



Raising resilient children

All children benefit from being able to cope well with challenges, change, and adversity. These are coping skills that help build a foundation of resilience. In this article you'll find tips on how to help children develop a lasting resilience that will help them all through life.

What makes a child resilient?

Why is it that some children seem to have a natural resilience and can stay strong even when they face challenges that might undo others? Experts agree that resilience results from a combination of factors. Partly, it comes from the natural tendency to adapt to change. Social, spiritual, psychological, and biological factors also contribute to resilience. You can take steps to build those factors into your child's life.

The seven C's of childhood resilience

Building resilience is a process that goes on from infancy through the teenage and young adult years. You can find help in the book *A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings*, written by the Academy of American Pediatrics (AAP) and Kenneth Ginsburg, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Ginsburg has identified seven key aspects of resilience that he and the AAP call "the 7 C's of resilience." The following things, he says, will help children develop the ability to cope with change and rebound from setbacks:

Competence, the strengths and abilities they need to master their challenges and cope with change all through life.

Confidence, a belief in their abilities that comes in part from competence.

Connection, close ties to a family and community that give them a sense of security and belonging.

Character, values that help children see the difference between right and wrong and make good, moral decisions.

Contribution, the knowledge that they can make a positive difference and that "the world is a better place because they are in it."

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Coping, having the emotional and other tools they need to deal capably with many kinds of stress they may face.

Control, the knowledge that they can affect the results of their decisions.

Help your child appreciate their skills. Support your child as much as you can if they'd like to gain a new skill that will help to build competence.

Ways to help children develop resilience

Here are some ways to build resilience in children from a young age:

Encourage your child to keep developing new skills. Help your child appreciate their skills. Support your child as much as you can if they'd like to gain a new skill that will help to build competence, such as the ability to play a musical instrument or learn the basics of computer coding.

Give your child frequent and sincere praise. Strengthen their confidence and sense of self by praising them when they make a good effort, whether or not it has the results you had hoped.

Remember that "it takes a village." Ask for and welcome the support of relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers and coaches, members of your faith community, and others. Their help will make your job as a parent easier and will give your child a strong sense of connection to a wider community. Have family rituals and routines, and include your extended family in these.

Model the kind of character you would like to see. Let your child see you acting in ways that are honest, kind, and loving—by obeying traffic signs, by helping older neighbors, by showing respect for people who come from different religious or cultural traditions. Also model positive coping strategies when feeling stressed or angry, like meditating, practicing yoga, and exercising.

Offer your child many opportunities to help others. When your child helps others—whether by sharing a meal with a friend or taking part in a community-wide volunteer project—they learn that their actions make a difference and that they can make a contribution to the world.

Let your child solve problems and make decisions. Give your child age-appropriate decision-making opportunities.

Show that you have faith in them by not rushing in to solve every problem they could handle on their own. This will help them see that their actions have consequences. If they can't always get what they want, they do have control over the results of many of their decisions.

Teach your child to manage stress and painful emotions. Help your child develop the ability to cope with all kinds of challenges. Send the message that sadness, like happiness, is a part of life. It's natural to feel sad and cry, and knowing how to handle those feelings is part of staying physically and emotionally healthy. Talk with your child about how to express feelings in healthy and appropriate ways—for example, by kicking a soccer ball in the yard to let off steam when feeling frustrated or talking with a trusted adult, like a parent or grandparent, when they are sad.

Finally, remember that developing resilience is a lifelong process. Reassure your child often that you love them, that they can always come to you if they face challenges that seem overwhelming, and that you had a lot of those in your own childhood, too

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Stress and diabetes - understanding the link

Most people know at least a bit about the negative impact prolonged stress can have on the body. But stress and its connection to type 2 diabetes? For many of us, this link may not be top of mind. While stress isn't a direct cause of diabetes, it can contribute to other factors that can lead to it. For those already diagnosed with diabetes, stress can create further complications.

The Dangers of Stress

The human body sees stress as a danger and reacts with a “fight-or-flight” response. Basically, the body responds to stress by getting energy from fat and glucose (sugar) stored in its cells.

The first reaction: With a hectic workday, you may be “running on adrenaline.” Your stress response releases hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. Though these hormones help increase your energy levels to deal with the stressful situation at hand, they also raise blood sugar levels.

What happens next: When blood sugar levels become higher, the pancreas tries to lower those levels again by creating insulin. After removing the sugar from the blood, insulin acts as a “key” that opens the cell to store the sugar as energy.

A different reaction: Stress is especially difficult for people living with type 2 diabetes because they don't produce enough insulin in response to elevated levels of blood sugar, making it more difficult for their body to keep blood sugar balanced.

Though you may not be able to prevent stress from creeping into your life, you can choose how you respond to it.

Reducing Your Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

As with any illness, type 2 diabetes does have risk factors. These include:

Age. Most people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes are over the age of 40. Why? Because your body typically produces less insulin as you get older.

Weight. If you're overweight or obese—especially if you carry the excess weight around your mid-section—you're more likely to develop diabetes.

A sedentary lifestyle. While there isn't a direct link between “couch potatoes” and type 2 diabetes, the less physically active you are, the more likely you are to be overweight or obese. In fact, one Harvard School of Public Health study found that the risk of developing type 2 diabetes was nearly triple for men who spent more than 40 hours watching TV weekly compared to those who watched TV less than one hour a week.

High cholesterol, blood pressure and/or heart disease. None of these conditions are good news, but they can also increase your risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Family history. If anyone in your family (usually a parent, brother or sister) had or has type 2 diabetes, you have a higher risk of developing it too.

Watch for these signs: If you've been feeling extra tired and thirsty all the time, have lost weight without trying or are urinating frequently, make an appointment with your doctor for a type 2 diabetes screening. Even if you don't have these symptoms, the Canadian Diabetes Association recommends you ask your doctor to screen for diabetes at the age of 40 and at least every three years after that.

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Managing Type 2 Diabetes

While type 2 diabetes can be challenging, the good news is that you can keep it well-managed and minimize its damaging effects with a little effort and resolve to lead a healthier, less-stressed life. Be sure to:

Commit to healthy lifestyle choices. Skip fat, sugar and salt-laden fast foods and pack a healthy, diabetic-friendly lunch for work. Do a quick search online for diabetic meals and you'll find an array of recipes to choose from! Positive food changes won't just help you stabilize your blood sugar levels; they'll also help keep your weight at a healthy level. Also, if you've been prescribed medication, be sure to take it as instructed.

Get moving. Exercise not only lowers stress levels, it can also help you maintain a healthy weight. Hate the idea of hitting the gym? Snap on a pedometer and go for a fast-paced walk during your break, take the stairs instead of the elevator or get off a few bus stops early to pack more movement into your day. Whatever you do, avoid long periods of sitting.

"De-clutter" life stresses and relax. Your stress hormones are meant to react to short-term stresses, such as dealing with difficult people, tight schedules, or intense meetings. Constant stress can produce dangerous long-term blood sugar level elevation. If your workload is overwhelming, ask for help. Constantly stressed out by your commute? Consider taking public transit or car-pooling to lighten the load. Look into relaxation tapes, information on meditation or join a yoga class. All can help you remain cool and keep stress levels at bay.

Socialize to de-stress. Meet with co-workers, friends, or even take a night class to get your mind off daily stresses and connect with fun and interesting people.

Take a deep breath. When stress feels overwhelming, take a moment and "breathe." This can be especially helpful during moments of great stress and anxiety.

Get professional support if you feel your stress levels are becoming unmanageable. Contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program or your doctor to connect with a professional who can provide you with solid strategies to manage your stress.

Whether or not you have diabetes, everyone can benefit from lower stress levels. Arming yourself with knowledge and staying on top of risk factors can go a long way to reducing your chances of developing type 2 diabetes or, if already diagnosed, keeping it under control.

Measuring Type 2 Diabetes

In 2009, more than 50 percent of the Canadian population with type 2 diabetes was aged 25-64

- Every year, over 60,000 new cases of type 2 diabetes will be diagnosed
- Adults can reduce their risk for type 2 diabetes by over 50 percent by exercising frequently and losing a moderate amount of weight

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