

How to foster resilience

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November 2016, Vol 47, No. 10

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Resilience is different from post-traumatic growth (PTG) in that it involves the ability to more easily rebound from trauma and quickly return to one's normal state of being. Someone who has achieved PTG is likely to be resilient if and when future trauma strikes—but a resiliency mindset can be taught before trauma occurs. "Most everyone has the potential to be resilient if basic adaptive systems and protective factors such as community and family supports are in place," says Teresa LaFromboise, PhD, of the Stanford University Graduate School of Education.

Some ways psychologists can help their clients build resiliency is to:

- 1. Encourage them** to have or develop supportive relationships, says Robert Brooks, PhD, of Harvard **Medical School**.
- 2. Help them create narratives** of their lives to help boost their sense of identity and control, recommends LaFromboise.
- 3. Hold training workshops** for teachers and others who can pass along resilience skills, stressing how people need to learn to be flexible and take risks, suggests Ron Breazeale, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Portland, Maine.
- 4. Teach them mindfulness** techniques, such as focused breathing. Anita Thomas, PhD, dean of the school of psychological sciences at the University of Indianapolis, taught at-risk boys at an elementary school breathing techniques they could use if faced with a situation where they felt angry or hurt.

"Kids who are more resilient are able to get down to zero" on the arousal scale, Thomas says.
- 5. Explain** that there is no answer to "Why me?" but instead, says Brooks, recommend that people ask themselves: "What steps can I take to deal effectively with the situation?"
- 6. Teach parents to pause** before rushing in to solve their kids' problems, Brooks says. Instead, parents should listen to how their children would fix the problem, offering, when indicated, questions that provide direction.
- 7. Tell people** that mistakes or setbacks are experiences to learn from, not be defeated by.