



## Resilience is an essential skill for life

It's natural for parents to want to protect their children from adversity. From birth, we try to do the best for our kids, love them and nurture them. Sometimes, this may be intensified as some modern parents have been labelled 'helicopter parents', constantly hovering over their children, trying to solve their problems for them in an effort to protect them and keep them happy.

Ironically, a recent study by clinical psychologist and researcher, Judith Locke found that children who were over-parented were no more satisfied with their lives than children whose parents were less involved. And, in the long run, this can leave children ill-equipped to cope with life's curve balls.

Positive parenting is a delicate balance between protecting children from adversity and letting them experience hardship so they can develop resilience and positive mental health and wellbeing.

Resilience is the ability to cope with life's ups and downs, and bounce back from adversity. Children need to develop coping skills to help them respond to challenging times and maintain a positive outlook on life. Challenges can also be viewed as opportunities to learn about oneself and to grow as a person.

Someone who is resilient and has positive mental health and wellbeing shows the following characteristics:

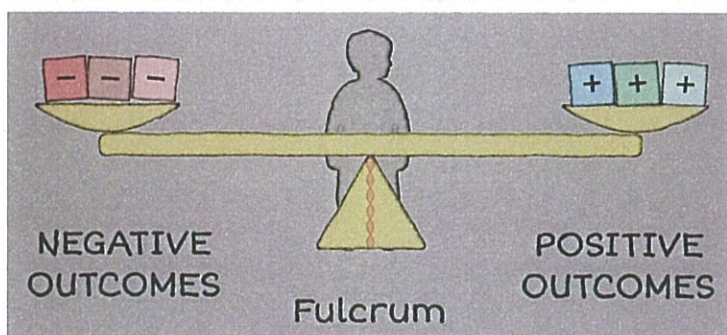
- The ability to learn from their experiences and grow
- Good relationships with others
- A capability to manage their own emotions and express empathy for others
- Good communication skills
- Good problem solving skills
- The ability to set realistic but rewarding goals and actively work towards them

These characteristics mean that a child is better able to make sense of the world around them, connect with people, and even seek out support when they experience difficulties. Good problem solving skills and the ability to work towards realistic goals also gives children a feeling of control over their lives and a sense of positive self worth.

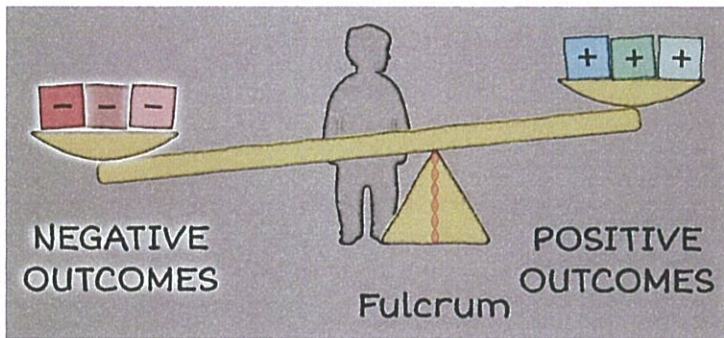
All of these resilience characteristics contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing, and reduce the risk of social or emotional problems later in childhood. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that resilient children are more likely to achieve academic success.

So where does resilience come from? An individual's resilience is a combination of both pre-set characteristics a person is born with and the environment a person grows up in, including the support networks around him or her.

If we think of a set of scales, someone's genetic sensitivity is the fulcrum in the middle, and their life experiences, both positive and negative, sit on each end.



The fulcrum might start in the middle if a person has an average sensitivity to life's experiences, or it might be off-centre if a person is naturally more sensitive.



If that is the case, they might have a tendency to be less resilient than another person with an average level of sensitivity who is exposed to similar life experiences.

Research has shown that someone's natural response to stress can be altered through their experiences, and so the fulcrum can be moved. When positive experiences, like nurturing relationships and a sense of belonging, are added to one end of the see saw, and children start to develop coping skills, like the ability to solve problems or manage behaviour, the fulcrum can slide and the see saw will tilt towards a more positive outcome.

Key to developing a child's resilience is the relationship they have with at least one adult in their lives. Parents and carers are vital supports in shaping a child's resilience as they can teach a child to develop a sense of optimism and a set of coping skills to help them bounce back from life's challenges.

[Read more about optimism and developing coping skills.](#)



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