

The REALM COVID-19 Parent Workshop

Right now, our kids are learning amazing lessons in resilience, fortitude, flexibility and humanity. If they pick up a little math along the way, that is great. :) Stay connected, be calm, embrace the moment.

Resilience - The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness

“Don’t handicap your children by making their lives easy.” -Robert A. Heinlein

With the plethora of shopping opportunities, the ability to communicate across the world in an instant, and electronic entertainment coming from every direction, life in today’s world is fast-paced and full-on. Anything seems possible. And with so many options and devices at our disposal, parents can be tempted to make their kids’ lives very easy. Want that \$2 toy? Okay, you got it. (Better to avoid a meltdown, right?)

However if we want our children to stand up to the inevitable challenges they will face in the future and keep going despite disappointment or frustration, we need to help our children develop resilience. This means they need to practice coping skills, and therefore need some challenges to practice these skills with.

After all, life is not about figuring out how to turn off a thunderstorm or switch on the sun – no matter how much we would like this to be possible.

Our children will learn to be much happier, more resilient people, when they can enjoy the sunshine when it is around and dance in the rain when there is no other choice.

Quick Tips

- **Try three before me!**
- **Let your child own their feelings**, even if they are challenging, by not belittling the emotions but giving them a way to maintain perspective through phrases such as “Every challenge makes me stronger” or “A rainbow will come after the storm.”
- **Help your child learn self control** regarding electronic mediums and entertainment by demonstrating your own restraint
- **Give your child the opportunity to wait patiently** (or even be bored) when it is required - do not always provide entertainment.
- **Give your child independence to try new things they initiate**, such as climbing at the playground or opening a container, even if you think it is “too hard” for them

MANY more ideas can be found at:

<https://bouncebackparenting.com/25-ideas-for-teaching-your-kids-resilience/>

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Fortitude - Courage in pain or adversity. Courage, bravery, strength of mind, strength of character, moral strength, toughness of spirit, firmness of purpose

“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you are right.” - Henry Ford

There are two kinds of courage or fortitude – the kind that faces danger or risk with a sporting spirit of firmness and the other kind which bears that which must be borne without complaint. It is a mental toughness which permeates the outlook and habits of the character of the individual.

Fortitude is a vital virtue that we need to develop in order to properly follow our life’s path. Fortitude gives us a larger vision for ourselves and the world we inhabit. The quality of character that includes this mental toughness allows us to take our eyes off petty issues and problems and embrace our larger potential. Understanding and developing an idea of our mission and embracing the path that our mission sets out before us, is an act of courage. We need to overcome the desire to remain in our comfort zone with the status quo and be willing to continuously improve ourselves.

Not only must we seek opportunities that require us to make an effort but we must also learn how to stand firm. The world is full of negative influences and the virtue of courage creates for us an inner strength that allows us to face reality with a calmness of vision and a sense of purpose

Quick Tips

- “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”
- **Resist the temptation to jump in and finish a task for your kids**, let them see it through even if it takes them a painfully long time. Time moves slower for kids as they build fortitude.
- Teach kids how to work on **passion projects**
- **Honor feelings but explain that they are just indicators** for a need. If kids can learn to address the need, they won’t be trapped by their feelings.
- **Celebrate frustration** as it is the moment before learning something great.
- **Create routines that allow kids to “compete” with themselves**. Everyday sit ups or pushups, how many can you do in 2minutes. Time them running, how long can they run continuously? Graph the results and see the growth!

More Ideas:

<http://10kids.com/2016/09/20/fortitude/>

<https://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/beverlywoodsES/Documents/Marchcourage.pdf> (includes fun lessons and activities)

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Flexibility - The quality of bending easily without breaking. Willingness to compromise, openness to change.

“It is not the strongest of the species, nor the most intelligent who survive, but the one most responsive to change.” - Charles Darwin

While we might not think about cognitive flexibility in our day to day life, it is an essential skill that we call upon every day to help us navigate and make sense of the world. Cognitive flexibility, also known as flexible thinking, is the ability to shift one’s attention as the demands of the environment or task change. This involves being able to take different perspectives, shift priorities and redirect attention from one thing to another. The quicker you’re able to shift from one perspective to another, the greater your cognitive flexibility.

Actually, obtaining greater cognitive flexibility helps children learn, both in and out of school. The ability to easily shift perspective and recognize when the rules change allows us to think in novel ways, act creatively and solve problems. Key academic skills like reading, writing and math are also easier to learn when we can think in flexible ways. For example, kids need to think flexibly about letters to understand that they can have different sounds. They need that cognitive flexibility to grasp the many exceptions and complexities to the rules of grammar. And they need it in math to understand that there’s more than one way to solve a problem.

Right now, with the world completing upside down and different, it is the perfect time to demonstrate, teach and practice flexibility!

Quick Tips:

- **Go outdoors!** Nature is both calming and stimulating at the same time. It is ever-moving and changing, offering varying sounds, smells, and sensations. No indoor environment can provide such welcoming and plentiful opportunities to shift focus
- **Model rolling with the flow.** Routines are so good for kids, and we by no means advocate disrupting supportive routines. Rather, take chances to embrace the day to day curves that life throws your way. When there is an unexpected change in the flow of a moment or a day, try to slow down, act calm, and actively welcome the change
- **Use surprises to support.** Surprises are happy curves in the road of life. We can engineer them often to give kids the chance to delight in shifting the focus of a moment, afternoon or whole day
- **Pretend play!**
- **Transform things.** Change the rules yourselves by turning things into other things.
- **Play games with shifting rules.** When you are playing games, select games that include rule switching or look for ways to take favorite games and switch up the rules

More Ideas:

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<https://sociallyskilledkids.com/flexible-thinking/>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/flexible-thinking-how-to-encourage-kids-to-go-with-the-flow>

Humanity - Compassionate, sympathetic, or generous behavior or disposition. The quality or state of being humane.

“That best portion of a good man’s life, His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.” - William Wordsworth

One of the gifts of human beings is our ability to love. We love our families. We love our friends. We love our community, our nation, and our world. It is love that motivates us to help others, to design, to create, and serve other people. The ability to love and use love to meet others needs is a distinctly human attribute.

Kindness involves doing good deeds to help other people. With kindness, we take care of other people, thinking of their comfort and needs, possibly before our own. Kindness as a strength makes us generous and compassionate towards others. People who have this personal attribute have discovered that in the long term it is more productive to be kind than right. People with kindness as a strength have discovered that with kindness you can change the heart of an issue in a way that debating or fighting never can.

When we can express our humanity through love, kindness and positive interaction with other people, we become happier, healthier and better humans. It is the little kindnesses that are remembered and stored in the heart and mind. Kindness is the stuff that makes us human and defines our humanity. When we can help our children learn to turn their random acts of kindness into intentional acts of kindness, perhaps true humanity will flourish in our world.

Now more than ever, humanity is being put to the test. Human are being asked to step up, see outside themselves, and fight for the good of us all. What a perfect time to teach and practice this essential virtue.

Quick Tips:

- Write cards to friends, family and neighbors! Practice writing and compassion all at once :)
- Send pictures, snacks or cards to your community's nurses, doctors, and essential workers.
- Create PSA's to spread the message of love, tolerance and compassion
- Decorate sidewalks with positive messages and statements of love
- Leave surprise handmade presents for anyone!!
- Do sweet things for each other at home. Leave little cards, notes, or fun handmade gifts for one another!

More Ideas on How to Help:

<https://goop.com/wellness/environmental-health-civics/how-to-help-others-during-covid-19/>

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<https://www.care.com/c/stories/16698/ways-to-help-others-coronavirus/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/21/how-you-can-help-during-coronavirus/?arc404=true>