

Building resilience

FOR CARERS

Resilience is the ability to overcome challenges or ‘bounce back’ from hard times. Building resilience helps kids to recover from trauma.

For kids in out-of-home care (OOHC), building connection, mastery and emotional regulation are key to building resilience. Your support throughout this process is key.

Connection

To increase resilience, kids need to build strong, trusting relationships with adults who care about them. Support the kids in your care to build connections with you, and other trusted adults in your family, school, neighbourhood and cultural communities. Ways to build connection with your kids may include:

- taking time to listen without judgement - the importance of this should not be underestimated
- setting aside one-on-one and family time. Spending time together and having fun is important
- providing clear boundaries and expectations
- working at their pace and being patient
- showing affection, while respecting their personal boundaries and wishes
- letting them know that they’re appreciated and loved by people in their life
- focusing on what they are doing well, rather than on their struggles
- talking with them about what healthy and safe relationships look, feel and sound like
- asking them what they want and need from you, and how they want their life to be
- being consistent - doing what you say you are going to do.

Mastery

Increasing mastery improves kids’ confidence in coping with difficult circumstances, making meaningful contributions and being successful. Ways to build mastery with your kids may include:

- enhancing decision making to ensure they feel in control of their life
 - encourage them to make decisions and to build this skill safely. Give younger kids simple choices, and support teens to make more complex decisions about their lives
 - allow them to make mistakes. When this happens, support problem solving for future decisions



- fostering contributions to home and school life
 - encourage them to contribute to family choices and decisions will not only support their mastery, but build their sense of self and belonging
- providing encouragement and positive feedback
 - give targeted praise will highlight what your they are doing well. Try to catch them being good
 - set simple goals, so they are more likely to experience success. Provide positive feedback and encouragement as they reach their goals
 - have one-on-one time, during which you discuss their successes, worries, and goals. Provide encouragement, give positive feedback and support problem solving
 - remember that all praise should be genuine.

Emotion Regulation

Increase emotional regulation by helping kids develop their ability to recognise and respond to emotions. The ability to experience difficult emotions without becoming overwhelmed is something we all need to learn. You can teach this important skill to the kids in your home by:

- equipping them with the words they need to express how they are feeling
 - use emotion words when talking about their emotions and behaviours
 - model the use of emotion words by talking about your own emotions and behaviours
- allowing them to express their emotions. Remember that emotions are okay, but behaviours may require intervention
- being aware of what triggers certain behaviours. Discuss these triggers to increase their awareness, and develop response strategies together
- being aware of early signs that they are Heating Up. Support them to recognise these signs in themselves, and help them use calming strategies
- engaging in emotional problem solving together, and work out ways of responding next time. Don't shame or punish kids for the behaviour they have used
- working with members of their cultural community to develop culturally appropriate response strategies
- when they are calm:
 - practice calming strategies – if practiced when calm, these strategies are more likely to be used effectively when they are overwhelmed
 - try a range of calming strategies including relaxation, exercise, music and mobile / computer apps to see which are most effective
 - develop a variety of strategies that can be used when the child is alone and with others
 - encourage the use of calming strategies at the first sign of escalation

With planning and support, family time can help birth parents and kids heal their relationships. Remember that family time is about building, repairing and maintaining positive family connections.