

## Resilience and wellbeing What can families do?

Sue Roffey

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## What is resilience?

- "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off and start all over again"
- "To bungy-jump through the pitfalls of life"
- To come through adversity with a positive sense of self
- The more adversity you experience at any one time the harder it is to bounce back.
- But we do know what helps to promote resilience for even those with the most difficulties.

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## What might 21<sup>st</sup> Century kids be dealing with?

- Loss
- Family conflict
- Learning difficulties
- Communication difficulties
- Poor health
- Living with mental illness
- Social issues
- Pressure to excel
- Protecting others
- Protecting self
- Inconsistency
- Economic pressures
- Absent parents
- Sibling issues

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## Research on resilience...

- has identified both personal protective factors (those within individuals) and environmental factors (what is going on around you and how you are treated)
- There is clearly an interaction between these but presented here separately for clarity.

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## What personal factors promote resilience?

- A positive outlook
- A sense of humour
- Being able to problem solve
- Wanting to connect with others
- Confidence
- Persistence
- Androgyny
- Willingness and ability to talk about issues

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## Tracking style

- | POSITIVE   | NEGATIVE                                    |
|--|---|
| ■ Counting your blessings and being thankful       | ■ Bemoaning what you don't have             |
| ■ Having a glass half full approach                | ■ Having a glass half empty approach        |
| ■ Seeing difficulties as challenges to be overcome | ■ Seeing difficulties as insoluble problems |

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### What is your tracking style? What are you modelling to your kids?

- Are you focused on the negative?
- Do you talk about the good things?
- Do you get overwhelmed when things go wrong or think out loud about what you might do to address challenges

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### What can you do?

- Accept sad feelings, they are important
- BUT also talk to your children about what they enjoyed the most, the best three things that happened today, what they learnt from a difficulty, what they are looking forward to
- Timing is important – bed-time is good

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### The importance of experiencing negative emotions

- Its real – everyone experiences loss, failure or other adversity
- It enables people to appreciate the good
- It provides opportunities for problem-solving
- It provides opportunities to learn about emotional regulation – how to feel better
- It helps develop empathy
- It connects people in support
- It encourages help seeking and sharing
- It inhibits a sense of entitlement
- It gives opportunities for facilitative parenting

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### But first...

- Validate feelings (then they won't get louder to be heard)
- Reflect, feed back,
- Commend strengths and strategies
- Build confidence

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### Active listening

- Is focused
- Doesn't interrupt with own stories
- Asks for clarification
- Gives re-inforcers
- Tunes into meaning and feelings
- Does not give unasked for advice
- Asks questions without interrogating

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### Then...

- After empathising with feelings...
- Not just you – tough things happen to most people from time to time
- Do a reality check
- Check on 'always' and 'never' language
- Ask good questions – don't give answers

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## The value of conversations and solution focused questions

- What did you learn?
- What do you want to happen now?
- What could you do?
- What would be the possible outcomes?
- What else might you do?
- Who might help?

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## Fair blame Responsibility pie chart

- Blaming others might enhance self protection at first but it leads to feelings of helplessness and being a victim
- Blaming the self can lead to depression
- 'Fair blame' looks at what could you have done differently, what could others have done differently and what was down to chance.

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## If you have confidence...

- You will have a go
- You will try new things
- You will not be afraid of failing
- You accept that mistakes happen
- You have had experience of success
- You are aware of negative thoughts that inhibit you and positive thoughts that encourage you

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## Parents need to...

- Acknowledge we are not perfect
- Not try to know everything
- Admit when we don't get it quite right
  - be specific about this
- Show they are willing to ask for help when they need it

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## What external factors promote resilience?

- Having someone who thinks you are worthwhile – who believes in the best of you.
- High expectations
- Feelings of belonging and connection


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## Talking with, not to

- What opportunities are there for talking with your children?
  - Mealtimes
  - Helping each other
  - Playing games together
  - Planning projects
  - Bedtimes


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## High expectations

- Get children to think about who they are becoming
- Make links between positive behaviour and positive feelings
- Questions do not mean interrogation!
- Focus in on strengths

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## Have fun!

- Smiling connects us with people
- It conveys warmth
- Laughing decreases stress, increases resilience
- When was the last time your family laughed together?

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## Websites for further information

- [www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au](http://www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au)
- [www.sueroffey.com](http://www.sueroffey.com)

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