

Building Strength and Resilience in our Kids (and families)

Resilience – To bounce back, to move through and recover from adversity. It is in a sense – toughness in terms of walking through hard things. Teaching resilience can begin when our kids are young. As parents, we can encourage strength and perseverance as kids face adversity – whether it be a cut or scrape or a disagreement with a sibling or friend. With intentional guidance as a parent, we can turn situations of strife into windows to strength and sticking to it to overcome the challenge.

These opportunities and teachings also increase self-efficacy – the belief that by our own efforts we can achieve something. Children with high self-efficacy become teens with high self-efficacy who learn that regardless of the situation, they can give their best effort and persevere. This doesn't mean winning, or even always succeeding, but it means having confidence walking into new things knowing effort can be applied to do one's best. The outcome or worry about the outcome is less the focus while effort takes the lead. That said, there are many factors involved with building strength and resilience and therefore, continued conversations about these topics within our families adds to their growth.

Managing stress: Each year, I present to CP students on the topics of stress management and study skills. Stress – we all experience stress and cannot avoid it and manageable stress helps us develop strength and resilience as we utilize tools to effectively cope with it.

Study skills: Developing good study habits and skills reduces stress in turn helping to build resilience. When a student utilizes effective study skills and feels prepared as a result, stress tends to reduce. It does not mean the stressor goes away (the thing causing the stress) but it can reduce/improve the body's response to the stressor (stress) making things more manageable. Examples include:

- Put in effort – The good news is that effort results in stronger memories!
- Do not cram – The brain consolidates information learned when we sleep so studying a few days in advance of test allows for better retention and recall of information,
- Don't multitask (but do take breaks) – Most of us believe we can multitask well but when learning new information or things that demand stronger focus, the brain retains less information when multitasking. Therefore, studying for a set period without the tv on or a device nearby to distract is better than multitasking. Taking breaks is also important as breaks allow greater focus when studying.
- Get sleep – As mentioned, during sleep memories are consolidated so in the study realm, sleep allows for storing of information as well as better recall of it on test day!

Sleep: Sticking with sleep - Have you ever thought about how many things sleep can help or assist with? Focus, attention, energy level, motivation, learning, emotions, mood. The list could go on. While sleep hygiene is a common area of struggle for teens, it is crucial to build good sleep habits – both amount and quality of sleep – on the journey to strength and resilience.

Positive relationships are key to walking through hard times and developing strength and resilience. Those closest to us – family and friends – can provide support and help as we navigate adversity. We can reciprocate this as we give support and help in these relationships and both are important! Receiving and giving support results in positive outcomes not only emotionally, but physically as well.

Self-Care: Taking time for ourselves, doing things that are fun and that we enjoy, is important to building strength and resilience. Self-care allows us to recharge and refuel and in times of adversity, can allow for moments of joy and happiness amidst the challenges.

Wishing you all the best,
Mrs. Wehrman, CP School Counselor
719-487-2018, twehrman@asd20.org