

Q&A STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS TO HELP CHILDREN FACE OBSTACLES AND OVERCOME THEM.



FOR PARENTS

Q How can I help my child deal with frustrations and disappointments?

As parents, we must teach our children that having struggles does not equate to failure on their part. Provide love, support and encouragement.

Children need the space and appropriate freedom to explore and develop their problem-solving skills. Help children process what happened and make it clear that while emotions are normal, some behaviours (such as tantrums) are inappropriate.

Remember these tips:

1. **Help your children forge a connection** with people who support them. This will build self-esteem, motivation and optimism.
Example: "I told your grandparents how you helped your classmate. They are so proud of you."
2. **Model resilience for your children.** Show them how you deal with difficult moments and anxieties, and that these are normal experiences.
Example: "I am disappointed I was not promoted. I did my best. But you don't always get what you want."
3. **Allow your children to take safe, considered risks.** Encourage them to think about their decisions and the possible consequences. Help them cope when things go wrong.
Example: "When you try something difficult, it may not work out, but you are still learning from the experience. Next time, you will be wiser and do it better."
4. **Tell your children that you have trust in their ability to bounce back.** As hard as it is to see them struggle, refrain from stepping in to fix everything.

Q What are some considerations when teaching resilience in kindergarteners?

The American novelist Robert A. Heinlein once said, "Don't handicap your children by making their lives easy." By doing everything for them, they become over-reliant on you, and it robs them of the sense of accomplishment that comes from achieving goals on their own.

To build resilience in preschool-aged children, teachers should consider these tips when planning activities:

- > **Encourage competence and a sense of mastery** by enabling children to practise and try out new activities or skills without excessive handholding in class. Avoid stepping in too early to resolve conflicts for children. Encourage them to figure things out on their own.
- > **Nurture an attitude of optimism in children.** Focus on possibilities. Teaching children how to reframe their thoughts when interacting with their peers or tackling a problem in class can also be a powerful tool to develop resilience.
- > **Celebrate values like perseverance over perfection.** Recognise children's efforts in their attempts and reinforce what they have learnt in the process rather than the results. Highlight the values displayed by the child in completing, say for instance, an obstacle course despite not winning.
- > **Provide problem-solving opportunities** through project work, experiments and activities at the learning centres (e.g. dramatic play, water play) for children to find their own answers. Teachers can facilitate with "how" and "why" questions to scaffold their learning.



FOR EDUCATORS



DR JARED NG is a consultant psychiatrist at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). He was previously in charge of the children and adolescent inpatient service at IMH, and is currently helping to oversee emergency and crisis services at the hospital.



REBECCA HAN is a Curriculum Manager with Odyssey The Global Preschool (Busy Bees). Her work focuses on curriculum design and development, as well as coaching, mentoring and teachers training. She received the Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award in 2008 and was appointed an ECDA Fellow in 2015.