



Forest Charter School

A Personalized Learning Program
Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

AUGUST CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH: RESILIENCE

Resilience is being able to bounce back from stress, challenge, tragedy, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world. The great news is that resilience is something that can be nurtured in all children. But first we need to take care of ourselves! For many kids, school brings up a lot of different feelings: nervous, excited, sad, happy, and more. Need a quick script to guide conversations with your child as they start the school year? Start by telling your kid this: “It’s ok to have so many feelings about going back to school! Part of you may feel excited and part of you may feel nervous. I used to feel many feelings when I went back to school.” Kids don’t need our help feeling better during big changes, they need our help making sense of things. Remember that if we want to wire kids for resilience, we need to acknowledge when things feel hard. If your child is struggling with going back to school, bring them close and say, “This feels hard because it is hard. You’re a kid who can do hard things. We’ll get through this together.”

Tips for Parents and Building Resilience at Home

Take Care of You: One of the most powerful ways parents can support kids is by taking care of themselves. This means noticing your feelings and remembering you don’t have to have it all under control. Identify your most helpful self-care strategies and model ways to manage stress. If there are times when you get angry or lose patience, know that it is ok, “repair statements” are your best friend! Owning up to mistakes and apologizing for our “bad” behavior are opportunities to model handling big feelings and conflicts more effectively. Above all else, practice flexibility and self-compassion and embrace the idea of “good enough” parenting. Even if it’s just taking a few minutes to yourself, going for a walk, or getting plenty of rest, the more you can model being resilient, the better you will feel, cope and be able to support your child. <https://be-good-to-yourself.net/personal-growth/positive-affirmations-for-parents/>

Exploring feelings: Reassure your child that they are allowed to experience all feelings, even the uncomfortable ones. Feelings always have a good reason for being there, and you can model how to manage them. The key for kids is to learn to respect those feelings (even the bad ones), but not let them take charge and steer towards trouble. When given permission to feel upset, angry, frustrated and so on, your child will later be able to recognize and label feelings. <https://www.thepragmaticparent.com/help-kids-identify-control-emotions/>

Choices: Provide your child with choices when navigating difficult situations. This will empower them by giving a sense of control over the outcome. When given choices, your child will begin to learn how to problem-solve independently. <https://www.kiddiematters.com/problem-solving-activity-free-printable/>
<http://www.bluestemcenter.com/articles/How%20to%20Teach%20Decision%20Making%20Skills%20to%20Adolescents.pdf>

Practice and encourage mindfulness: Mindfulness creates structural and functional changes in the brain that support a healthy response to stress. <https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-parents/> <https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/>

Be a positivity role model: Model being optimistic. If children hear lots of optimistic comments, they are more likely to develop this way of thinking themselves. Look for and point out the good side to events and experiences. Offer interpretations of events that are specific, that locate control and influence and that allow for a different outcome next time. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zykkvwvx>

Tips for Kids to Build Resilience

Maintain good self-care: You are the only you we have, so try to take good care of yourself! Do some cooking and eat healthy, get enough sleep, take breaks when you need them, play outside when you can and work to keep friends you like who are fun and help you feel good about yourself. Help others whenever you can, too!

Routine: School takes a lot of self-discipline! Work with your supervising teacher and parents to create a routine and schedule for your school day. Find a schedule that works for you and your family, write it down, and stick with it. Use checklists. Celebrate your accomplishments!

Exercise: Exercise strengthens and reorganizes the brain to make it more resilient to stress. One of the ways it does this is by increasing the neurochemicals that can calm the brain in times of stress.

Ask for help when you need it: Being brave is not about dealing with things by yourself. Being brave and strong means knowing when to ask for help. Try first to think about how you might solve your problem, try to do it by yourself and then if you still need it, ask for help. Stumped by a school question? Can you ask a friend or sibling, search the internet, text your ST or do you need ask your parent?

Think of failure as an opportunity: Whether things have gone well or badly, the most important question you can ask yourself is “What will I do differently next time?” Failure as a natural part of learning that helps us to recognize what we don’t yet know or can’t yet do. Hard work and effort makes us stronger and smarter. It’s like exercise for our brains!

Learn to reframe: This goes along with “failure” and keeping trying. In times of distress, it is easy to beat ourselves up and focus on the negative thoughts. Sometimes we make a situation seem worse than it really is, or we might blame ourselves for things out of our control. No one is perfect! Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook. To build this skill, acknowledge how hard and disappointing things can feel, then look towards the opportunities the problem might have brought you.

Practice Mindfulness <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/mindfulness.html>

- **Simple breathing practice:** in through your nose by imagining smelling a flower or piece of pizza, then breathe out imagining blowing out a candle. Do three times. Do you feel calmer??
- **Mindful Breathing:** Get into a comfy position and close your eyes. How does your breath feel as you draw air in and as it leaves. Put a hand on your belly, and feel the rise and the fall of your breath. Do this about five times – five inhales, five exhales. After five breaths, what thoughts and feelings are you aware of? Let go of those thoughts and feelings by imagining that they are bubbles, floating away, as you return to their breathing. Repeat the five breaths – five in, five out – and do this as many times as feels right.
- **Thought Clouds:** This is a slightly different take on the above exercise. As you breathe in, imagine that your thoughts are forming as little clouds above your head. Imagine the cloud floating away as you breathe out. Keep breathing slow, strong breaths and let your thoughts come, and then go.’
- **Youtube videos to help with mindfulness:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awo8jUxImoc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvF9AEe-ozc>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihwcw_ofuME
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUIGKhG_Vq8
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_vEZTrmtyA
Videos that may be good fits for older students
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsUEOUaWpY&t=8s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmFUDkj1Aq0&t=18s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG7DBA-mgFY&t=4s>