

Resilient Families

Families may experience periods of stress and worry over the course of their life, such as the arrival of their first child or following the diagnosis of an illness within their family.

Families who experience persistent levels of stress are at a greater risk of developing mental health issues and experience poorer health outcomes over their lifetime.

Resilient families are better able to face life's stresses; to bounce forward following difficult times; and to adjust in healthy ways to life's challenges. For this reason, supporting the resilience of families during periods of stress can help to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the family.

It is important to recognise that all families, with a little bit of support, can be resilient and have the capacity to bounce forward following challenging times. This factsheet outlines several key characteristics found in resilient families.

1. A resilient family recognises each other's strengths

When families can recognise the different strengths of each person, the family unit is more likely to be able to develop a support plan which works for each member and the whole family.

2. A resilient family keeps family routines and a sense of stability even during difficult times

Routines create a sense of predictability and stability for family members during difficult times. For this reason creating and maintaining routines within your family can contribute to building the resilience of your family.

3. A resilient family looks after themselves and each other

Taking time to rest, recharge and reconnect improves our ability to parent and care for those who we love in our family. It is important that we remember that the first step in looking after others – is looking after ourselves. We refer to this as self-care.

4. A resilient family talks honestly and clearly with each other

Like all parts of family life, communication patterns between people are often based on habits which can be helpful or unhelpful. Good communication can reduce stress, and improve relationships and resilience within the family.

5. A resilient family spends time together and celebrates milestones

Many families get caught up in day-to-day activities and forget to spend 'time' together as a family. Most children and young people really want mum and dad's time. If you can set aside a few hours on a weekend to spend with your kids, you will find that the investment of your time will be paid back quickly and positively.

6. A resilient family maintains a positive outlook

Resilient families are able to maintain a positive outlook even during period of stress and worry. Maintaining a positive outlook is defined as the ability to maintain positive feelings about family life even during stressful periods within a family.

7. A resilient family tackles problems constructively

Working together as a family to solve life's problems can build a sense of support within a family. There are skills that can be learned to help solve problems and help family members feel.

8. A resilient family is based on respectful relationships

Even in a strong relationship, conflict will sometimes arise. Nobody can agree 100% of the time. However, having a relationship between adult parents that is respectful and cooperative is a great way to ensure the family is likely to rally together in tough times. Feeling connected and emotionally healthy creates a nurturing environment that benefits all family members.

9. A resilient family develops a shared understanding and acceptance of illness

All parents living with a child with a chronic illness have a common set of things which drive them forward. One is the desire to understand the illness; the other is to come to a point of acceptance of the illness.

10. A resilient family understands the challenges of parenting a child with a chronic illness

Parenting is made harder when one or more of your children have a chronic illness. Chronic illness raises a whole range of issues, especially as your child grows and meets a range of milestones. Having a strong foundation of family resilience will help your family 'bounce forward' during tough times.

Family Strengths Checklist

If you are interested in building the resilience of your family, complete the Family Strengths Checklist by circling the numbers that most apply to your family:

- If you scored 4 or 5 for any response on the checklist, well done!
- If you scored 1, 2 or 3 for any response your family may benefit from learning new skills in this area.

For more information and activities to build the resilience of your family please contact a family mental health support service in your local area or visit the CHIRP website at www.everymind.org.au/familyresilience

	Hardly ever	Not very often	Sometimes	Usually	Always
We have predictable routines as a family	1	2	3	4	5
We look after ourselves and each other	1	2	3	4	5
We can talk honestly with each other	1	2	3	4	5
We spend time together and celebrate milestones	1	2	3	4	5
We are able to maintain a positive outlook	1	2	3	4	5
We are able to tackle problems as a family	1	2	3	4	5
Our relationships are usually respectful	1	2	3	4	5
We understand the challenges of supporting a child or young person with a chronic illness	1	2	3	4	5
We understand about the chronic illness and are working to accept it	1	2	3	4	5

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