

THE SEVEN C'S OF RESILIENCE BUILDING WITH TEENAGERS

1. COMPETENCE: *SPECIFIC ABILITIES/SKILLS* TO HANDLE SITUATIONS EFFECTIVELY.

-must be earned the hard way by getting in the game of life, in winning *and especially* in losing

-acquired through *actual experience*

-helps teens learn to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations

COMPETENCE BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Encourage any/all activities, *structured or not*. Baseball and debate teams are great; so are “useless” rock n’ roll bands and gay/straight alliances
- Say lots about what they do well; say little as possible about what they do poorly
- When pointing out a mistake, stay narrow focused: don’t say “*you always do this*”; instead try “*if you had to do over again, what would you do differently?*”
- Don’t lecture with answers; do force thinking with questions
- Let them make mistakes; don’t try to excessively protect them: *bad decisions made well are more strengthening than good decisions made poorly*
- Don’t compare them to others (especially to sibs)

2. CONFIDENCE: A BELIEF IN SELF THAT PROJECTS COMPETENCE THE INTO FUTURE

CONFIDENCE BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Expect the best: *not of achievements*, but personal qualities such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness; “*I know you’re better than that...*”
- Don’t treat them as stupid; do treat as someone who is learning to navigate the world. *Frame mistakes as wonderful learning opportunities*
- Praise them *often but honestly* about *specific achievements* (“wins”), and *even more* about *good efforts that fail* (“losses”)
- Encourage *them* to push *themselves*, don’t push them: say “*What do you have to lose by trying?*” “*How will you feel if you don’t try?*”
- Avoid shame: frame bad decisions as *symptoms*, not *sins*

3. CONNECTIONS: THE INVISIBLE LIFELINES THAT BUILD RESILIENCE MORE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR

CONNECTION BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Promote physical safety and emotional security within the home: *avoid fear-based parenting (yelling, ridiculing and punishments vs. previously agreed upon consequences)*
- Remind them that you are crazy in love with them *especially* in conflict, “*love you too much to help you to hurt yourself...*”
- Be like the mafia: *take their failures as business errors, not personal attacks*
- Allow them to express *all* emotions as long as not abusive: “*I understand that you hate me right now. I’m sorry for that, but I love you too much to let you...*”

- Model positive conflict resolution: (“I love you even though we disagree”) vs negative (avoiding/exploding)
- Use consequences vs. punishments

4. CHARACTER: *WHAT YOU DO WHEN NO ONE’S LOOKING*

CHARACTER BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Show how the kid’s behaviors affect other people in good and bad ways as *ripples in the pond*: “you have no idea how happy you made grandmom...”
- Allow them to clarify their *own values especially if you disagree*: “How the hell can you be a Giants fan?” vs. “Tell me what you love about the Giants”
- model the importance of caring for others and *what that does for you*
- Demonstrate the importance of community: *emphasize how for better and for worse we are all connected, and how character makes that connection for the better*: “I love helping out your coach. She’s an incredible lady to give so much of her time. Look at how she impacts upon your teammates...”
- Help them develop a sense of purpose and meaningfulness of life: “What is this all about, for you?” Give them *questions, not answers*
- Proactively stand up to hateful prejudice. Be very clear how you see that stuff.
- Show how you think of others’ needs when making decisions: *talk out loud to yourself in front of your kid*: “I’d love to play golf today, but mom could really use a break.”
- Share own experiences: “*I once did a nice thing and no one knew about it but me. That felt great. It felt less great the more people found out*” (the hero’s dilemma)

5. CONTRIBUTION: *CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE PEBBLE AT A TIME*

CONTRIBUTION BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Continually reference the “real world” of people in need vs. our “Disney world”
- Model generosity with your own time and money
- Show how we really change the world with one pebble at a time: *“that one person we fed today might disagree with you that small acts are pointless”*
- Create opportunities for each child to contribute in some way; *don’t forget the power of a well-placed bribe* (allowance for working in the homeless shelter); *extrinsic rewards become intrinsic*

6. COPING SKILLS: *THE MARTIAL ARTS OF RESILIENCE*

COPING SKILLS BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Help them with perspective: to distinguish life *horrors* from *frustrations* (i.e. Social rejection vs. Genocide)
- Model positive coping strategies: narrate own responses: *“this feels scary right now, but I know the sun will come up; can’t let my fear make my decisions...”*
- Allow some unstructured “wasted” time: *fantasy and play are great tools to solve problems. Outside-the-box thinking*
- Model the serenity prayer: *“grant me the serenity to accept...to change...the wisdom...”*
- Model/narrate (vs. preach) the importance of exercise, nutrition, and adequate sleep: *“I feel so much better when I...”*

7. CONTROL: HOPE IN ACTION

CONTROL BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Show how most things happen *as a direct result of someone's actions and choices*
- Constantly point out their small successes to *remind them that they can succeed*: kids experience much more failure than success
- Link autonomy with responsibility...
- Use consequences versus punishment. Be the *calm cop* in conflict

Seven “Cs” from *Building Resilience in Children and Teens* courtesy of The American Academy of Pediatrics

Handout courtesy of Michael Bradley, Ed.D.

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To stay up to date on current teen issues, visit Dr. Bradley at www.doctormikebradley.com and/or like him on Facebook.

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