

Parent Guide » Building a Resilient Family

Resilience:

*The ability to bounce back when you have every reason to shut down – but you fight on! Resilient people have both tapped and untapped reserves, **enabling them to thrive** as they face the setbacks, challenges, and fears of daily life.*

Developing Resilience

The first thing to do in developing resilience is to avoid falling prey to the natural forces that tear our families and personal lives apart.

Have you ever seen a car or other piece of machinery sitting out in a field? Without proper care, consistent driving, and regular tune-ups, the car loses its ability to run. If left out long enough, it may begin to rust, and plants and critters might even start making a home there.

Like the rusted out car, our relationships can fall apart if they aren't fed with consistent attention and care. Nature can take over when we are confronted with challenges, as well. It's natural to feel afraid or to give up when confronted with a difficult challenge. Sometimes, we let metaphorical "plants and rust" take over. The principles in this guide will give you actionable tools so that your relationships stay "tuned up."

These principles, by the way, don't solve everything. Don't be afraid to reach out to your support systems to help you solve your problems. However, applying these principles regularly makes it that much more likely that a family will thrive in the face of adversity, rather than shut down.

Getting Started

There is seemingly no end to the obstacles facing families:

Divorce, relationship struggles, addiction, mental illness, physical ailments, financial shortfalls, unemployment and underemployment, bickering and quarreling, children who struggle academically or behaviorally.

In fact, it's impossible to list every adversity. The key is to find the inner motivation to not give up or shut down. Our goal is to help you learn to face those challenges with resilience. Let's look at how to get started.

While the suggestions below won't fit everyone's unique circumstances, see how you can adapt them in your own family to increase resilience in your home.

With your partner or on your own, discuss resilience: If you're married or co-parenting, share the ideas. Share you'd like to set aside some time to share ideas on how the two of you can create a more resilient family. Show them this chapter to give a better idea of what resilience is. If you're a single parent, you can complete the following steps on a piece of paper on your own. Here's a possible agenda for your discussion or thought process:

1. **Read the definition of resilience** at the beginning of this chapter and share or write down what it means to each of you.
2. **Talk about your observations.** If completing this activity with your partner, tell your partner about a time when you've noticed that they were resilient. What was the situation? How did they respond? What benefits did you observe as a result of your partner choosing to respond resiliently? If you're a single parent, answer this question for yourself. What are some times you've been resilient in the face of challenges? What were the benefits?
3. **Now think about your children.** What are some examples of times you've noticed each of your children responding to adversity in a resilient way?
4. **Next, write down the names of each family member and brainstorm challenges or difficulties they're facing.** Don't try to cover everything; just come up with two or three situations for each person where resilience could make a difference.

Resilience Family Meeting

Call a family meeting to share your “resilient family vision.” This can even be a discussion at dinnertime around the table. It doesn’t have to be very long. Here are some ideas for what that family meeting might look like:

No time for family meetings? Try to fold the lessons of this guide into your everyday conversations with your children!

1. **Get everyone’s attention** by completing the activity, Fold Your Arms.
2. **Share some of the specific examples** you came up with of times you’ve noticed each of your children bouncing back from challenges. This will build confidence in them. Explain the attribute that they all have shown is called resilience. Explain that our family goal is to have even MORE resilience during hard times.
3. **You might ask your children** for additional examples of times they’ve seen each other being resilient. Perhaps they can find examples from outside the family.
4. **Ask the family to share thoughts and ideas** on what they think of this goal of building a more resilient family. What would that look like? How might life in our family look different if everyone knew how to respond in a positive way to our hard challenges?
5. **Thank your family** for their willingness to participate in the meeting. Express your confidence that each member can increase his or her resilience.
6. **Have a favorite treat prepared afterward** to make this time worthwhile. Ice cream, cookies, or another favorite snack will motivate your children to attend other family meetings in the future!
7. **How did it go?** Following the family meeting, sit down with your partner or reflect on your own. Go over your points of view about the family meeting. What went well? Did the children seem to understand the concept of resilience? What could have made the meeting more effective?

Important Meeting Notes

Every family’s situation and schedule are unique, so the important point is to make your resilience meetings a regular occurrence. Preferably schedule the

same day and time. This will communicate to your family that you really do want to create a resilient family culture. If you really don't have time for meetings? Don't sweat it too much. Try to fold the lessons of this book into your everyday conversations.

How Frequently Should Resilience Meetings Be Held? Moving forward, we won't be giving you a specific outline for resilience family meetings. We do provide you with sample activities and discussion questions. Find a schedule that works for your family. Whether that's weekly or monthly, talk about different points of resilience together. Try to stick to it.

What do you talk about in each meeting? As you read through this guide, pick out topics that pertain to your family's situation. Use those as a starting point for each meeting. For example, while reading about Relational Resilience, you may decide that the booster called "*Put Down That Device*" has an application for your family. Spend a family meeting completing the activity for that booster. Talk about ideas that would help your family put down their phones and spend more quality time as a family. These activities can be fun moments for the family.

A word of warning: Don't expect all family members to be as enthusiastic as you. There will likely be some family members who make excuses for why they can't attend. Be patient – resilience isn't born overnight. Win them over by making the time engaging and interesting. Try to make meetings exciting. Use YouTube videos, favorite music, or the activities found in this guide.

As you read through this guide, pick out topics that are relevant to your family's situation and use those as a starting point for each family meeting, or even your next conversation!

Resilience Boosters

Throughout this guidebook, we're going to be presenting you with ways to increase resilience in your family. We refer to these strategies as boosters. A booster is a practical, easy-to-understand method or skill that will enable you to practice your resilience immediately. The boosters will strengthen your motivation and ability to transfer the ideas in this guide into everyday action. The

boosters are proven techniques. We've drawn from some of the most powerful research on family life, marriage, effective organizations and, of course, resilience. We've combined this information with our own insights. The result is a series of powerful tools to literally boost resilience within your family.

Reflection

Use a journal to write about your resilience discussion or brainstorm session and the resilience family meeting. How did both things go? What would you like to discuss in your next resilience family meeting?

It doesn't matter what neighborhood you were born into, or who your parents are, or if you've lost a loved one, lost a job, or been to prison... Whatever the daily battles you're fighting, or if you're simply a human being trying to be a better human being – your worst pain and problems can be converted into emotional fuel."

Christian Moore – The Resilience Breakthrough