Eyes on

Resilience

The ability to bounce back from adversity
What do we know?

- For some children, difficult circumstances (e.g., the death of a parent, living in poverty or being in a natural disaster) can affect their development. Yet most children can successfully deal with these difficulties because they are resilient.

- Resilience is being able to adapt to difficult circumstances in a positive way.

- Resilience is not a personality trait: it varies depending on the duration, nature and accumulation of risk factors and depending on the support the child gets.

- Some children who show resilience in one aspect (e.g., school) may struggle in another (e.g., getting along with peers).

- When a child has limited access to the resources in his environment, the capacity to show resilience may be compromised, although the impact may vary greatly from one child to another.

- Early childhood is an important time to nurture the development of resilience by stimulating the emergence of children's individual competences and by supporting their parents, important actors in this learning.

- There are a number of factors that support the building of resilience. How effective they are depends on the child’s age, personal resources and protection systems. These include:
  - Personal strengths: having good social skills and an easy-going personality. Being able to regulate one’s emotions after a stressful event.
  - Social supports: having supportive friends, available and sensitive caregivers, and at least one warm and consistent relationship with an adult.
  - Factors such as the family having enough money, safe and stable schools, communities and neighbourhoods.

- A child’s resilience is closely associated with his executive functions (e.g., memory, attention, being able to control impulses) and cognitive control. These skills help a child to adapt to changes in his environment caused by a stressful event.
## The ability to bounce back from adversity

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| ... pregnancy and the early years. | - During pregnancy, have realistic expectations of how your life will be after birth.  
- When you are in stressful situations, get the support you need to stay healthy and provide a nurturing environment for your child.  
- Look for childcare with warm and consistent educators and keep a close connection with them. |
| ... your child’s age and development when adversity strikes. | - Resilience varies with age. For instance, your toddler may be adapting well to adversity by showing strong attachment to you. But your 5-year-old may cope better with good relationships with his peers.  
- Recognize that if your child is irritable or if his play involves the traumatic event, he may need psychological help. See your family doctor for advice. |
| ... your child’s executive functioning. (See information sheet Executive functions: Help your child think before acting). | - Involve your child in activities such as specific computer-based training, and physical activity such as martial arts.  
- Play games that involve taking turns, attention and memory.  
- Set clear limits and rules to foster your child’s self-control (e.g., ask your child to stay at the table until supper is over or ask him to complete a task). |
| ... your own well-being and parenting behaviour during adversity. | - After a stressful event, try to restore a regular routine as soon as possible, keeping in mind that new routines may have to be established.  
- Be physically and emotionally available to your child’s reactions.  
- Listen and let your child ask questions. Follow your child’s lead and discuss the traumatic experience. If you find it difficult, seek help from a professional who knows about post-traumatic treatments. |
| ... the type of interventions best suited for your child. | - Participate in interventions with your child to help your family regain a normal life.  
- Find treatments that fit with your child’s personality, development and culture. |
Information

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