

## How to build family resilience

Life can be extremely difficult sometimes and it's perfectly normal to experience anger, grief and pain., but the more resilient you are as a family the easier it will be to keep functioning both physically and mentally during difficult times.

### 1. Stay together

Having strong, positive relationships with loved ones can provide the support and acceptance necessary to get through difficult situations. Try to work together as a team against problems rather than against each other as adversaries. Remember that you might not always agree but you're always on the same side.

#### Tips for bonding and teamworking

- Keep in mind that you both want the same outcome, which is the child's health and happiness. You might not always agree but remember you are both on the same side.
- Try to identify a shared goal and work towards it by breaking it down into small steps
- It's natural to want to focus on problems, but it's also important to celebrate wins and positive steps, as well as trying to create a routine that includes activities you enjoy doing together or as a family.

### 2. Stay mindful

It's easy to become swept away and overwhelmed by everything that's going on but being aware of your own and each other's feelings makes it easier to be kind and compassionate in the way you interact. Remember that while you might not be able to control your emotions you can control the way you respond to them.

#### Tips for reducing the impact of your emotions

- When you feel strong emotions, try to pause and take a deep breath before reacting.
- Remember that your feelings are towards the situation and not the child.
- Try to focus on being supportive rather than apportioning blame.
- Build resilience by reminding yourself of previous occasions when you've come through adversity and gained valuable experience.

### 3. Stay healthy

Diet, exercise and sleep all play a big part in physical and mental health, so make sure you're all including them in your daily routines. Try to practice stress management and relaxation techniques like meditation or yoga and reduce exposure to things that might contribute unnecessarily to stress levels.

#### Tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle

- Establish a healthy sleep pattern that allows for around 8 hours of sleep and involves going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. This connects us with our natural circadian rhythms and is ideal for developing brains.
- It's not just what we eat that matters, but also when. Establishing a routine based around three meals a day at regular times and incorporates a healthy, balanced diet, helps to promote not just physical but also mental health.
- Equally important are daylight and fresh air. Going without them for lengthy periods can have a negative impact on physical and mental health, so try to incorporate exercise and time outside into the daily routine if possible.

## 4. Stay positive

You can't change the past, but you can always look toward the future. Breaking big challenges down into smaller portions can make them more manageable and makes it easier to feel a sense of accomplishment when you achieve goals along the way.

### Tips for maintaining a positive outlook

- Difficult times are when we tend to learn the most. Try to view challenges and mistakes as part of a learning curve where each experience is making you better prepared for future challenges.
- Allow yourself to find the humour in even the most difficult moments, and when things are tough remember that what's happening will probably make for a great story in the future.
- Think about things that you are grateful for, however small, and try to visualise the future you hope for.
- You can build resilience by reminding yourself of previous occasions when you've come through adversity and gained valuable experience.

### Things to avoid if you're struggling

- Try to avoid fighting what you can't change and focus instead on what you can.
- While TV and other news media can give you a distraction, bad news headlines often paint an unrealistic picture of the world that can make you feel worse.
- Constantly seeing positive posts of friends and family on social media can make it seem like everyone's life is amazing compared to yours. It's best to limit your exposure to it and recognise that what you're seeing is the aggregated highlights of what people want you to see and not the reality.

## 5. Stay on top

Don't ignore your problems. Instead, figure out what needs to be done, make a plan, and take action. Although it can take time to recover from a major setback, remember that the situation can improve if you work at it.

### Some resources that may help.

- NHS advice for supporting the mental wellbeing of others. Better Health: Every Mind matters <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/childrens-mental-health/>
- For information on how to access NHS Mental health services visit <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/>