



The Parenting Style that Builds Greatest Resilience in Kids

Kids are often better than adults at bouncing back and some kids seem to be born with a temperament that provides them with a talent for resilience and an ability to quickly move on from set-backs.

However, according to a group of researchers, one of the factors that contributes to the degree of resilience in kids is not the temperament they are born with but rather, their parents' style of parenting. In a recent study, researchers investigated the relationship between parenting styles and resilience including which style seems to build resilience.

Researchers looked at three styles of parenting including:

1. 'Acceptance-involvement' (warm, firm, involved and sensitive to kids' changing needs)
2. 'Psychological autonomy-granting' (democratic discipline and not pushing kids to comply with rules)
3. 'Behavioural strictness-supervision' (shaping, controlling and evaluating the behaviour and attitudes of the child in accordance with set standards of conduct that are usually absolute)

The main question of the study was to ascertain which parenting style can predict resilience. The effect of the gender of children in this relationship was also examined.

KEY FINDINGS

- The strongest relationship was between the 'acceptance-involvement' (warmth, support and child-centred) parenting style and children's resilience, and as such, could be regarded as a protective factor that may increase a child's ability to overcome negative life events and crises.

- Authoritative ('acceptance-involvement') parents may be more attuned to their child's needs, thereby helping the child to master early developmental tasks and build more skills needed to master significant environmental challenges.
- In relation to gender differences, the results showed there was a significant difference between resilience scores of boys and girls with parents who exhibit a 'behavioural strictness-supervision' style, with boys displaying greater resilience.

- ✓ Talk through the 'bad' days, brainstorm solutions together, and encourage your kids to see the bigger picture – any factors they don't know about that may have contributed to the bad day.

Source: Hamidreza Zakeri et al., *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5 (2010) pp1067-1070.

THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Develop an authoritative (warm, responsive, supportive) parenting style to help support a healthy, whole-family relationship.
- ✓ Rather than just chauffeuring your kids to their activities, investigate ways to be involved, perhaps on a committee or as a grounds person, coach, or in a supervisory role.
- ✓ Contact your child's school to ask about ways to be involved. For most of us, employment commitments mean we can't help in the classroom, but the school will advise you of other ways you can support your child's education.
- ✓ Develop an electronic parent/teacher partnership with your child's teacher, so that you can stay involved in homework and your child's academic and social progress.
- ✓ Talk to your kids about a resilient attitude. Employ specific strategies and role model these at times when things go off the rails. Coping strategies may include use of the Catastrophe Scale (is it a 2 or a 10 catastrophe?) to put adverse events into perspective, or rational thinking strategies such as the ABC of thinking (A = activating event, B = your take on this (rational or otherwise), C = how you feel and act as a result of what you think about the situation).
- ✓ Allow kids to make mistakes, experience the consequences, and then help them to move forward.



TAKEAWAY

FROM PROFESSOR MICHAEL BERNARD
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
FOUNDER, YOU CAN DO IT! EDUCATION

"Life at times is filled with stress, risks and adversity, which has the potential to side-track kids from developing into happy, healthy adults. What appears to determine the difference between those who continue on successfully and those who do not, is resilience. Our parenting style, and an 'authoritative' style in particular, contributes significantly to supporting a healthy family relationship and to building resilience in our kids, empowering them to cope with stress, trauma and general life pressures."