

### Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 13

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What is resilience? Bouncing back from adversity or challenging situations, being able to carry on, adapting to and handling what is needed in the moment are just some of the ways we describe resilience. Resilience is ongoing – we acquire resilience through life lessons and the mistakes we make. We also flex our resiliency muscle when we develop ways to cope with current challenges. One way to do this is by looking at how we have coped with tough situations in the past. (For example, by asking ourselves, “What has worked for me during times of stress?”) Of course, coping with unprecedented situations brings additional challenges and so we need to remain flexible with our coping strategies. Broadening our perspectives and being open to new ideas is a good way to help build resilience!

Resiliency requires some vulnerability – knowing our limitations and embracing our discomfort. As caregivers, family (and others) may look to us to have all the answers. However, being willing to admit and acknowledge that perhaps *we don't know* and instead asking others for support, help or guidance can help shape resilience. Asking others how they are managing, learning, and supporting one another can be ways to empower others' resilience too.

The pandemic has impacted every facet of our lives. Sometimes we feel less able to bounce back and more like a deflated balloon. Society impresses on us the value of productivity. The pressure “to do” may leave us wondering if there's something wrong with us. We are here to say it's ok to just *be*. Actually, “just being” – resting, relaxing, sleeping – are activities that can help us recover and regain resilience. Let's give ourselves permission to be gentle with ourselves, while tuning in to our own emotional, physical and mental health. Begin by asking, “How am I doing?” Then, take a moment to reflect on what is emerging, where it is coming from, and asking, “What do I need for support?”

Focusing on things we need in order to take care of ourselves first is self-care. For some, slowing down and taking it easy is what's needed, for others, increased activity may be the answer. Getting outside in nature can be quite healing and helpful in gaining fresh perspectives. Another way of broadening our worldview is through volunteer work and being of service to others. Helping others gets us out of ourselves, exposes us to new perspectives, and has a way of expanding our world.

No matter how you choose to cultivate it, resilience helps us generate hope, optimism, and excitement for the future.

#### Strategies for building and maintaining resilience

- Develop self-awareness – better understand your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours.
- Acknowledge your limitations and also, your strengths!

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- Engage in reflection and learning – become flexible with outcomes, by being willing, open and choosing to learn from experiences... including learning about what went well, what worked, how you responded, how you could respond differently or improve next time. Recognize your successes, opportunities for learning and growing while also forgiving any mistakes.
- Lay a healthy foundation through basic healthy lifestyle habits and routines – hygiene, nutrition, hydration, sleep, exercise/activity.
- Consider your locus of control – accept what you can and can't control. Be flexible with the outcomes and let go of expectations.
- Establish a mindfulness practice.
- Challenge negative thinking.
- Reduce media exposure.
- Practice gratitude.
- Maintain strong, supportive relationships.
- Let others win the argument (sometimes) and conserve your energy.
- Look for possibilities.
- Accept help.

### Resources

- Bounceback Program <https://bouncebackontario.ca/>
- For more information on WRAP & Family WRAP please visit the Copeland Centre for Wellness and Recovery <https://copelandcenter.com/>
- Tolerance for Uncertainty Workbook – free downloadable resource in French and English <https://www.baypsychology.ca/workshops>
- Serenity Prayer – Reinhold Niebuhr
- Don't Sweat the Small Stuff with your Family – Richard Carlson, PhD
- The Brain that Changes Itself – Norman Doidge, MD
- The Book of Awesome – Neil Pasricha
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families – Stephen R. Covey