

# BUILDING RESILIENCE - CONTRIBUTION

**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.**

## CONTRIBUTION

Confident young people who recognize their competencies, feel connected to people, and have strongly rooted character are poised to contribute to the world. Contribution flows from the other Cs, and those who take active steps to contribute will gain experiences that prepare them to thrive. Parents and communities who ensure ample opportunities for children to contribute are building the next generation of leaders.

When young people work to improve their communities, they develop a meaningful sense of purpose. They receive positive feedback that protects them from negative messages about youth. They hear from numerous people besides their parents, “I think you are important,” and absorb the important belief, “I have high expectations for you.” They are surrounded by thank-yous rather than condemnation. Because kids live up or down to expectations set for them, these thank yous can be highly protective. Youth who contribute are also important role models for us and that sense of being a role model can help deter them from making choices and adopting behaviors that don’t benefit that image.

There are several key benefits to fostering contribution:

**It starts with family.** Children who do chores within their family learn that they are an integral part of the family and that their contribution is critical to the family’s happiness and success. Chores also develop skills and responsibility that translate into new competencies.

**They see beyond themselves.** Contemporary culture is so focused on material things like electronic equipment, expensive shoes, and clothes, cosmetics, and cars that children can naturally get swept up into this tide. To counter this influence parents, can support opportunities for children to give rather than receive. When they give a new toy to a child in need, collect recyclables, or tutor younger children, they gain a more realistic perspective of the world and their place in it. They recognize themselves as part of larger communities in which they can make a difference.

**Leverage contribution with the other Cs.** Contribution is interwoven with competence, confidence, connection and character as an integral thread in the web of resilience. Asking for donations leverages new competencies and grows confidence in things like articulating themselves and talking with adults. Volunteering opportunities forges connection with new people and connection to their neighborhoods,



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schools, and the world. Contribution strengthens character because it develops desirable traits such as responsibility, generosity, and caring.

**It's a two way street.** Anyone who makes contributions like volunteering, donating, or helping will tell you that it feels good. Contributing makes us happy. It gives us hope. When children give back they realize that they have purpose and value, and the world is better because they are in it. They also learn that there is no shame in receiving help, and that the person who offers to help receives as well in this exchange so it may make them less hesitant to ask for help when they need it.

**Beyond Charitable Deeds.** Young people also need to know that they can contribute ideas that will be taken seriously and respected. When adults invite children and teens' opinions, especially about matters that concern them, we increase their sense of control which enhances their resilience.

**A word of caution about contribution.** Be careful to encourage contribution and let your child choose and carry out the activities themselves. As adults, we can sometimes take over projects in an effort to help. Contribution builds children's life resumes. It should not be encouraged primarily to have another asset on their college applications or impress scholarship committees. While prizes and scholarships offered to children who have made outstanding contributions is wonderful, children shouldn't be encouraged to volunteer predominantly in the hope of winning a scholarship or prize—they should be encouraged because it is a worthy thing to do.

### IDEAS/TIPS for Parents and Families:

1. Identify chores for children that are age appropriate. Preschoolers can learn to put their toys away when they are done playing and to put dirty clothes in the hamper. Give specific instructions and don't expect perfection.
2. Talk with children about their interests and try to match them with appropriate resources. Guide them in asking at school or a local library where they can find volunteer opportunities. Don't do it for them.
3. Contribute together. Identify an activity such as cleaning up trash on a river bank or stacking an elderly neighbor's wood that you can do together. Even chores, like washing a car, can be done together and also be fun.
4. Practice spontaneous acts of kindness. Offer to clear someone's plate from the table. Hold open a door for a stranger. Pay the toll of the driver behind you. Think of things with your child that they can do too.

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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