



Parental Resilience

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience. They have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Parents with resilience are generally able to cope on their own, but they also know how to seek help in times of trouble. Their ability to deal with life's ups and downs serves as a model of coping behavior for their children.

Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict and domestic or community violence—and financial stressors such as unemployment, poverty and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.

All parents have inner strengths or resources that can serve as a foundation for building their resilience. These may include faith, flexibility, humor, communication skills, problem-solving skills, mutually supportive caring relationships, or the ability to identify and access outside resources and services when needed. All of these strengthen the capacity to parent effectively. In addition, community services that help families in crisis include mental health programs, substance abuse treatment, family and marital counseling, and special education and treatment programs for children with special needs.

Exploring Your Strengths and Needs

As a parent, you can pinpoint the factors contributing to your stress, as well as successful coping strategies and personal, family and community resources.

In Order to Explore:	Ask Yourself:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What you identify as your coping strengths and resilience Your strengths in parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What helps you cope with everyday life? Where do you draw your strength? How does this help you in parenting? What are your dreams for yourself and your family?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What you identify as everyday stressors Stressors precipitated by crises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kinds of frustrations do you deal with during the day? Has something happened recently that has made life more difficult?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of stress on your parenting skills The impact of parenting on your stress level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you able to meet your children's needs when you are dealing with stress? How are your children reacting to crisis situations?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether or not there is marital stress or conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your spouse or partner support you in times of stress? How does your spouse or partner help with parenting?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs that might be identified by a different family member (not all family members may identify the same needs) such as a spouse, partner or child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are other family members experiencing stress or concern? How are they dealing with that? Has anyone in your family expressed concern about drug or alcohol abuse?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term supports (respite care, help with a new baby, help during an illness) Long-term strategies (job training, marital counseling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you are under stress, what is most helpful to you? Are there places in the community where you can find help?

Strategies and Resources to Promote Parental Resilience

When you as a parent identify and communicate what worries you most, there is an opportunity to explore and learn some coping strategies and resources to begin to deal with the stress. You may not always be aware how your ability to cope with stress impacts your capacity to parent and your children's development. You can model coping behaviors for your children, since children observe and imitate parents in many ways. Empowering yourself to seek help and take steps to combat stress is part of building both resilience and hope.

Resilient parenting includes helping yourself and all of your family members translate concerns into specific needs that can be discussed and resolved. Many community resources and services are available to help you and your family cope. Faith communities, community colleges, self-help groups and social service agencies can help you develop problem-solving and communication skills that strengthen your ability to deal effectively with crisis, so you can continue to provide for your children.

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway. (Updated 2008). In *Promoting healthy families in your community*. Retrieved June 7, 2010, WorkplaceOptions.

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