

BUILDING RESILIENCE DURING COVID-19 E-BOOK

COMPASSION**FIRST**



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Introduction

Compassion First (CF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to long-term, hope-filled solutions for survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. For over 10 years, CF has been providing aftercare with a strength-based focus. Resilience-building is a key component of this approach. Our goal is to build strength and competency in every person we care for. And we would like to extend this to you!

RESILIENCE

Resilience is a word that has been thrown around a lot lately as we work through the challenges of COVID-19 and other national crises. The pandemic has caused radical changes to our lives affecting our jobs, our families, and our communities. Individuals and families have all felt the stress and challenges of these changes. We often focus on the negativity of these stresses. How can we approach these challenges in a positive and productive way?

We know we need resilience, but what exactly is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to face a challenge, meet or overcome that challenge, and become stronger, not defeated from the challenge. Resilience is a mind-set, an approach to life, that looks at a challenge as an opportunity to overcome rather than a stress to endure. Essentially, resilience is the ability to bounce back strong from adversity.



Think of yourself as a basketball, and the air within you is your resilience. If you have no resilience, you have no air in your basketball. When thrown to the ground, your ball absorbs the blow, becoming misshapen and deflated. You absorb the force of the blow with no ability to bounce back.

In contrast, what happens when your basketball is filled with air - the air of resilience? When thrown to the ground with the same force, you still absorb the force of the blow and temporarily become flattened. However, because of the resilience within you, you can rebound from that blow with renewed energy and bounce back, ready for another play and another day.



That is resilience! Bouncing back strong!

Research has shown:

1. Resilience can overcome the effects of trauma and stress.
2. Resilience improves optimism and problem-solving.
3. Resilience improves performance in school and work.
4. Resilience has been shown to decrease or prevent anxiety and depression.

We are all born with resilience. Yet we can all learn to become more resilient and teach others to be more resilient. And when we teach others to be resilient, we ourselves become more resilient.

Resilience Targets

THE 7 C's

CF has adapted this section from Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg's *Fostering Resilience* which categorizes the features of resilience.¹

Research has shown that resilient people often have the following characteristics. Anyone who is building resilience can use these qualities as targets to aim for.

1 COMPETENCE

- Everyone has something that they can do well. We should all work to know our own strengths and help others to find their strengths.
- Competence comes in many forms: physical skills, kindness, empathy, and other traits.

2 CONFIDENCE

- People need confidence to be able to try new things.
- Confidence allows us to risk failure, which allows us to grow.
- We build confidence by allowing mistakes. Experience builds confidence from past successes and failures.

3 CONNECTION

- Resilient people often depend on others for strength: connection with family, peers, and safe adults in the community.
- "Someone is on my team who will help me and watch out for me."

4 CONTRIBUTION

- The giving of time, energy, money, or ideas for the benefit of others.
- A sense of purpose, with motivation to take actions and make choices that will improve our world.
- External rewards of contribution include gratitude, praise, and respect.
- Internal rewards of contribution include self-worth, satisfaction, and purpose.

5 COPING

- Patience, persistence, optimism, humor, faith, music, dance, and art are some examples of healthy coping strategies.
- Treat your body well with exercise, proper rest, and healthy nutrition.
- Healthy coping strategies can help us push through challenges. These can be taught and role-modeled by adults during difficult times.

6 CONTROL

- Resilient people learn to control their emotions when experiencing challenges or stress.
- People who realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions have more trust in their ability to handle adverse situations.

7 CHARACTER

- People with character have a fundamental sense of right and wrong.
- Character involves having a consistent set of values which builds a sense of self-worth and confidence.
- People with character demonstrate empathy and a caring attitude towards others.

Building Resilience in Individuals

YOURSELF AND/OR YOUR PARTNER

1 KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

CF has adapted this section from Dr. Nan Henderson's *The Resiliency Workbook*.²

THE T-CHART: COMPETENCE

It is important for all of us to know and understand our strengths. Take some time to write down what you know you are good at. This could be a skill like cooking or puzzles, being a kind friend or a good listener, or a skill that manifests in groups such as leadership or support. Faith, humor, perseverance, optimism, and creativity are also strengths that we use to push through challenges. The above examples are just a small sampling of the strengths we find in ourselves and others. Ask those close to you what strengths they see in you.

The T-Chart. During a particularly difficult personal challenge or stressful circumstance, it helps to take a piece of paper and draw a large "T". On the left side of the chart, write down what the challenge is. On the right side, list those strengths that have helped you to overcome a past challenge. List personal strengths as discussed above, but also list your environmental strengths. This may include people or groups in your environment that have given you strength in the past such as friends, family, faith organizations, community groups and the like.

As you list your personal and environmental strengths, you will likely realize that your strengths are greater than the challenge at hand. Focus on using your strengths and resources to help you overcome or push through the current challenge.

2 BUILDING RESILIENCE

STRENGTH THROUGH FAILURE: CONFIDENCE

One of the tools that we can use to teach resilience is failure. Any time that we do not meet our expectations, we could call it a failure. Some examples include losing at a board game, struggles in getting along with peers or our partner, or being reprimanded at work. Failure is inevitable.

Dealing with our own failures and helping others with their failures can help to build resilience. Failure can either be a stumbling block or a stepping stone. For example:

A colleague gets a poor evaluation from their boss. One approach could be:

"I'm sorry that you didn't do well. That is disappointing. Let's go watch a movie and forget about it."

Or, another approach could be:

"I'm sorry that you didn't do well. That is hard to hear. But you work hard, and that hard work is going to pay off for you. Don't give up because you have what it takes to succeed! This will make you stronger."

Both approaches show care and concern, but the first approach looks at failure as a result and does not teach resilience. The second approach teaches that failure is a normal part of life and can be overcome. Failure is used to teach us important life lessons such as persistence and patience and to never give up.

Failure is an important building block for future success. We should not protect our friends or family from failure. Instead, we can coach our friends, family, and ourselves with affirmation, optimism, and strength.

Building Resilience in Individuals

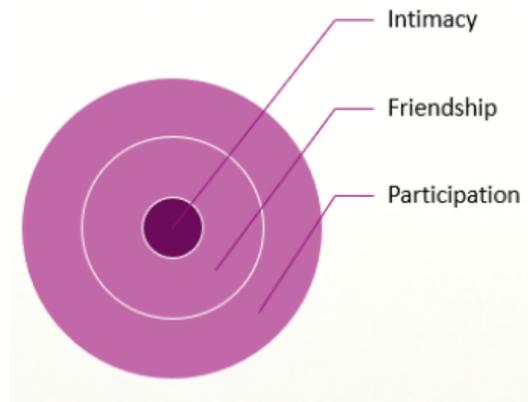
YOURSELF AND/OR YOUR PARTNER

3 CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

CF has adapted this section from Kim Davis, MS, "Creating a Circle of Support".³

CONNECTION

No matter what stage of life we are in, we all need people who make up our circle of support. It is important for all of us to have people in our lives who provide strength to us. The Circle of Support helps us to identify who these people are.



People outside the outer circle represent strangers or people that we do not have a significant relationship with.

The outer circle is the **CIRCLE OF PARTICIPATION**. This represents people who participate in activities with us. This group could contain coworkers, classmates in school, church groups, or organizations. Some of these individuals may move into the inner circles over time, as your relationship develops.

The next circle is the **CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP**. This group is made up of friends or relatives who we call to go out to dinner or see a movie. Although we do not consider them our most dear friends, we enjoy spending time with them. People in this circle can move into the innermost circle with some effort in building the relationship.

The innermost circle is the **CIRCLE OF INTIMACY**. These are our closest friends or family members. This group is made up of those who we share a close relationship with and whom we share our secrets and heartfelt emotions. These are people you have on speed dial that you can call in the middle of the night when you need help. Even resilient people can struggle overcoming challenges on their own. There are many times in our life that we need to rely on the people in our inner circle.

Take some time to write down the people in your life who reside in each circle listed above. If you do not have a consistent person or persons in your circle of intimacy, you can find people in your friendship group and nurture those relationships. This takes time for sharing, meaningful dialogue, and commitment in conversations and deeds.

Building Resilience in Individuals

5.

YOURSELF AND/OR YOUR PARTNER

4

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOR: REMEMBER THE PINEAPPLE

CF has adapted this section from Dr. Amy Stoeber, "Yolky Feelings".⁴

COPING

Emotions are sometimes hard to sort out. It is essential for us to realize that the behavior and emotions that we see on the outside are not always an accurate picture of what is going on inside. Psychologists have taught us that we have different levels of feelings.

Primary Feelings. Primary feelings are the core feelings that we feel deeply inside of us. These feelings are the most accurate representation of what is going on with us. Three primary feelings that are most common are SAD, WORRIED or CONFUSED. Others include loneliness, disappointment or bored. When primary feelings are understood and communicated, we can access help.

Secondary Feelings. These are very real feelings, but they often mask or cover up the real primary feelings. Secondary feelings are more obvious to others because they are outwardly displayed in our behavior. Examples of secondary feelings are ANGER, IMPATIENCE, ANNOYANCE or JEALOUSY.

The communication of secondary feelings rarely leads to productive help. Rather, the outward display of our secondary feelings will often get us in trouble with others. These behaviors are commonly - and unknowingly - used by us as a defense mechanism to protect the primary feelings that we have inside us.

Here is one way that we can remember this: think of a pineapple.



The inside of a pineapple is soft, sweet, and delicious fruit. The interior is what is valuable in the pineapple. The outside is tough, prickly, and can cause pain. But the outer rind has an important purpose. If the pineapple didn't have that tough outer shell, the delicate inner fruit could more easily be damaged or hurt.

Just like the pineapple, our inside feelings and our outward behaviors serve a purpose. Understanding those emotions is important in building connection with others.

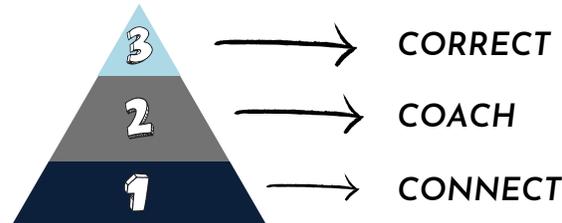
Building Resilience in our Families

1 POSITIVE PARENTING

CF has adapted this section from ConnectedFamilies.org.⁵

COMPETENCE

Positive parenting is a style of raising children that is highly endorsed by experts in child development. This pyramid is a helpful visual tool to demonstrate how a parent can positively affect their child's behavior.



A CONNECT

The base of the pyramid is **connection**. This should be the foundation of parenting and where a parent spends most of their time. Connection simply means "to be present with." Not just a physical presence but also a caring, emotional presence.

- **Love:**
 - Build a foundation of love. Your child needs to know your unconditional love every day.
 - Your child needs to feel safe: physically, emotionally, and mentally.
- **Attention:**
 - Give each child one-on-one attention of at least 10-15 minutes every day. Let your child direct the activity.
 - Give attention to the behaviors you like, not the behaviors you do not appreciate.
 - Positive statements should outnumber negative by 4:1.
- **Family:**
 - Prioritize and value quality time with your family.
 - Maintain routines.
 - Listen to what your children say. Encourage negotiation and communication. Attention to their requests can prevent misbehavior.

B COACH

If your child shows signs of misbehavior, then the next step for parents is coaching. Coaching is a combination of leading, teaching, encouraging and inspiring. Use all these coaching skills in shaping your child's behavior.

- **Lead:**
 - Model the behavior you seek: patience, persistence, and calmness.
 - Have realistic expectations. Children make mistakes. It is normal.
 - Let them know the rules, but do not expect perfection.
 - Reward effort, not performance.
- **Teach:**
 - Life skills: respect, concern for others, cooperation.
- **Encourage:**
 - Avoid saying no. Find ways to answer without a negative. Give alternative choices.
 - Redirect, redirect, redirect.
 - Say "no" when you need to, but give them a warning.
- **Inspire:**
 - Allow and demonstrate problem solving. Teach them to ask for help when they need it.
 - Ask questions that help guide them to figure out an acceptable solution
 - Let them learn by natural consequences.
 - Example: "If you don't wear that coat, you could get cold."

Building Resilience in our Families

7.

C CORRECT

The top of the pyramid is correcting your child's behavior, which hopefully involves the least amount of time. The goal is that when we connect often and coach well, we will not have to correct our children often. Positive parenting will enhance your skills and build competence and confidence in your child.

- **Set Rules:**
 - Remind them that we all have rules to live by. Make sure the rules are clearly stated.
 - Prioritize. Don't have too many rules - establish a few rules that are most important.
 - Make rules positive:
 - Example: "Treat each other with respect" rather than "Don't hit".
- **Consequences:**
 - Consequences happen when rules are not followed.
 - The severity of consequences should match the severity of the offense.
 - Possible consequences:
 - Verbal reprimands
 - Time-out
 - Lost privileges
 - Please talk with your pediatrician about concerns regarding spanking.
- **Stay Calm:**
 - Good communication is not as effective when anger is involved.
 - If you want your child to learn from correction, you must wait until both sides are calm.

Remember:

- Most of your time should be spent in connecting and coaching.
- Spending too much time in correcting your child is frustrating for both parent and child
- Let your pediatrician help you if your child's behavior is causing you to spend most of your time correcting them.

2 COMMUNICATE & NEGOTIATE

COMPETENCE

This resilience-building tool can be introduced as early as three years of age and can be used for children of all ages including teens. Communication and negotiation skills are important in life for self-determination and learning how to work with others.

Communication

Give your child time to increase their vocabulary through meaningful conversations. Ask them open ended questions, not allowing them just to answer yes or no. Encourage them to verbalize their feelings. Let them experience leadership and help them learn to be a follower. Do not say too much. Do a lot of listening.

Negotiations

Start teaching them early. When three-year olds begin to use their words, they will try to get things that they want by asking. Give them some simple guidelines in order to build important communication skills.

3 THE VALUE OF CONTRIBUTION

CONTRIBUTION

All of us need to feel connected to the larger world and believe we are making the world a better place. Contribution to others gives children a sense of purpose and motivation to take actions and make choices that will improve the world.

Contribution starts early when we ask our children to perform chores to help around the home.

- Chores are something that an adult chooses for the child as an obligation.
- In contrast, if we teach that the household chores are a way to **contribute** to the home, it is a more positive approach which emphasizes that a child can give back to their parents, to siblings and their home. Home is a better place when they work to help others.
- Contribution helps to teach appreciation of what we have: our home, our yard, our family members, or our pets.

The value of taking care of a pet

Studies have shown that taking care of a pet teaches people empathy, compassion, patience, and responsibility. It is of special value for those recovering from trauma.

During this time of COVID-19, opportunities for contribution could include making masks, distributing food, or giving time or money to relief organizations.

Questions for parents to ask regarding contributions:

- Do I teach the importance of serving others? Do I demonstrate this to my child?
- Do I model generosity with my time and my money?

4 GRATITUDE FOR SELF-CARE

CF has adapted this section from Dr. Martin Seligman's *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*.⁶

COPING

Gratitude: The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation and to return kindness. Parenting is wonderful, exciting, challenging, and exhausting - sometimes all at once. It is essential that parents take care of themselves during these busy years. Self-care is not selfish; it is a necessary part of health and wellness for all of us. If you take care of yourself, you will be more able to provide care for your child. One easy and exciting way to practice self-care is to practice being grateful.

Research has shown the health benefits of gratitude:

- Improves quality and length of sleep
- Eases depression symptoms
- Improves connection and satisfaction in relationships with your partner
- Increases patience

Building Resilience in our Families

The following simple exercise in gratitude building has been described as the “most successful technique for long term happiness.” It almost sounds too easy to be true. Try it out for yourself, your partner, and your child(ren).

3 Good Things: Every night for the next week, set aside ten minutes before you go to sleep.

- Write down three things that went well today and why they went well; keep a physical record of what you write. The three things need not be earthshaking in importance (“my husband picked up my favorite ice cream for dessert on the way home from work today”), but they can be important (“my sister just gave birth to a healthy baby boy”).
- Next to each positive event, answer the question “Why did this happen?” For example, if you wrote that your husband picked up ice cream, write “because my husband can be really thoughtful”.
- Writing about why the positive events in your life happened may seem awkward at first, but please stick with it for one week. It will get easier. The odds are that you will be happier and addicted to this exercise six months from now.

5 RESILIENCE FROM "FAILURE"

CONFIDENCE

One of the tools that we can use to teach resilience is failure. This can be broadly defined as a child’s inability to meet expectations. Some examples include the inability to tie one’s shoelaces, losing a board game, struggles in getting along with peers, or flunking a math test. Failure is inevitable. How our children deal with simple failures early in life can shape how they approach larger failures later.

A child falls off a bike and skins his knee. One approach could be: “Oh no, you hurt yourself. Let’s go inside, clean it up, put a band aid on it and have some lemonade.” Another approach could be: “Oh no, you hurt yourself. But look how far you went. You are strong! Let’s get back on and ride some more.”

Both approaches show care and concern on the part of the parent. But the first approach looks at failure as a result and does not teach the child the traits of resilience. The second approach teaches that failure is a normal part of life which builds persistence and perseverance.

As parents, we should not protect our children from failure. We can coach them through it with affirmation, optimism, and strength. A child needs to learn how to approach a challenge through problem-solving. Their first solution may fail. They will need to learn to be persistent, creative, and flexible in coming up with Solution #2. And if that fails, give them encouragement to try Solution #3. Allowing them to experience this process early in life with minor failures can build resilience for more serious future life challenges. Resilience is best built by practice over time.

Conclusion

The challenges of COVID-19 and other national crises have taken their toll on many of us. Thankfully, research has found beneficial relief through resilience-building. The benefits of resilience are proven, real, and attainable for all of us. Instead of choosing to focus on the negative stress that current events are causing, with resilience, we can choose to look at these events as challenges and opportunities that will make us stronger. Resilience can do this! We wish you well in your journey and hope that you learn to "bounce back strong!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COMPASSION FIRST

For more information about the ongoing anti-trafficking work of Compassion First and to get involved, please visit: compassionfirst.org.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Children's Health Alliance is a not-for-profit association of private practice pediatricians throughout the Portland/Vancouver/Salem metropolitan area. To learn more, please visit: www.ch-alliance.org.

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