

The Gateway

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**Garfield School 216 10th St SE Watertown, SD 57201
605-882-6399**

CECE.SOU CY@K12.SD.US

TAMARA.HANSON@K12.SD.US

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Progress Reports will be e-mailed to you mid-January. If you haven't received it by the end of the month, please contact us.

KidBiz goal for the second quarter is 1000 points. Please ask your child if he/she has made their goal. End of the quarter is January 13th.



The following article was taken from:

Author: Rosina M. Gallagher

From The SENG Update of: October 2010

When things go awry, and you land face down...

“Get yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again.”

Sound advice. Psychologists call this process, *resilience*, “the capacity to rise above difficult circumstances and keep moving forward with optimism and confidence,” according to pediatrician Kenneth Ginsburg (2006, p. 4). To become resilient, however, is easier said than done. Resilience skills must be taught, and becoming adept takes time, patience and practice.

Why build resilience?

All children need to build resilience. The gifted in particular, because of general uneven development and varied intensities, may be prone to multiple stressors and be at-risk for depression and other difficulties.

- “Math and science come easy...but why can’t I read like the others?”
- “We’re polluting the earth with plastic bottles!”
- “I want to do everything!”
- “Kids hate me...they call me *nerd*.”
- “Am I to blame for my parent’s divorce?”
- “The people in Haiti are starving.”
- “I just don’t fit in—and never will!”
- “This just isn’t good enough.”
- “Wish my big brother didn’t compete with me all the time. When he challenges me, I just lose my cool and wind up showing off.”

Statements and thoughts like these by gifted youth highlight the need to help children develop clear thinking, problem solving, social skills, and, in particular, an optimistic outlook. Indeed, optimism is key to resilience. In *The Optimistic Child*, Martin Seligman explains this does not mean promoting unrealistic ideas such as “look for the silver lining,” or “see the glass as half full.” Nor is it a matter of having vague, unfounded, or exaggerated evaluations of one’s abilities, such as “I’m gifted,” “I need to be perfect,” “That won’t happen to me.” Nor, for that matter, does it mean choosing to avoid responsibility or being afraid to extend one’s reach.

The national media frequently remind us that resilient individuals are successful because they push their limits and learn from their mistakes. Babe Ruth is known for his batting prowess, but he struck out nearly twice as often as he hit homeruns. Michael Jordan has said, “I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and I missed. I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald’s Corporation, is known for valuing determination and persistence over

talent, genius and education. Fantasy fiction author Stephen King, has been quoted to say, “Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.”

Finally, Josh Waitzkin, national chess champion and world martial arts competitor, highlights that skill mastery can be transferrable. An eight-time chess champion in his youth, he was the subject of the book and movie, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. Waitzkin later became world champion in Tai Chi, and is now an author, public figure and benefactor. When asked about his accomplishments, he concluded, “I’ve come to realize that what I am best at is not Tai Chi (or)... chess...(but) the art of learning.”

How can resilience skills be taught?

To teach resilience skills effectively, Dr. Marty Seligman and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania have found that authoritative parents need to be comfortable with the process in their own lives. These parents provide consistent discipline and support, and communicate regularly with their children. They also promote emotional intelligence by fostering awareness of feelings and the ability to express and manage emotions.

Ginsburg’s 7 Cs of Resilience

Parents may consider the following elements the present writer has adapted from the work of Dr. Ken Ginsburg to help children develop resilience.

Competence – The ability to handle situations effectively.

To foster competence:

- help children build on their strengths
- teach thinking skills
- be specific when praising accomplishments
- provide constructive feedback
- offer choices
- avoid lectures
- allow natural consequences
- avoid overprotection

Confidence – The solid belief in one’s own abilities.

To build self-confidence:

- develop personal qualities: being kind, helpful, generous
- set realistic high expectations
- acknowledge specific achievement honestly
- emphasize effort and progress, not just results

Connection – Feeling close to family, friends, school, community.

To establish physical and emotional security:

- work and play together
- listen
- share ideas and feelings keeping in mind content and level of understanding
- express and manage emotions: anger, sadness, anxiety, shame, joy
- address conflict and resolve problems
- promote pride in cultural group
- allow the establishment of close, healthy relationships
- develop empathy: seeing the world from another person’s perspective

Character – Respecting and caring for others; distinguishing right from wrong.

To develop character:

- provide feedback and direction
- model caring behavior
- demonstrate the importance of community
- develop spirituality
- promote tolerance by abstaining from prejudiced or hurtful remarks
- instill pride in cultural values

Contribution – Believing personal contribution is possible.

To encourage a sense of community:

- establish bonding relationships at home, school, community and the world
- encourage teamwork and excellence, not perfection
- model good deeds and noble actions
- discuss how one person can make a difference, with big or small ideas
- identify positive adult role models

Coping – Managing stress for positive outcomes.

To develop coping strategies:

- help children tackle their own problems one step at a time
- model creative strategies consistently; saying “stop” is not enough
- model creative expression
- avoid negativity
- model healthy behaviors in nutrition, exercise and sleep habits
- laugh often and play together
- understand that risky behaviors may be mistaken attempts to relieve stress

Control – Learning self-discipline, making decisions and facing consequences lead to independence and ultimately, resilience

To promote positive self-discipline:

- understand that children crave attention
- focus on positive behaviors
- allow children to control outcomes of decisions and actions
- help children understand they are not responsible for all that goes wrong

Conclusion

As noted initially, building resilience requires time, patience and practice. Ginsburg’s elements are all interrelated, and emerge at a different pace given each child’s personality and environment. But resilience does not make a person invulnerable. Learning to rebound from circumstances beyond our control, such as severe illness or loss, may require parents to seek professional help. When children exhibit decreased performance, increased anxiety, anger, irritability, social withdrawal, physical symptoms, or drug, alcohol, or cigarette use, it is time to turn to clinicians who are familiar with your child.

Ginsburg concludes, “Resilient children and teens learn to make wise decisions, recognize and build on their natural strengths, deal effectively with stress, foster hope and optimism, develop skills to navigate a complex world, avoid risky behaviors and take care of their physical and emotional health.”

References

Ginsburg, K. R. (2006). *A parents guide to building resilience in children and teens: Giving your child roots and wings*. American Academy of Pediatrics.

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Seligman, M. (1995). *The optimistic child*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Waitzkin, J. (2007). *The art of learning: A journey in the pursuit of excellence*. New York: Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster.

Rosina M. Gallagher, Ph.D., NCSP, is the president of SENG. She is a psychologist and educational consultant who was born and raised in Mexico City through early adolescence. Her 30-year career includes being evaluator of bilingual programs, coordinator of Special Education Services, and administrator of gifted programs in a large urban school district. Dr. Gallagher is adjunct faculty in the graduate program in gifted education at Northeastern Illinois University and president elect of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children. She has served as Chair of the Special Populations Network and a member of the Diversity and Equity Committee of the National Association for Gifted Children. She has also been a member of the Illinois Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children. Dr. Gallagher and her husband are the proud parents of three adult sons and two granddaughters.