

## Building and Maintaining a Resilient Nature

Experts say all children are born resilient, but it takes several environmental factors to ensure that they maintain that resiliency. These factors include:

- **Caring and Support** – Children must know that their parents love them unconditionally and will always be there for them. In cases where parents are not present, an adult mentor – such as a relative, teacher, coach or church leader – can provide genuine caring and support to help foster resiliency. Children with mentors show great resiliency as well. Find significant adults in your child's life that can offer caring and support.
- **Clear and Consistent** – Be clear about your expectations and have high expectations for your child's behavior, academic effort, academic progress, and participation in family and outside activities. Make sure that school and teacher expectations are also clearly stated and understood. Set realistic goals with your children and help them adjust the goals if they cause frustration.
- **Participation in Home and Community Life** – Assign chores and responsibilities at home. When children participate in and complete tasks, they feel worthy and capable of being an important member of the family. Even the youngest children can complete tasks that will benefit them individually and the family as a unit. In addition, find ways for your child to participate in school, as well as in activities and service opportunities in the community.

As a parent, you can help build resiliency skills in your children by working on your *own* resiliency skills. The Nemours Foundation suggests developing the following attitudes and behaviors:

- Start thinking of change as challenging, not as problematic.
- Learn to see problems as temporary: "This, too, shall pass." Problems are opportunities for finding solutions, not barriers that stop all progress.
- Learn how to set achievable goals and work toward them with optimism and persistence – believing in your future success.
- Solve problems as they come up, when they are manageable. Don't let small problems grow into bigger ones.
- Seek to improve relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. Keep your commitments.
- Know where to find the support you need, and learn how to ask for help.
- Find familiar and new ways to have fun and relax.

When we can identify a challenge, focus on the process of meeting it, get ourselves organized to face it, and be positive and flexible in our approach to the challenge, then we are truly resilient and ready to teach our children how to be resilient as well.

## RESOURCES

*"Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in Family, School and Community"* by Bonnie Benard, WestEd

*Lessons for Living*

*The Nemours Foundation*