

Building Resilience In Children

Building Resilience in Students with Disabilities

Welcome: Alicia Hlavinka

Understanding Resilience Presenter: Marisa McGovern

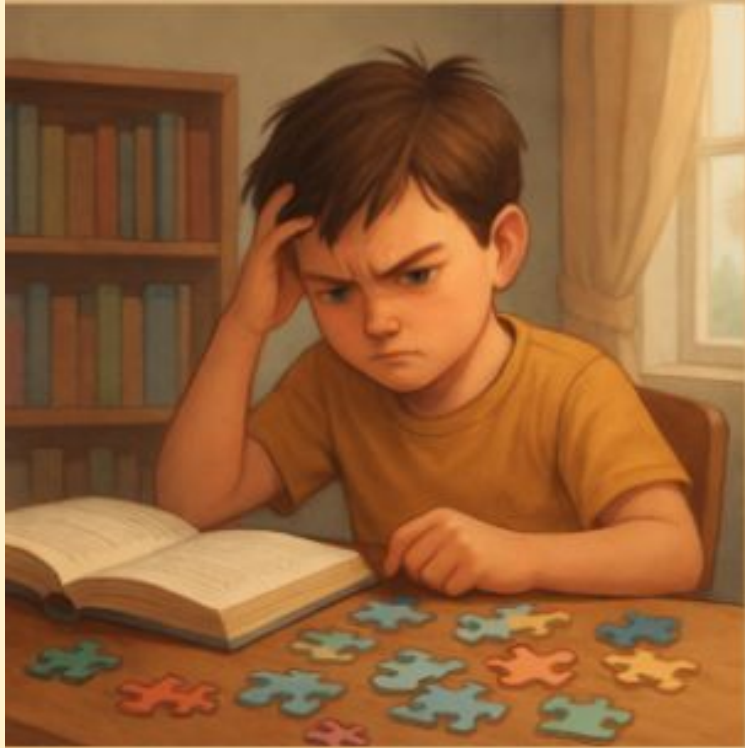
Rescue vs. Release Presenter: Shaelyn Adams/Elexis Coleman

Stress Thermometer & Coping Plan Presenter: Bethany Hiegel/Haley Melikian

Language That Builds Resilience Presenter: Sheila Christopher

Long-Term Vision & Closing Presenter: Tiffany Edwards

What is Resilience?



**The ability to recover, adapt, and grow
though difficulty**

Bounce back from challenges
Keep Trying
Grow through difficulty

Resilience is taught, modeled, and practiced

Encourage Effort

What it is:

- Praising effort
- Focusing on trying
- Using growth language

What it is not:

- Ignoring emotions
- Pretending things aren't hard
- Removing support

Focus on effort, not perfection

Resilience in SPED students means adapting, persevering, and using supports to manage challenges.

Normalize Struggles:

- **Mistakes are okay**
- **Share your experiences**
- **Create safe space**



Teach Problem Solving

Ask Questions
Encourage thinking
Support Independence



Build Emotional Awareness



Name Feelings
Teach Coping Skills
Validate Emotions



All feelings are okay.
Behavior is what we guide.

Create Small Wins

- Break big tasks into steps
- Focus on one step at a time
- Celebrate progress



Don't Forget to celebrate!!

Model Resilience



Stay Calm
Keep trying
Practice
Use positive self talk



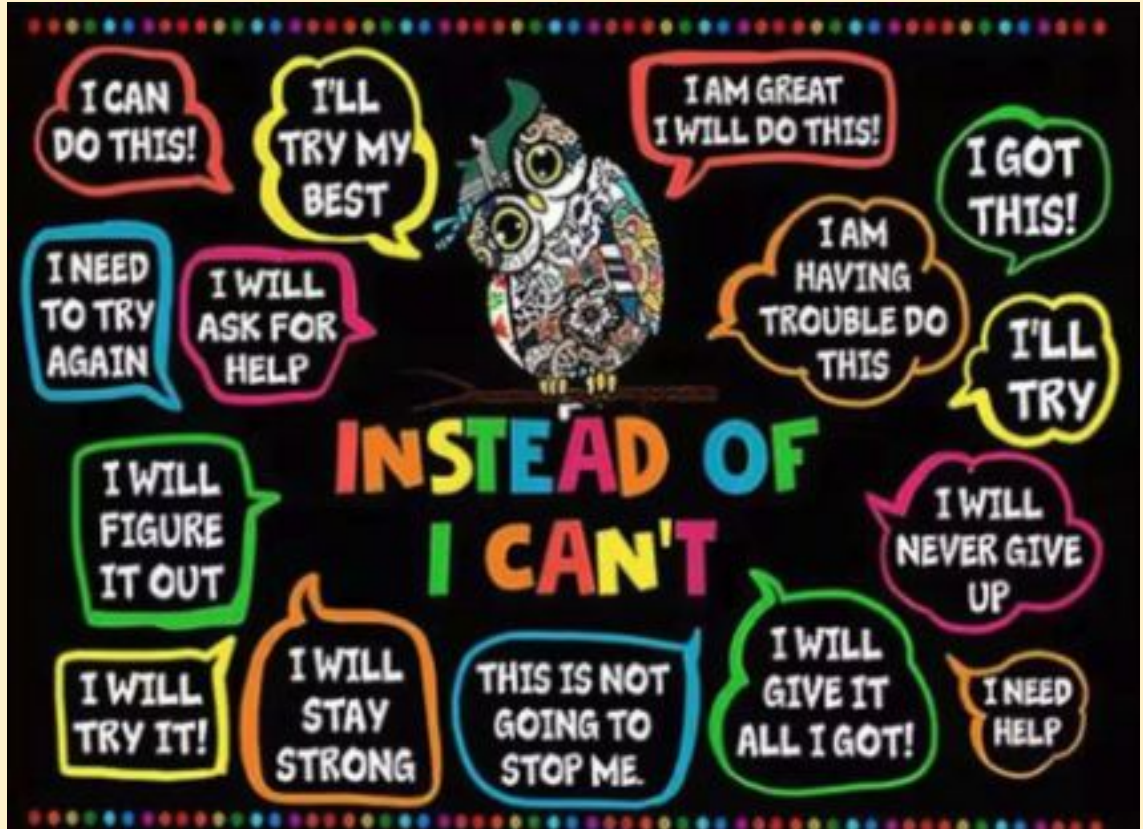
Kids learn more from what we do than what we say.

Growth Mindset Matters

Your child is capable

Support matters

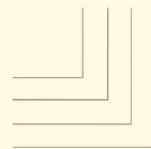
Growth takes time

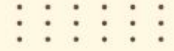
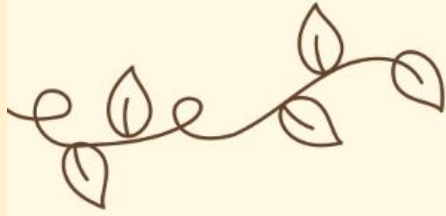




The Parenting Balance

Rescue vs. Release





Unspoken Love and Efforts



Our instinct is to protect our children.



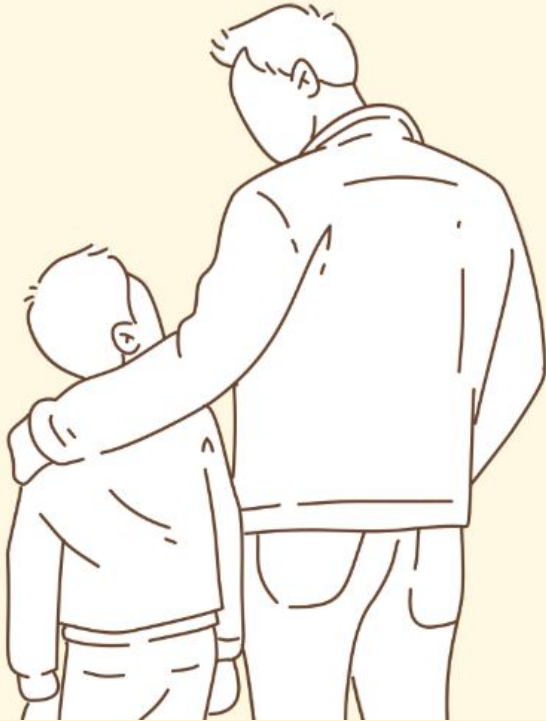
We want to remove problems or discomfort



This comes from care, but too much support can sometimes limit opportunities for skill development



Rescue v. Coaching

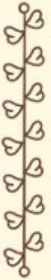
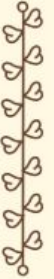


Rescue

- Create a safe environment
- Listen without judgment

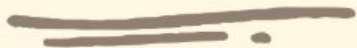
Coaching (Release)

- Ask open-ended questions
- Support their self-reflection





Guiding Words for Tough Moments



Instead of:

"I'll do it for you"

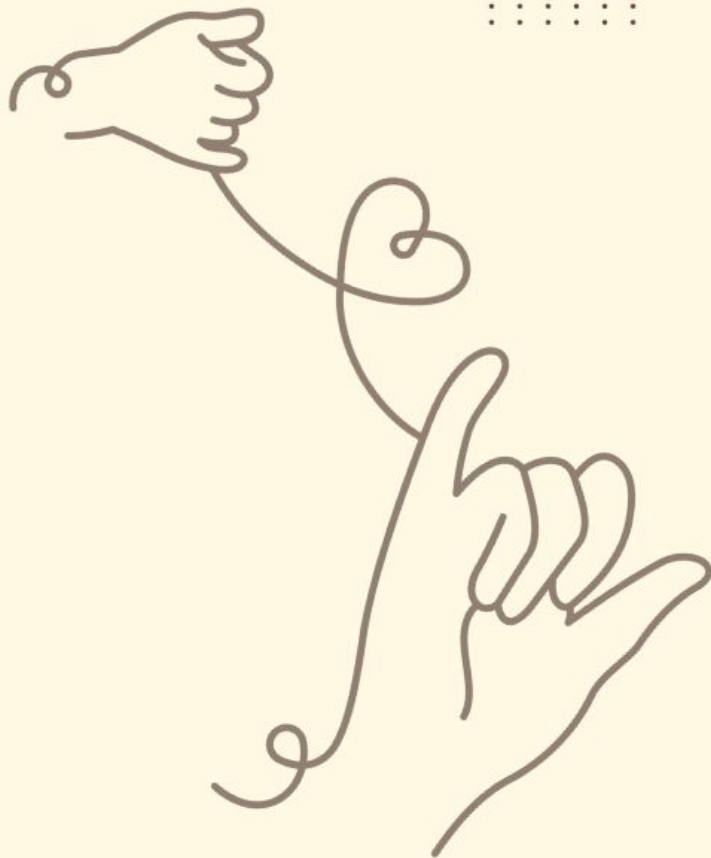
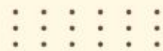
Try:

"Let's try one together"

"What part feels hardest?"

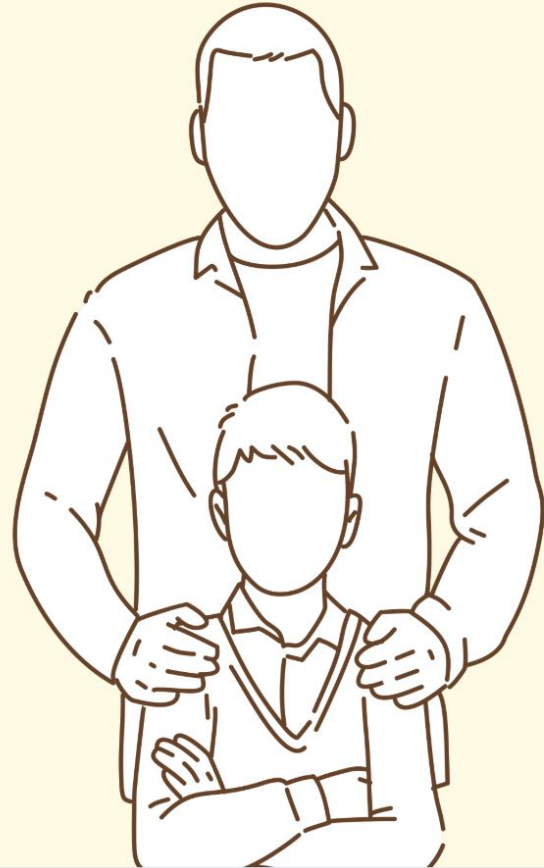
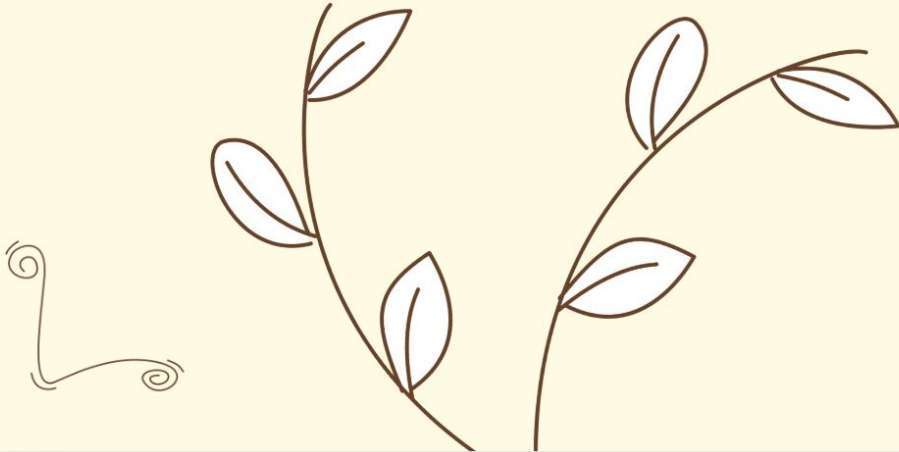
"How could I help?"

"I know this is hard. We will get through this."



Scenario Activity:

- **When is support necessary?**
(Safety, distress, task too hard)
- **When might support reduce growth?**
(Doing it for them, removing expectations)
- **What would coaching sound like?**
("Let's try one together," "Show me the first step")



Making Sense of Big Feelings Together

What feels hardest about stepping back?

- We don't want them to feel defeated
- We don't want them to fail
- It may take longer
- It feels uncomfortable
- Growth happens through supported discomfort

But resilience grows when support remains, even if the solution isn't immediate."



TEACHING OUR KIDS TO BE RESILANT IN STRESS

FAMILIES WILL BE ABLE TO SPOT THEIR CHILD'S STRESS EARLY AND USE COPING STRATEGIES BEFORE ESCALATION



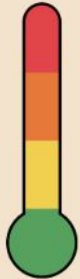
Emotional Regulation Tools



RED LIGHT: STOP, Take a break, Ask for help.

YELLOW LIGHT: SLOW DOWN, Use your coping skills.

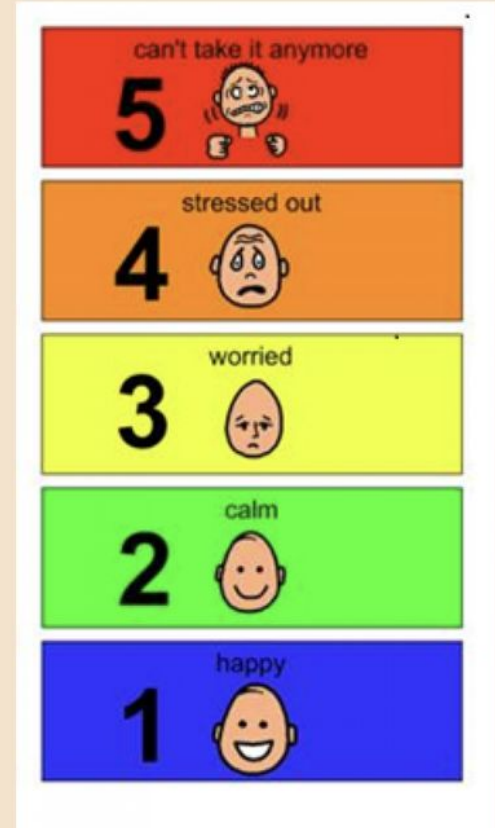
GREEN LIGHT: KEEP GOING, Follow directions, Calm body.



Red = Overwhelmed / Escalated

Orange/Yellow = Starting to feel stressed

Green = Calm/Ready



Define the Color

 When my child is calm, they look like...

relaxed body, steady breathing, can follow a simple direction, tolerates noise/changes

 Early warning signs are...

voice changes, pacing/rocking, covering ears, more rigid thinking, repeating phrases, leaving area, refusal, shutting down.

 When escalated, they...

- yelling/crying, bolting, dropping to floor, throwing items, aggression, total shutdown, unsafe behavior.

Build your Yellow Toolkit


Visual Supports

FIRST / THEN BOARD & VISUAL TIMER

FIRST → **THEN**

Finish task **Listen to music**

Visual Timer



10 minutes







Calm Down Cards

 <p>Take deep breaths</p>	 <p>Ask for a hug</p>	 <p>Use a fidget toy</p>
 <p>Use a calming jar</p>	 <p>Swing</p>	 <p>Read a book</p>

Movement Break

Movement Break Choice Board

Pick one!

 <p>Wall pushes</p>	 <p>Animal walk</p>	 <p>Stretch</p>
 <p>Carry something</p>	 <p>Chair pushes</p>	 <p>Take a walk</p>

Build your Yellow Toolkit



Environmental Supports



Designated calm-down area



Dim lighting



Tent or cozy corner



Reduced visual clutter



Cognitive Supports

Simple puzzles



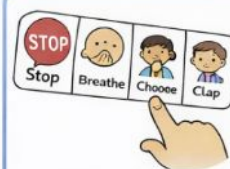
Simple puzzles



Matching/
sorting tasks




Coloring pages



Calm-down
sequencing cards

Your Personalized Regulation Plan

 When my child is calm, they look like: _____

 Early warning signs are: _____

 When escalated, they: _____

 My best YELLOW strategies (pick 2-3): _____

- (Choose from: movement break, sensory input, visual schedule, deep breathing, break card, shortened task, humor, quiet space, fidget, calming jar, swing, music, reading, hug)

What adults will do/say in YELLOW (keep consistent): _____

RED plan (from the traffic light): STOP, Take a break, Ask for help.

BUILDING RESILIENCY THROUGH LANGUAGE

How everyday words shape your child's confidence and ability to handle challenges



WHY WORDS MATTER

Your words become your child's inner voice.

They influence:

- Confidence
- Emotional control
- Willingness to try

LANGUAGE SHAPES MINDSET

Fixed mindset: “I can’t do this.”

Growth mindset: “I can learn this.”

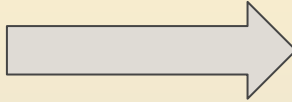
Your response helps determine which one grows.



WORDS MATTER: SMALL SHIFTS

Instead of:

- “Calm down”
- “It’s okay”



Try:

- “I see how hard this feels.”
- “You’re working really hard.”
- “Let’s figure this out together.”

VALIDATION FIRST, THEN PROBLEM SOLVE

Step 1: Validate feelings

“I can see you're frustrated.”

Step 2: Guide solutions

“What can we try next?”

Kids need to feel understood before they can think clearly.



THE POWER OF 'YET'

“I can't do this” → “I can't do this... yet.”

- Builds confidence
- Encourages persistence
- Teaches that learning takes time

THE POWER OF
YET!



I can't do this YET
I'm not good at this YET
I don't understand this ... YET
It doesn't work YET
This doesn't make sense ... YET

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Some children need more time and support.

Helpful language:

- Focus on effort
- Break tasks into steps
- Celebrate progress, not perfection

Accomplish BIG Things With a
GROWTH MINDSET!

Success Begins With Believing You Can



Instead of Thinking...

- I can't do it.
- I'm not good at this.
- It's good enough.
- It's too hard.
- I'm afraid of making a mistake.
- They are better at it than I am.
- I don't know how.
- I can't make this any better.
- I don't like challenges.
- I give up.



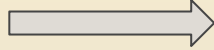
Think This...

- I'm still learning. I'll keep trying!
- What can I learn to get better at this?
- Is this the best I can do?
- With more practice it will get easier!
- Mistakes are how I learn & get better!
- What can I learn from them?
- I can learn how!
- I can always find ways to improve!
- Challenges make me better!
- I'll try a different way!

REAL-LIFE PARENT EXAMPLES

Instead of:

- “That’s wrong.”
- “Just try harder.”



Try:

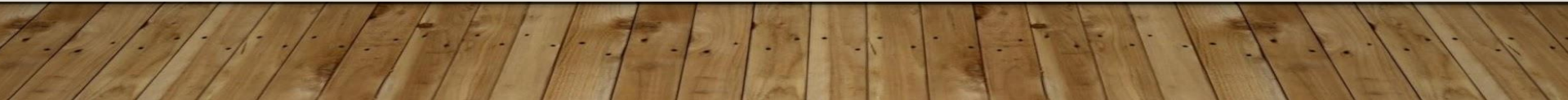
- “Let’s look at it together.”
- “You’re getting closer.”
- “What’s another way to try?”

BUILDING RESILIENCY AT HOME

Use consistent language daily:

- Praise effort
- Normalize mistakes
- Encourage problem-solving

Your words build lifelong skills



TAKEAWAY

- What you say today becomes how your child talks to themselves tomorrow.
- One small change in language can make a big difference.

Wrap Up

What Matters Most

Praise effort

Allow struggle (with support)

Use coaching language

Celebrate progress

Resources

Immediate Support

- Texas Parent Helpline
- 24/7 support for stress, behavior challenges, and crisis guidance
- Texas Parent to Parent (TxP2P)
- Parent mentoring, training, and emotional support

https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Parent-Helpline/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

https://www.txp2p.org/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Behavior & Parenting Strategies

- Texas Family Resources (Behavioral Health)
- AVANCE (Parenting & Early Childhood Programs)

https://www.familyresources.texas.gov/health-wellness/behavioral-health-services-children?utm_source=chatgpt.com

<https://www.avance.org/programs/>

