

THE SEVEN C's OF RESILIENCE Building With Teenagers

1. Competence: specific abilities/SKILLS to handle situations effectively.

- must be earned the hard way by getting in the game of life, in winning and especially in losing
- acquired through actual experience
- helps teens learn to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations

Competence BUILDING jobs for parents:

- Encourage any/all activities, structured or not. Baseball and debate teams are great; so are “useless” rock n’ roll bands and gay/straight alliances
 - Say lots about what they do well; say little as possible about what they do poorly
 - When pointing out a mistake, stay narrow focused: don’t say “you always do this”; instead try “if you had to do over again, what would you do differently?”
 - Don’t lecture with answers; do force thinking with questions
 - Let them make mistakes; don’t try to excessively protect them: bad decisions made well are more strengthening than good decisions made poorly
 - Don’t compare them to others (especially to sibs)
2. Confidence: a belief in self that projects Competence the into future

CONFIDENCE BUILDING JOBS for parents:

- Expect the best: not of achievements, but personal qualities such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness; “I know you’re better than that...”
- Don’t treat them as stupid; do treat as someone who is learning to navigate the world. Frame mistakes as wonderful learning opportunities
- Praise them often but honestly about specific achievements (“wins”), and even more about good efforts that fail (“losses”)
- Encourage them to push themselves, don’t push them: say “What do you have to lose by trying?” “How will you feel if you don’t try?”
- Avoid shame: frame bad decisions as symptoms, not sins

1. Connections: THE INVISIBLE LIFELINES that build resilience more than any other factor

CONNECTION BUILDING JOBS for parents:

- Promote physical safety and emotional security within the home: avoid fear-based parenting (yelling, ridiculing and punishments vs. previously agreed upon consequences)
- Remind them that you are crazy in love with them especially in conflict, “love you too much to help you to hurt yourself...”
- Be like the mafia: take their failures as business errors, not personal attacks
- Allow them to express all emotions as long as not abusive: “I understand that you hate me right now. I’m sorry for that, but I love you too much to let you...”
- Model positive conflict resolution: (“I love you even though we disagree”) vs negative (avoiding/exploding)
- Use consequences vs. punishments

4. Character: WHAT YOU DO WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING

CHARACTER BUILDING JOBS for parents:

- Show how the kid’s behaviors affect other people in good and bad ways as ripples in the pond: “you have no idea how happy you made grandmom...”

- Allow them to clarify their own values especially if you disagree: “How the hell can you be a Giants fan?” vs. “Tell me what you love about the Giants”
 - model the importance of caring for others and what that does for you
 - Demonstrate the importance of community: emphasize how for better and for worse we are all connected, and how character makes that connection for the better: “I love helping out your coach. She’s an incredible lady to give so much of her time. Look at how she impacts upon your teammates...”
 - Help them develop a sense of purpose and meaningfulness of life: “What is this all about, for you?” Give them questions, not answers
 - Proactively stand up to hateful prejudice. Be very clear how you see that stuff.
 - Show how you think of others’ needs when making decisions: talk out loud to yourself in front of your kid: “I’d love to play golf today, but mom could really use a break.”
 - Share own experiences: “I once did a nice thing and no one knew about it but me. That felt great. It felt less great the more people found out” (the hero’s dilemma)
5. Contribution: changing the world, one pebble at a time

CONTRIBUTION BUILDING JOBS for parents:

- Continually reference the “real world” of people in need vs. our “Disney world”
- Model generosity with your own time and money
- Show how we really change the world with one pebble at a time: “that one person we fed today might disagree with you that small acts are pointless”
- Create opportunities for each child to contribute in some way; don’t forget the power of a well-placed bribe (allowance for working in the homeless shelter); extrinsic rewards become intrinsic

6. Coping SKILLS: the martial arts of resilience

COPING SKILLS building JOBS for parents:

- Help them with perspective: to distinguish life horrors from frustrations (i.e. Social rejection vs. Genocide)
- Model positive coping strategies: narrate own responses: “this feels scary right now, but I know the sun will come up; can’t let my fear make my decisions...”
- Allow some unstructured “wasted” time: fantasy and play are great tools to solve problems. Outside-the-box thinking
- Model the serenity prayer: “grant me the serenity to accept...to change...the wisdom...”
- Model/narrate (vs. preach) the importance of exercise, nutrition, and adequate sleep: “I feel so much better when I...”

7. Control: hope in action

CONTROL BUILDING JOBS for parents:

- Show how most things happen as a direct result of someone’s actions and choices
- Constantly point out their small successes to remind them that they can succeed: kids experience much more failure than success
- Link autonomy with responsibility...
- Use consequences versus punishment. Be the calm cop in conflict

Seven “Cs” from Building Resilience in Children and Teens courtesy of The American Academy of Pediatrics

Handout courtesy of Michael Bradley, Ed.D.

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2008); *Crazy-Stressed: Saving Today's Overwhelmed Teens with Love, Laughter, and the Science of Resilience* (Amacom, 2017). ****Check out the website for details on how you can get reimbursed for *Crazy-Stressed* by posting a review on Amazon.****

To stay up to date on current teen issues, visit Dr. Bradley at and/or like him on Facebook.

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