

# BUILDING RESILIENCE - CONFIDENCE

**We are all born with resilience inside of us, that ability to recover from adversity.** We all have the mental, emotional, and physical capacity to bend and flex and then come back to our original form. When raising children, our work is to recognize, nurture, and encourage the qualities that strengthen resilience—just like exercising our muscles to grow physically stronger. Using Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg’s model for raising resilient children and teens, there are 7 Crucial C’s (7Cs), or characteristics that we can foster in our children—and in ourselves as role models. These seven integral and interrelated components are: **competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control.**

## CONFIDENCE

Confidence is a belief or trust in one’s abilities. It is acquired through effort and supported by appropriate praise and feedback. Competence and confidence go hand in hand. Children gain confidence when they experience their own competence. They have to manage challenges to know that they are able to succeed.

It is necessary to have confidence to navigate the risk-taking journey of childhood and adolescence successfully and safely. Without confidence, children won’t take necessary risks or they will take them recklessly. Authentic confidence, assures children that they have a role to play in the world and a sense of control over what that will be. As a result, they are more likely to persevere and have an optimistic outlook instead of feeling passive or powerless. Confidence earned during childhood and adolescence will be a springboard towards success in adult life.

There are several key tips for fostering confidence:

**Catch them being good.** We tend to be great at this with very young children, making a big deal of developmental milestones like learning to brush teeth or ride a bike. As children get older, we often find ourselves focusing more on the less than stellar behaviors like procrastinating on homework. It’s important to continue offer words of appreciation and praise to older children too—reinforcing kind gestures, unprompted acts of generosity, and other good behaviors.

**Offer genuine and specific praise.** The best way to praise children is with words that show children we really notice and appreciate something specific that they have done—praising the effort and not the product. Excessive praise will not ring true and can create undo pressure on children to be perfect. Try for a balance. Look for one or two things every day that your child has done that’s worthy of a verbal pat on the back.

**Set reasonable expectations.** Children live up to or down to our expectations. We cannot expect children to be perfect but we can expect them to be honest, caring, and responsible. In order to set the best level of expectations around their accomplishments it’s important to pay attention to their responses to achievement and failure. We can also engage with them in setting reasonable challenges and support them in recovering from failure.



Adapted from *Building Resilience in Children & Teens* by Kenneth Ginsburg, MD

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**De-emphasize incompetence.** One of the greatest ways to destroy confidence is to emphasize incompetence and shame children. Youth will struggle to have the confidence to change when they feel denigrated or are made to focus repeatedly on their faults. It's better to promote positive behavior by accentuating existing strengths. This asset-based approach allows us to build on something.

**Play to their strengths in the midst of problems.** Children will make mistakes. Our job is to set them straight, not make them feel good regardless of their behaviors. But if we focus only on what they do wrong, it will make it harder for them to believe they can bounce back. If we recognize their strengths and remind them of their abilities to succeed, we energize them to transform failure into a learning experience from which they can rebound.

### IDEAS/TIPS for Parents and Families:

1. If your child is learning a skill, such as riding a bike, and struggling, rather than deny the failure, focus on persistence by encouraging their trying again. Staying with the bike riding example, if they fall you can say, "Well, that was your first fall from a 2-wheeler. Do you know how many minutes you stayed up before you fell? How do you feel? Yes, it's a bummer. Ready to try again?"
2. Go on a hike and let your child lead the way. Help her problem solve but let her stay in charge of decision points on the trail—directions, where to stop for snack, etc. Have her plan out the timing for starting and ending the hike and check in about timing along the way. Be careful not to rush the activity but give her responsibility of keeping everyone on schedule or working with everyone to adjust the plan if that becomes an option.
3. Give your child a small amount of money to make a donation. Create a list of questions to have him research and be able to answer about the donation that he'd like to make. For example you could ask him to tell you why he thinks it's important to give to this group, how many people or beings will be helped, and how long the organization has been in existence? Let him do the work to find out more about the organization so he will be making an informed decision and then let him make the gift himself. Make sure to acknowledge the effort that he puts in to making his choice rather than the specific donation he chooses to make.
4. At the dinner table invite your child to talk about one thing she enjoyed doing and feels she did well that day and also one thing that did not go well and how she is learning from that mistake. Be a good listener and help them recognize their specific strengths as she works through her challenges.

The **Ok. You've Got This** project is a collaborative, county-wide public education campaign to increase resilience among Addison County youth. For more information and resources visit [okyouvegotthis.org](http://okyouvegotthis.org).



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