

FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS!

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

Toolkit

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**BCDI**

Black Child Development Institute

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# WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

## MORE THAN A WORD

Resilience is a word/term that has become a more and more integral part of today's vocabulary and conversations.

Many of us use the term without fully understanding what it means and why it is so important to the healthy social-emotional development of our children. To understand the word Resilience, we must first define it: resilience is one's ability to bounce back from an incident or life changing experience.

The other basic question/issue we must address is why is resilience critical to our children, particularly our Black children. There are so many factors that can/ impact our children in a very negative way, such as racism, poverty, implicit/explicit bias in the classroom, particularly existing within the early childhood classroom.

In the early childhood classroom, Black children are often made to feel less than other children, less intelligent, less competent. Therefore, creating internalized bias within themselves.

As a former head start teacher, I was able to provide my students with multiple project-based learning opportunities centered on critical thinking and imaginative 'thinking outside the box.'

~Mr. William Christmas, EDD Candidate

So, how do we as professionals, prepare and support our children with Resilience? The Center for Resilient Children, has developed research and evidence-based strategies that provide guidance for professionals as well as parents / families to build resilience within children. These strategies are called **PROTECTIVE FACTORS**, and fall into three (3) categories, which include:

1. Initiative: a child's ability to do things on their own
2. Attachment: a child's ability to form healthy relationship with others
3. Self-Regulation: a child's ability to identify/express feelings appropriately.



# CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

## RESILIENCE LOOKS DIFFERENT IN DIFFERENT CULTURES!

When an individual is exposed to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources. These resources can be provided by individuals, family, community and culture. The resources ultimately assist in providing the individual feelings of well being that feed their connection to culture and sense of self.

Cultural resilience considers how cultural background (i.e., culture, cultural values, language, customs, norms) helps individuals and communities overcome adversity. The notion of cultural resilience suggests that individuals and communities can deal with and overcome adversity not just based on individual characteristics alone, but also from the support of larger sociocultural factors.

In 2004, Clauss-Ehlers defined “culturally-focused resilient adaptation” as how culture and the sociocultural context have an effect on resilient outcomes. The question presented by this concept is to consider what are those larger environmental variables that help individuals overcome the obstacles they face, and how. An example of a cultural component that can foster resilience is viewing life circumstances through an Afrocentric worldview.

In an afrocentric worldview, values harmony, and emotional awareness, are balanced. This can directly influence the way certain hardships are viewed, and dealt with, as well as the way relationships, resources and relationships are developed - relating positively with resilience.

An example of this is encouraging emotional awareness in your child when they are beginning to get upset, to enable them to calm down before a tantrum erupts.



# IMPACT ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## HOW RESILIENCE AFFECTS A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

When resilience is cultivated in the early stages of life, children are able to recuperate from challenges and setbacks despite their role in the onset of that adversity. Helping children recognize and acknowledge their success in solving a problem or pushing through some challenging situations builds their confidence and aids them in tapping into those same strategies when adversity arises again whether at home or in their learning environment.

When children feel confident and successful, they are more likely to take positive risks in their learning environments. Children who have attained or are building coping and problem-solving skills are able to better tap into their executive functioning skills, which are the skills that aid them in planning, paying attention and completing tasks. A higher percentage of their focus may be placed upon learning goals, class participation, and engagement.

"Developing resilience is a personal journey, and you should use your knowledge of your own children to guide them on their journey. An approach to building resilience that works for you or your child might not work for someone else."

~Mary K. Alvord, PhD



## The most common factor for children who develop resilience is:

*a stable relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.*

These relationships provide:

- personalized responsiveness, framing, and protection
- buffers for children developmental disruption.

Relationships also build these key capacities:

- ability to plan, monitor, and regulate behavior
- enable children to respond with more flexibility to stress

A combination of relationship support aids in adaptive skill-building, positive experiences is the foundation of resilience.

Children who excel under serious hardship, typically have:

- a strong biological resistance to adversity
- strong relationships with the important adults in their family and community.

Resilience is the result of a combination of factors.

"Early care and education are both crucial for children ages birth to five. These formative years represent a critical time for growth and development, and high-quality early learning centers provide a holistic foundation for students to thrive and grow, preparing them for success in school."

~Mr. William Christmas, EdD Candidate

Individual characteristics nor social environments alone ensure positive outcomes for children who experience prolonged periods of toxic stress.

Interaction between biology and environment builds a child's ability to cope with stress and build resilience.

Learning to cope with manageable threats is critical for the development of resilience with the help of supportive adults, this "positive stress" can be growth-promoting.

Ability to be resilient can be strengthened at any age. The brain is most impressionable early in life; therefore, utilize age-appropriate health-promoting activities:

For example:

- regular physical exercise
- stress-reduction practices
- programs that actively build executive function
- self-regulation skills



# TOOLS

## TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN



The following strategies are helpful ways to teach your Black child to be resilient in the face of racism, through **self-love** and **community**.

### Representation Matters

One of the many ways in which racism and discrimination present itself is through a lack of representation. So, it is important that we are intentional about **creating** opportunities for Black children to see **themselves** reflected in the world in which they live.

Buy and expose your children to books, toys and media that centers and celebrates Black children and families.

### Affirm Their Blackness

The use of positive affirmation can help foster a strong self-image, self-esteem and racial identity.

It is our duty as adults to teach and affirm Black children so that they don't accept harmful stereotypes and microaggressions, as truth.

Affirm your Black child's existence through celebrating their:

- Hair,
- Complexion
- Their names

### Disrupt internalization

Even further, in the moment, to disrupt any biases that are being internalized in your child, physical movement and activities can be key.

Words of affirmation can be included in your morning routine.

## Teach Stories of Resilience

Teach Black children that they come from resilient people.

Read to Succeed  
[nbcdi.org/what-we-do/literacy](https://nbcdi.org/what-we-do/literacy)

## It Takes a Village

It is important that Black children have a sense of community and space to be their full and authentic Black selves. Spaces where they are able to have reprieve from being the “token.”

Be intentional about exposure and engagement in spaces created for Black people.

## Your Child’s Feelings are Valid

Black children won’t always feel strong. Let them know it’s perfectly okay to feel sad, angry and frustrated by the racism they experience.

After these experiences allow them space to vent open and honestly about their feelings, providing them the strategies to move forward.

Research has demonstrated that resilience helps to reduce risk and promote healthy development in children.

Here are tips from the American Psychological Association:

1. Make connections: Teach your child the importance of engaging and connecting with their peers, including the skill of empathy and listening to others.
2. Maintain a daily routine: Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives.

3. Teach your child self-care: Teach your child the importance of basic self-care.

4. Nurture a positive self-view: Help your child remember ways they have successfully handled hardships in the past and help them understand that these past challenges help build the strength to handle future challenges.

5. Keep things in perspective: Even when your child is facing very painful events such as COVID-19, help them look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

6. Accept change: Change can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable.



# RESOURCES

## CHILDREN ARE OUR TOP PRIORITY!

Resources for additional information on Resilience:

- Center for resilient Children (books, Videos, webinars, supporting resilience in the early childhood classroom)
- Kaplan Early Learning company (books/videos, "Wired to Move: Supporting boys in an early childhood classroom / understanding / supporting boys, particularly Black/Latino Boys)
- Black Child Development Institute (research/data/articles on supporting Black Children)
- National Association for the Education of Children (NAEYC) (articles on racial equity in the early childhood classroom)
- PBS Kids ( videos on talking with children about race)

How to help your black child develop resilience in the face of racism and discrimination. Texas Children's Hospital. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2023, from

<https://www.texaschildrens.org/blog/how-help-your-black-child-develop-resilience-face-racism-and-discrimination>

[1] Chapman-Hilliard, C., & Adams-Bass, V. (2016). A conceptual framework for utilizing Black history knowledge as a path to psychological liberation for Black youth. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 42(6),479-507.

TOOLKIT CONTENT: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

For Black Fathers preschool - 5yrs old:

Videos For Perinatal parents:

[TMW YouTube](#)

[FTF page](#)

In Brief: What is Resilience?

For Birth - 5yrs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

Center on Developing Child - Harvard University

### Websites:

- Black Psychiatrist website: <https://www.blackpsychiatrists.org/>
- Positive -Adverse childhood Experiences <https://www.acesconnectioninfo.com/>
- 10 tips for building resilience in children and teens <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/guide-parents-teachers>

### Books:

"Daddy's Arms" by Fabian E. Ferguson

"Dark Girl" by Kofi Genfi

"Modern Herstory" by Blair Imani  
Princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis.

"I AM.... Positive Affirmations for Brown Boys" by Ayesha Rodriguez

"My Name is Unique Just Like Me" by Andrew Trotter and Melanie White

, "Hey, Black Child" by Useni Eugene Perkins

"I'm Gonna Push Through" by Jasmyn Wright

"Still I Fly" by Nikki Ace

"I am Courage A Book of Resilience" by Susan Verde

"I am! Affirmations for Resilience" by Edel Rodriguez

# REFERENCES

The Center for Resilient Children, authors/develop[er]s of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment? DECA, that supports resilience in children, youth & adults

Michael Gurian, Founder of the Gurian Institute & author of Boys & Girls Learn Differently, The Minds of Boys & the Wonder of Boys

Walter Gilliam, Director of the Edward Zigler Center for Child Study at Yale University as well as the groundbreaking study regarding the disproportionate number of suspensions/expulsions between Black boys & white boys.

Resilience <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

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*Was this toolkit helpful? Email us!*

Children's problems include adapting to a new classroom, bullying by classmates, or abuse at home, but resilience is the ability to thrive despite these challenges."

~American Psychological Association. (2020, August 26). Resilience guide for parents and teachers. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/guide-parents-teachers>

