

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Building Strong Families Through Resilience Strategies



BY KIM DEMARCHI

What if there was a “serum” to prevent the effects of trauma and chronic stress, would you give it to your child? What if it had no side effects, only positive outcomes? What if it was

accessible every day throughout your child’s life? AND...it’s free? Would you give the serum to your child? The “serum” I’m referring to is called Building Resilience.

As much as we want to protect and shield our children from stress and adversity, we can’t. We know our children are going to experience stress, disappointment, failure, frustration, and sadness in their lives. We can’t prevent all bad things from happening to our children, but we can teach them resilience.

What is resilience? It’s the ability to recognize, face, and manage or overcome challenges, and to be strengthened, rather than defeated, in the process. We are all inherently born with resilience to bounce back. Resilience can also be taught, modeled and improved upon.

Author’s Note:

I’ve been grateful to be a member of this community for twelve years and raised my twins through the Tigard Tualatin school district. I’m happy to report they are both off at University busy “adulting”!

I’ve had the privilege and pleasure of writing my monthly Passport to Parenting column for this newspaper for seven years. With a very heavy heart, this month will be my last article, and I’d like to give a huge shout out to past publisher Jonathan Crane and current publisher Michael Antonelli. Their dedication to our community is unwavering and I’m grateful they afforded me the opportunity to help the families in Tualatin and Tigard by offering support in raising children.

I’m thrilled to announce an exciting change! I’m embarking on a new adventure! I’m relocating to London, England in January! I plan on continuing as a Certified Family Coach and will serve my clients internationally via WhatsApp using text, phone and video. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me. I plan on coming home to Oregon several times a year as well. You can also access my podcasts, TV parenting segments and newspaper articles at EmpoweredParenting.com. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for embracing me and my services over the years.

There are three things that must be present in a family for resiliency skills to be taught and effective.

- 1. Children require unconditional love** from their parents. You want to communicate to your child, “No matter what, nothing you say, nothing you do behaviorally, will ever change my love for you.”
- 2. Children regulate their behavior based on the expectations from the adults,** experiences and environments they are in. It’s okay to have high expectations, goals and consequences. You can love your child and know that they will definitely make mistakes.
- 3. Parents are the primary role models** for their children. It’s not a “Do as I say” world. It’s most definitely a “Monkey See, Monkey Do” world. You are their first and most influential teacher.

Connection is a huge resilience factor as you will see. The following are several resilience interventions to do regularly with your children:

- 1. Build daily rituals into your routines** to connect with your child to build their

confidence. Explain what unconditional love means and play the game: I love you no matter what. Let the child use their imagination and really test the boundaries with questions such as, “Would you love me if I told you I didn’t like you anymore?” Your response would be something like, “I’d still love you even if you told me you didn’t like me.” Child: “Would you love me if I stole a car?” You: “I’d still love you if you stole a car. I’d visit you in jail on Sundays, and I’d still love you.”

- 2. Make sure your kids have some PSO’s in their lives:** Present Supportive Others. Don’t underestimate the power of other important adults in your children’s lives. It just takes one adult that cares for the child and that can really make a difference.
- 3. Listen. Really listen.** Really be present. Many parents today are great at giving Continuous Partial Attention. We are on our phones all the time, looking for recipes, writing emails, paying bills, texting, etc..... Make a commitment that you will be 100% there with your child and really listen. Give non-verbal whole body listening cues, validate them, empathize, support. Active listening goes a long way.
- 4. Ensure that your children have different levels of support in their circle.** They should have a couple of people in their primary circle who they can call at 3am no matter what. They should have a few more people in their secondary circle that they could call, but the next day. Finally, they should have some additional people in their systemic circle of support, such as their doctor, a teacher, a coach.
- 5. Have special time, floor time, or GEMS** (Genuine Encounter Moments) with



your child regularly. This is time that is unstructured....not board games with rules and roles. This is all about connection and getting into your child’s world. Let them lead it whatever it is. It’s not a teachable moment; it’s about connecting. Make sure all screens are removed and there are no distractions.

Building resilience in our children is the inoculation for stress and trauma. Building these strategies into your family on a daily basis will help your children bounce back from adversity. You may also see other benefits such as academic improvement, optimism, problem solving skills, supportive relationships, and less anxiety. Remember, it is never too late to implement these strategies and every single day you get to wake up, start fresh and do it all over again in a better way. Keep seeking improvement, not perfection.

Kim DeMarchi, M.Ed., Certified Parent Educator and Certified Family Coach, is a Tualatin resident with 18 year old boy/girl twins, and has been an educator for almost three decades. Kim is trained and certified through Positive Discipline, as well the International Network for Children and Families in a program called Redirecting Children’s Behavior. Kim is active in supporting her local parenting community by providing workshops, coaching families and writing articles



for our newspaper. Kim is a monthly guest on KATU’s Afternoon Live and AM Northwest. She also blogs twice a month for Knowledge Universe’s Kindercare online community. Kim’s goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through EmpoweredParenting.com.