

# Parent/Carer Resilience Toolkit

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A resource for parents & carers to help support their child or young person to understand and increase resilience.

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## About this toolkit

All children are capable of extraordinary things. The potential for happiness and greatness lies in all of them, and will mean different things to different children. We can't change the fact that they will face challenges in their lives but what we can do is give them the skills so that these challenges are easier to deal with. We can build their resilience!

Resilience is being able to bounce back from stress, challenge, tragedy, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world. However, some children need a little more help to build their resilience.

A child that lacks resilience may present with some of the following behaviours:

- Avoid or deal with failure badly
- Become highly anxious, especially in new situations
- Focus on the Negatives
- Overreaction to normal stress
- Give up on things easily
- Become isolated or clingy
- Show Irritability/anger
- Lack initiative
- Blame others when things go wrong
- Want you to solve their problems

There are things that parents and carers can do to help build young peoples resilience. STEP have put together this toolkit to help you understand resilience and how you can support your child to develop their resilience

# Resilience

## What is resilience?

Resilience describes a person's capacity to cope with changes and challenges and to bounce back during difficult times. Some children are more resilient than others, meaning that some are more able to get through tough times, and they have better chances of recovering from experiences of adversity and trauma. Resilience is an ongoing process that develops over time and so with the correct guidance children can increase their resilience.

Resilience is not about keeping quiet and putting up with a potentially harmful situation. When encouraging resilience in young people, it is important to avoid sending out the message that is about being the 'strong, silent' type who avoids asking for help or communicating their needs or feelings. Resilience needs to be developed with care as not to push unrealistic expectations onto young people. Rather than growing as a young person and developing new skills, such messages have the potential to increase the risk of psychological problems in young people.

*Myth: Being resilient means you do not ask others for help.*

*Fact: Creating social relationships is one of the most important factors in building resilience. People who have high resilience are aware when they need help from others and they seek it out. This is part of being willing to search for solutions to issues. People who are highly resilient realise that other people may have different perspectives and suggestions that will be helpful. Also people who are highly resilient don't put pressure on themselves to have all of the answers.*

## Understanding resilience

Resilience is a key factor in protecting and promoting good mental health. It is the quality of being able to deal with the ups and downs of life. It is a term that can be applied to people of any age. A child or young person's ability to be resilient can depend on many different circumstances, they may be able to overcome challenges in one situation, but not in another.

The capabilities that underlie resilience can also be strengthened at any age. The brain and other biological systems are most adaptable early in life. Yet while their development lays the foundation for a wide range of resilient behaviours, it is never too late to build resilience. Age-appropriate, health-promoting activities can significantly improve the odds that an individual will recover from stress-inducing experiences. For example, regular physical exercise, stress-reduction practices, and programs that actively build executive function and self-regulation skills can improve the abilities of children and adults to cope with, adapt to, and even prevent adversity in their lives. Adults who strengthen these skills in themselves can better model healthy behaviours for their children, thereby improving the resilience of the next generation.

### **A deeper understanding of resilience from your child's point of view.**

Resilience is the ability to recover from fumbles and outright mistakes and bounce back. This is more of the everyday definition of resilience that every child experiences. Whether it's failing an exam, not getting picked for a sports team, or forgetting your lines in the school play, the process of childhood includes making mistakes. However, the resilient child has somehow learned to pick him or herself up and keep going.

## Qualities Associated with resilience

Resilience does not develop in isolation, there are many qualities that impact on and affect resilience. Young people that are resilient often display or experience some of these qualities, some are listed below.

**Self-Esteem:** Being accepted by people whose relationship you value, and from completing tasks you value.

**Self-Efficacy:** Having the qualities of optimism; 'stickability' and believing that one's own efforts can make a difference.

**Trust:** Experience people as reliable, value them and expect them not to betray your confidence.

**Attachment:** A secure attachment relationship creates a secure base from which a young person feels safe to explore the world.

**Secure Base:** The provision of a consistent and stable place to live and continuity of wider relationships which then allow the maintenance or development of attachment relationships.

**Meaningful Roles:** Provide a sense of positive identity and a source of self esteem as well as a source of enjoyment.

**Autonomy:** Make decisions and know that it is OK to make mistakes and that you can learn from them

**Identity:** Young people need to know and understand who they are, where they belong and to whom they are important.

**Insight:** Helps people to take appropriate actions and make appropriate choices. It is therefore linked to self efficacy and to initiative.

**Humour:** Can help young people to distance themselves from, and therefore reduce, emotional pain and it can also help them make and sustain relationships.

## **Risk Factors for Resilience.**

It is more difficult for a young person to develop resilience if there are a number of risk factors apparent in their life. Detailed below are examples of some of the risk factors that could have a negative impact on a child becoming or maintaining resilience.

Please refer to: *Questions to explore when thinking about a young persons resilience and vulnerabilities sheet for questions you can explore with your children*

**FACT:** *The risk of young people not becoming resilient can be reduced greatly by decreasing these factors and increasing protective factors that are internal and external to the individual.*

### **Family**

- ♦ Absence of warm and healthy attachments between a child and parent.
- ♦ Lack of connections between close and wider family members.
- ♦ Violence, abuse or neglect.
- ♦ Family dysfunction.
- ♦ Moving away from family/friends.

### **Individual**

- ♦ Difficult temperament.
- ♦ Risky behaviour– Drug, alcohol misuse.
- ♦ Criminal involvement .
- ♦ Psychological problems.

### **Peers**

- ♦ Lacking friendships.
- ♦ Insufficient relationships with peers.
- ♦ Association with high risk young people.
- ♦ Relationship break ups.

### **School**

- ♦ Low achievement
- ♦ Poor attendance
- ♦ Difficult transition from primary to secondary

### **Community**

- ♦ Poverty
- ♦ Instability of accommodation
- ♦ Low connectedness to the community.

It is particularly helpful for young people to develop positive and caring relationships within family, social, school and community settings as positive relationships provide opportunities in life. The more protective factors a young person has, the more resilient they are likely to be.

Young people who are resilient tend to be more hopeful, confident and possess higher self-worth during difficult times. They are more likely to overcome challenges. Recognise when they need support and develop coping strategies enabling them to handle difficulties more easily in the future.

### **Benefits of resilience**

Resilient young people are more likely to:

- ♦ Have realistic expectations
- ♦ Persevere in overcoming difficulties
- ♦ Set goals
- ♦ Have a sense of independence
- ♦ Develop mutually respectful relationships
- ♦ Have good communication skills
- ♦ Recognise and manage their own feelings
- ♦ Empathise with others
- ♦ Problem solve
- ♦ Have good interpersonal skills
- ♦ Learn from mistakes
- ♦ Understand their strengths and weaknesses.

### **How can you help your child to become more resilient?**

**As previously stated, resilience is something that can be built upon at any age and in the following pages of this toolkit you will find some handy tips on how to help build your child's resilience, as well as some work sheets that you may want to take a look at together with your child. There are some activities for your young person to work through and together, hopefully you can start to help your child build some resilience.**

# Resource Section

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**In this section you will find:**

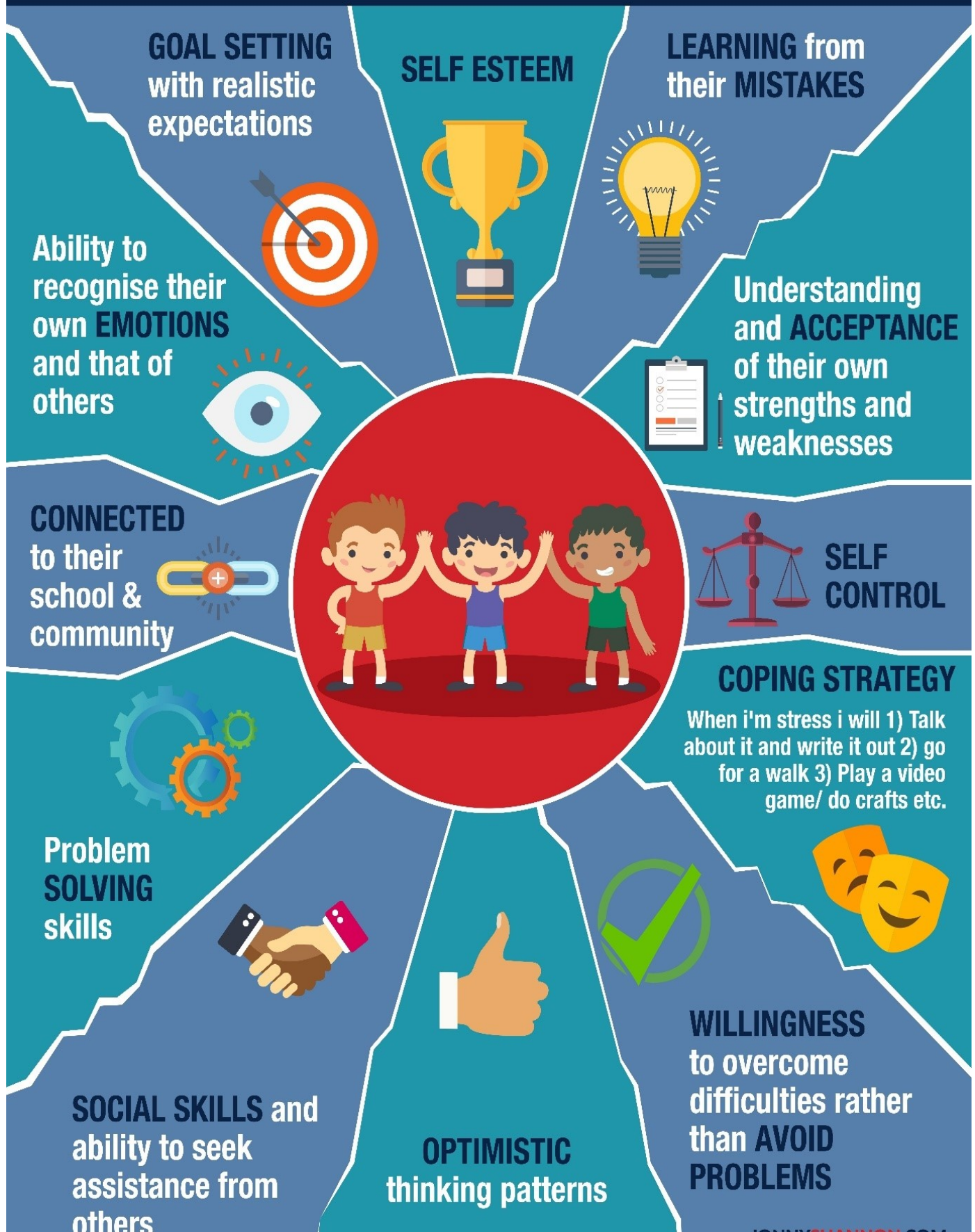
- ♦ **Useful Worksheets**
- ♦ **Resilience questions to explore with your young person**
- ♦ **Goal setting activities**
- ♦ **Resilience 5 a day check**
- ♦ **Coping strategies**
- ♦ **Online Support Links**
- ♦ **Support Telephone Numbers**

**Take a look at the tips below on how you can help your child to build resilience.**

### **Top Tips on Building Resilience in Young People**

- ◆ Young people need to feel safe and loved.
- ◆ Encourage young people to talk about how they are feeling.
- ◆ Give young people the time and space to express their emotions.
- ◆ Focus on the young person's key skills and attributes and keep highlighting these to them. For example, are they really good at a particular subject, sport or do they have a special quality?
- ◆ Value the young person and offer 'direct praise' by commenting on the actual behaviour rather than just a general comment as it will mean more to the young person.
- ◆ Ensure a young person knows they are loved and valued not just by their immediate family but their extended family and the wider community. They need to understand that they have an impact on the community they live in and can make a difference.
- ◆ Give young people choices and options. These could range from simple choices (e.g. what to have for dinner) to a more serious choice (e.g. what subjects to choose for their exams). Giving choices allows them to take responsibility and understand there are consequences and risks that need to be calculated.
- ◆ Avoid comparing siblings, family members or friends and embrace the young person's special, unique qualities as this will help to make them feel special and more valued.
- ◆ Make sure young people have a healthy balance of activity and rest. Too much activity can cause a young person to become exhausted and run down. Too much rest can cause a young person to lose motivation and become even more lethargic.
- ◆ Continue to support young people and help guide them to manage decisions and risks well but allow them to make mistakes that are not too risky. This will help them to learn how to negotiate life and the challenges they will face.

# RESILIENCE

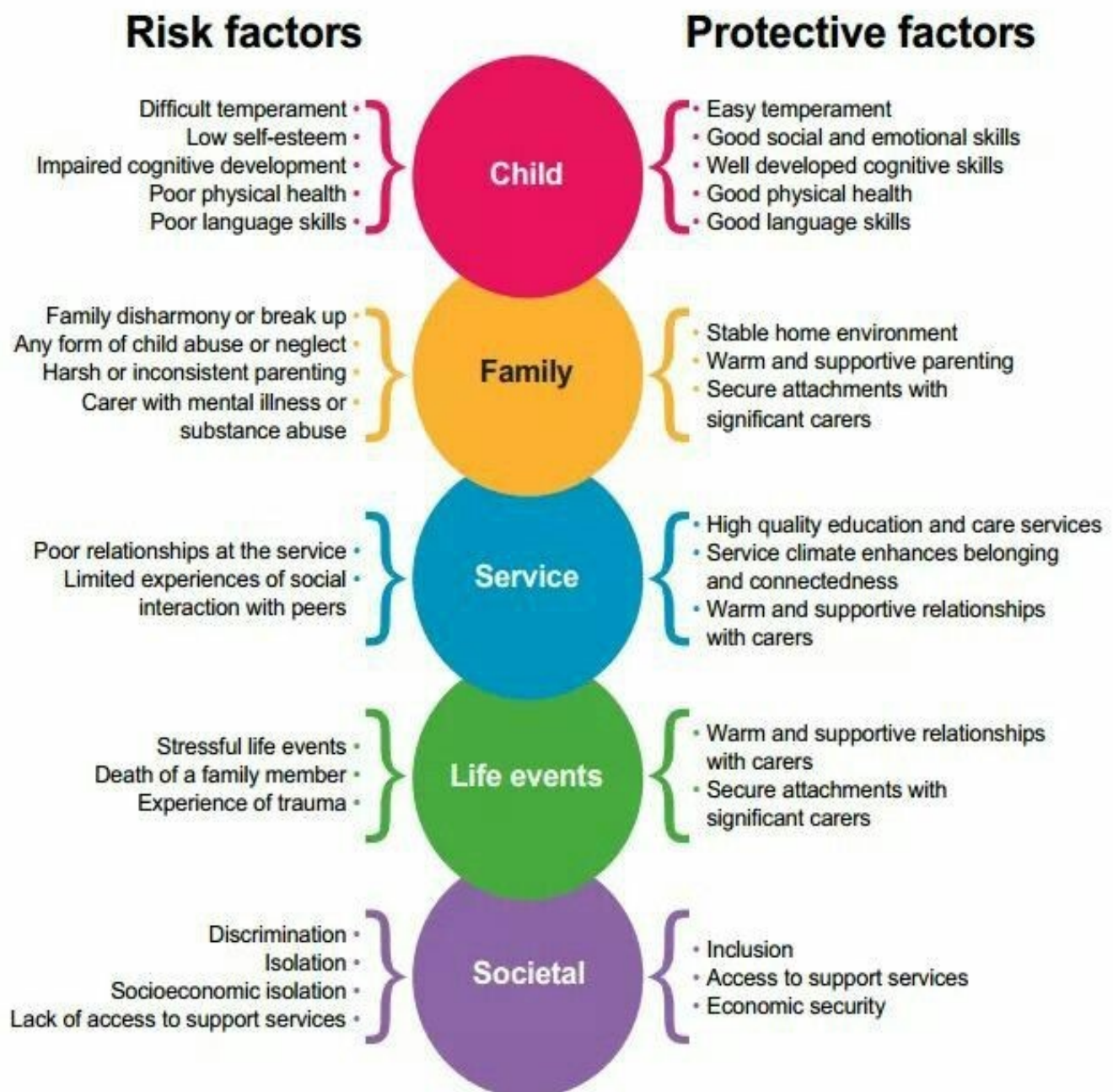


## Questions to explore when thinking about a young persons resilience and vulnerabilities

- ◆ Why are you worried?
- ◆ What sort of behaviour is causing the problem? Who is being affected, how and where?
- ◆ When did it start?
- ◆ What factors are in the young persons background? (divorce/illness) What are the present and past risk and protective factors?
- ◆ Which risk factors are decreased?
- ◆ Which protective factors can be increased?
- ◆ What are the strengths in the child, family, community, school and how can they be built on?
- ◆ What is the worst thing that could happen?



# Risk and protective factors



# HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE

TO BUILD RESILIENCE, PRACTICE POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES  
WHILE ELIMINATING NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES

## EMOTION FOCUSED COPING

If you cannot change the situation, change your mind. These strategies are most effective when faced with a situation you cannot alter.

## ACCEPTANCE

Start by accepting the reality of the situation while recognizing and accepting your inability to change it. Once a situation is accepted for what it is, begin working on uncommon and creative solutions to make it better.

## HUMOR

Humor can boost one's mood, alleviate emotional distress, and even buffer against depression. Laughter and humor improve immune response, enhance perceptual flexibility, and can offset the effects of stress.

## POSITIVE REFRAMING

Positive reframing allows you to take control of your response to a situation by reframing it into a potential growth experience.

## PROBLEM FOCUSED COPING

Problem focused coping strategies involve direct action to alter the situation or source of the stress.

## PLANNING

The first step in developing a good plan, is to define what success looks like. Once you know what success looks like, define clear, measurable goals that will bring you to success.

## ACTIVE COPING

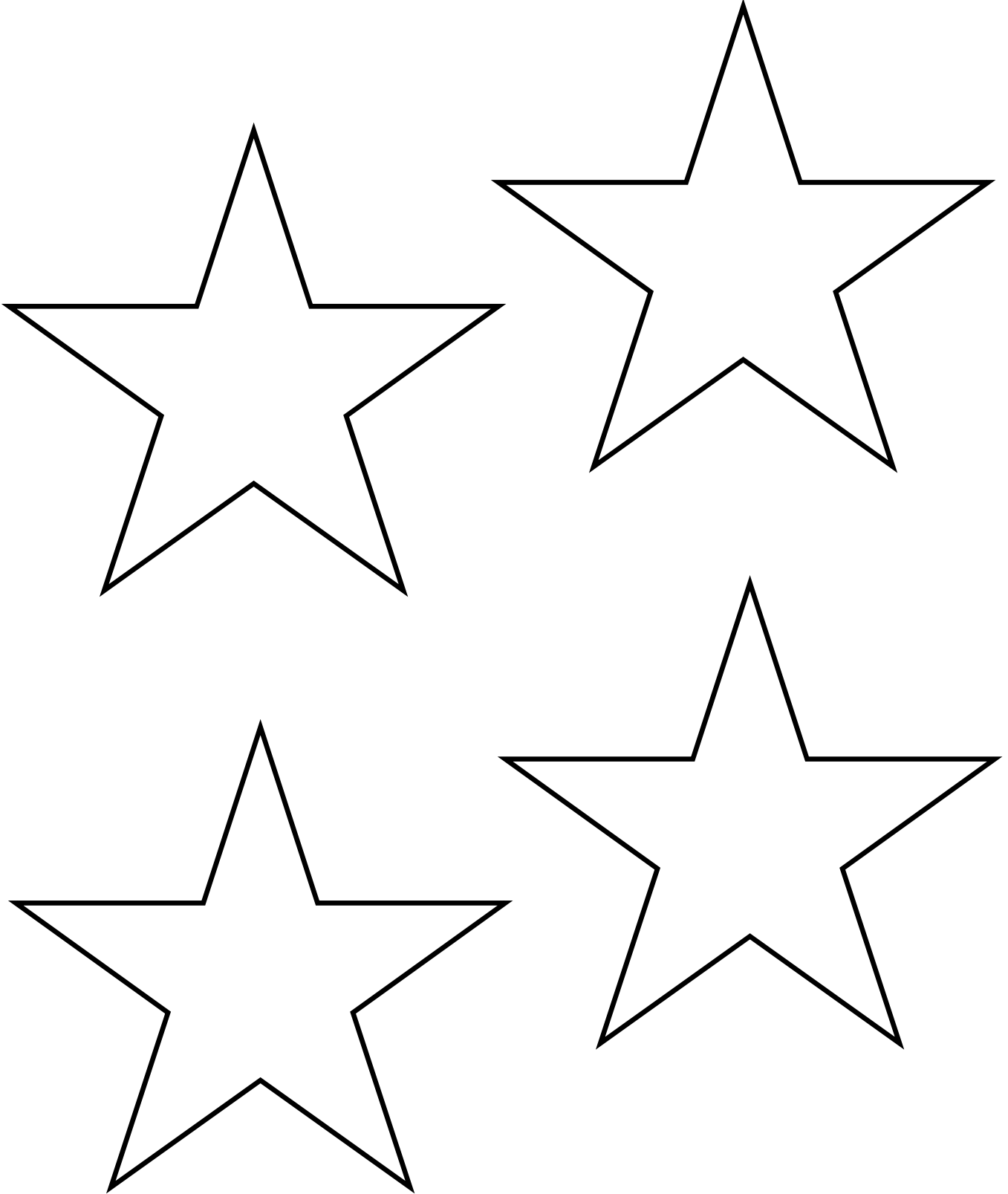
Active coping takes action toward dealing with the stressor or activating the plan. Once you have your plan in place with clearly defined goals, start tackling that to-do list.

### Shoot for the stars

Write or draw a picture describing a goal you would like to achieve in each star.

You could use things like school, college, job, travel, driving license, children, relationships, own home, families, emotion etc.

Try to think of some of your own personal goals

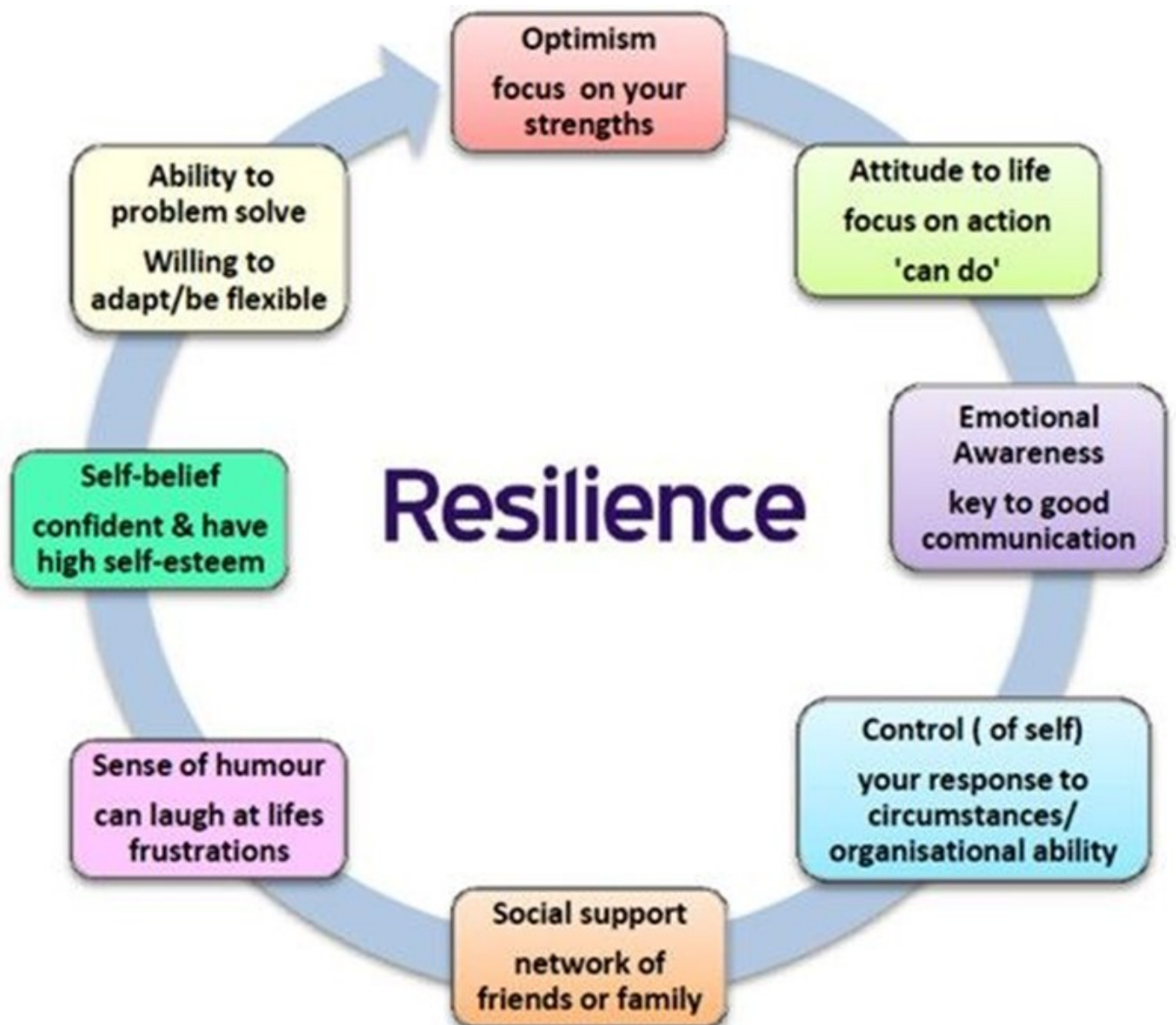


Keep a copy of this bounce back resiliency ball to remind yourself of the ways you can build resilience and how you can change your thought processes to be more positive. Also how certain questions can help you think about building and maintaining resilience.



As parents you will want to protect your children from all bad things happening to them, but unfortunately you can't be there for them all the time and, what's more, as they grow older you will need to be there for them in a different way – not cushioning them from falling, but helping them to find the resolve to pick themselves up.

Your children will deal with problems big and small – ranging from adapting to a new classroom, to bullying by classmates, or even more traumatic events. There are many uncertainties of growing up. The ability to thrive despite these challenges depends on your child's resilience.

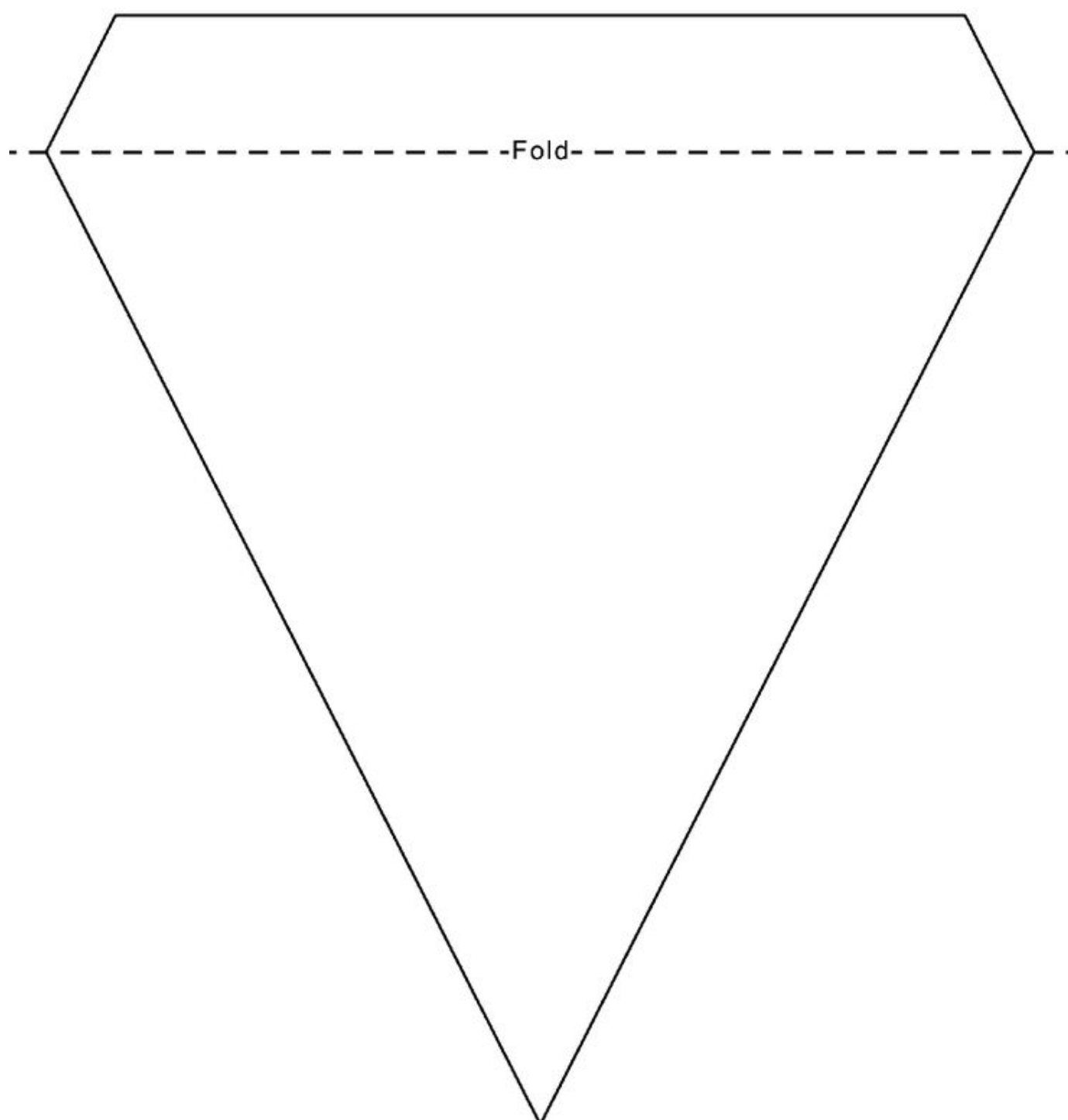


Have a go at Resiliency Bingo with your young person and see how many 'you can'.

# Resiliency Bingo

At Home I Can ...	In Social Situations I Can ...	Risk Zone I ...	At Work I Can ...	About Myself I Can ...
talk honestly to my spouse and/or children	initiate conversation with someone	can't control my future	work as a team with co-workers	find solutions and solve problems
tell the truth	avoid negative influences and people	blame others	be responsible for job duties	make responsible decisions
look for the "lighter side" of things	determine why people like me	<b>BOUNCE BACK BONUS</b>	motivate myself to work hard	identify my feelings and how to express them
be loyal to family members	laugh with friends and family	don't accept help from others	be creative in the workplace and think "outside the box"	be aware of what makes me laugh
find new ways to entertain myself	have fun without using alcohol or drugs	make fun of others	be honest in business dealings	spend free time doing healthy things

Encourage your young person to decorate this bunting with things they like doing, using both words and pictures. Encourage them to share their ideas with you and think together about why we should make time to do the things we enjoy and the benefits this has. These can be copied so that your young person can decorate a few and they can then be displayed.



Try the exercise below to help build mental resilience. Sometimes things are difficult but we must keep trying and learn and grow from our mistakes. We must also notice that things take time and we should keep trying.

## Building Mental Resilience



Look at the chart and say the COLOUR not the word

YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE
BLACK	RED	GREEN
PURPLE	YELLOW	RED
ORANGE	GREEN	BLACK
BLUE	RED	PURPLE
GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE

### Left – Right Conflict

Your right brain tries to say the colour but your left brain insists on reading the word.

## Sources of Support

**Online Support**—The following organisations can provide advice and guidance for children and young people and many offer advice and for parents/carers.

**Mind** - provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.  
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

**The Mix** - <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

**Young Minds** - UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health.  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/> and <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-anxiety/>

**Kooth** – Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.  
<https://www.kooth.com/>

**NHS** - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>

**The Dock Swindon** - The Dock is a new and different way for young people to find out about services that are here to help them in Swindon. <https://thedockswindon.co.uk/>

**Friends of STEP Facebook Page** - Here you can find useful resources covering a variety of topics  
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStep/>

## Useful Telephone Numbers

**Be U Swindon** - At BeU Swindon, we believe in the power of togetherness. Our Collaborative Care model brings together experts from different fields, ensuring that every child and young person receives a holistic approach to their well-being.

Tel - 01793781484, Website - <https://beuswindon.co.uk>

**CAMHS (children and adolescent mental health services)** - help children, young people and their families across Swindon, Wiltshire, Bath & NE Somerset who are experiencing more severe, complex and persistent mental health difficulties. Tel - 01865 903422 (Swindon)

## Useful online videos

**Self massage for anxiety** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-nKMaCkxGM>

**Sleep - a bedtime story (meditation to get to sleep)** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fbaoqkY0Qk>

**The benefits of exercise** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNI0sNI-o60>

**The Five Ways to Wellbeing** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF7Ou43Vj6c>

**Beginners guide to meditation** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kMJBWk9E0>

**How to calm worries and sleep-** better <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu1TaDhEtDY>