

# AGES AND STAGES

## THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE

Various stages of family life can test our resilience. Moving to a new town, caring for a sick child, aging parents or the loss of a job can be difficult circumstances. Situations like these disrupt the natural flow of the family, change a familiar routine, create fear, and put a strain on relationships. Change can feel like a roadblock.



### Change – It's Inevitable

With every change that we experience, we can choose to:

- Cling to the known and resist the unfamiliar
- Embrace the unknown and welcome growth

To create the life that we want for our family, change is necessary. It pushes us out of our comfort zone, forces us to see life through a new lens, and creates an opportunity for growth. We may not always be ready, but welcoming what life offers with curiosity and gratitude is good for your health. Studies show that adapting to change and managing stress levels keeps the immune system strong, improves mood, and supports longevity.

### Turn Toxic Stress into Tolerable Stress with Support



Emotional



Practical



Informational

### Emotional Support

You can't create your best life when you feel locked in the past or wish you could freeze time. Speaking to others who can offer empathy and patience through shared experiences can propel us past the fear and into a new state of reality. Make a list of people that you can call or get together with for encouragement, advice, guidance or mentorship. Those who know you can also help you find the strength and wisdom you may not be aware you already have.

### Practical Support

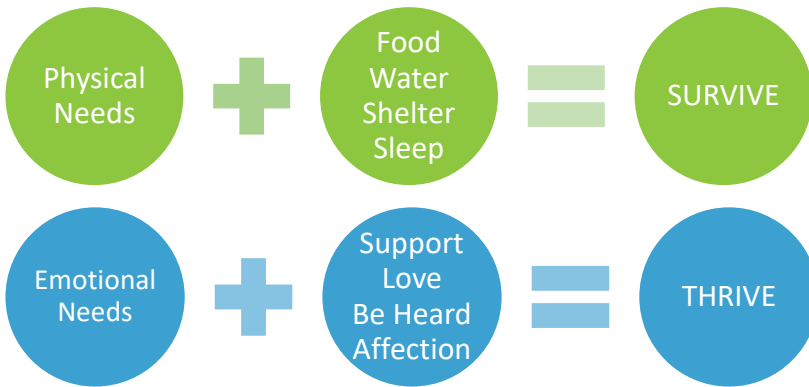
When faced with a challenge, even the simplest tasks can seem daunting. If a family is faced with a crisis like chronic illness, grief, or depression, asking for help with household chores like laundry and cleaning, picking up groceries, transportation, or making healthy meals can free up time and space to pause, reflect, and get in touch with your emotions.

### Informational Support

There may be times when reaching out to others is difficult, or when you're not open to social-emotional support. Resources like self-help tools, motivational books, Facebook groups, and brochures from a professional or support group can be a step in the right direction. Informational support can be a source of coping and improve your understanding of the situation.

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“Resilience depends on supportive, responsive relationships and mastering a set of capabilities that can help us respond and adapt to adversity in healthy ways,” says Shonkoff, Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard. “It’s those capacities and relationships that can turn toxic stress into tolerable stress.”

## BUILDING FAMILY RESILIENCE IS A 3-FACETED APPROACH



**FAMILY | Nurture a Positive Mindset.** The ability to find the silver lining is one of the greatest characteristics of resilient people. This doesn’t mean dismissing negative feelings but letting them sit side by side with the acceptance that things change. Acknowledge the negative viewpoint, but offer another optimistic perspective. For example, “It’s disappointing that you didn’t get the teacher that you wanted this year. I know you said you don’t like Mr. Wilder because he talks too much. Sometimes what we don’t like about someone allows us to grow! I bet this year will be a great lesson in patience.”

**INDIVIDUAL | Practice Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills.** Facing fears and healthy risk requires quick decision-making and independent problem-solving abilities, which are the foundation for resilience. It is our job as parents to protect our family from any undue harm. Encouraging risk can sound counterintuitive, especially in the era of the “helicopter parent.” Being exposed to stressors and challenges, however, builds the skills needed to cope with natural consequences and leads to independence, confidence, and an ability to trust and rely on instinct.

**COMMUNITY | Build a Circle of Support.** It takes a village. Building a family’s connection to others is associated with self-esteem, motivation, optimism, and resilience. How resilient we are has as much to do with our circle of support as it does with our personal skills and strengths. Create opportunities to deepen social connections. Schedule a regular dinner date with grandma, volunteer in a community-based organization, participate in a weekly bridge night, or join a church congregation. Contribute, engage, and do good in your community. You’ll gain a sense of purpose and have a circle of support for your family when you are going through a hard time.

Sources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4310821/>  
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