



Raising Resilient and Mindful Children

As we move into spring, and get closer to the summer holidays, thoughts on how to keep our children entertained and engaged arise.

In this tipsheet from our parenting expert, **Anita Fletcher**, we shares some tips around how to raise more resilient and mindful children. We also consider how we can help them to understand and manage their emotions, setting them up for whatever life throws at them.

- **Set Reasonable, Manageable Goals.** A big part of developing resilience involves being able to work toward a goal and being able to “cope” with mistakes or hurdles along the way. This skill takes time to develop! A reasonable, manageable goal might look like this: “I will do my homework before I do things with friends or watch TV” Or “When I don’t understand, I will ask my teacher, or one of my classmates to help me understand.”
- **It’s OK to make a mistake.** Learning that mistakes and disappointment are an expected part of learning is vital when building resilience in children. Remembering to praise hard work, perseverance, and grit and not just the overall success! Talk about your own mistakes (especially the funny ones) and what you learned from them. Allow children to recognise and correct their own mistakes. This way, you can recognise their determination and positively reinforce their effort.
- **Celebrate when Goals are met.** When a goal is met, it’s important to recognise the achievement. Talk about how they got there and the effort they put in. We can help our children become more confident and resilient when we point out their accomplishments. Just like adults, children tend to focus more on their failings and can find it hard to see the little wins along the way. This is where they need your help.
- **It’s OK to take a Risk.** Cultivate an environment that encourages Smart, Responsible Risk Taking. Little risks like trying new things in a safe environment builds confidence and teaches valuable life skills. For example: “how high is too high on the swing or in a tree?” or “how fast can I ride my bike and still stop quickly?” Allowing children to take these risks helps us see where they might need guidance or support and at the same time, sends a message to them saying “You can do this, I trust you.”

- **Name and Recognise Emotions.** Recognising and naming emotions helps with self-awareness. When children learn to label their emotions, they begin to learn to regulate them and in turn be less disruptive in their reaction to them. Some ways to encourage this could be to: Have daily emotional check-ins. While reading stories to children, have them guess how the characters in the story might be feeling. Ask questions like “How do you know?” or “what makes you think that the character is feeling that way?”
Try the emotional catwalk: You say “Action” and have the children walk across the room like they are sad, then say “Cut” and chat about what makes us feel sad and what other people look like when they are sad. Then “action” and move on to happy, lonely, excited, mad, afraid etc. Repeat the activity until you have practiced and talked about plenty of different emotions.
- **Practice Self Regulation.** Actions speak louder than words. Stop, Think, Respond! Mindful Meditation, deep belly breathing, what can I see/hear/touch. Allowing your child to see you practice these methods will encourage them to try them too. What’s reinforced is repeated. Our children learn from what we do so be the difference that you want to see.