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Resiliency Wanted

Helping Families Rise Above Today's Challenges

by Wendy Fachon and Debbie Radcliff

Parents, teachers and children are wondering how they can be successful in the upcoming school year. The memory of juggling work and family responsibilities throughout the school day is still fresh. The stressful state this memory produces has many realizing their former ways of dealing with stress are not working and holding on until things go back to normal is not a possibility. Much of our lives continue to require change and constant adjustment. Resiliency may be just what is needed, but how can resiliency be developed?

Parents that are tugged in different directions by work and family demands can easily become frustrated and stressed, leading them to wonder how to catch a break. To retain resilience, it is vital to make time to relax and recharge. In the face of a crisis, most adults tend to hold on until the crisis is over. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has been going on for six months, without any clear indication as to when it will end or how schools will safely and effectively manage their classrooms. So, how can parents continue to sustain themselves and their families mentally and spiritually?

START WITH SELF-CARE; IT IS MUCH EASIER TO GIVE FROM A FULL WELL.

Parents are their children's first teachers, and children pay attention to their caregivers and their environment. So, parents and caregivers need to take care of themselves during this time. One suggestion is for parents to perform mini resets, choosing several times throughout the day to take three- to five-minute breaks. A break might consist of standing and stretching, stepping outside, taking a quick walk, doing a couple of yoga poses, listening to some favorite music or spending five minutes doing breathwork or meditation. In taking periodic breaks, parents do two things: they build their own resiliency, and they model for their own children the importance of having reset strategies.

LIMIT EXPOSURE TO THE LATEST NEWS.

This is a particularly unsettling time for children, and like sponges,

they pick up on everything. They want to know what is going on and why. While parents rely on phone conversations, online chats, social media and news channels to remain socially connected, it is important to be mindful of setting the proper time and place for these activities. When talking about what is happening with children, remember to use language they can understand and information they can handle.

BE PRESENT IN THE MOMENT.

So many of the decisions we are being asked to make are brand new. One of the easiest ways to handle these circumstances is by being present; decide how to handle situations as they arise based on the information available at the time. Children pay attention to not only the words they hear, but they watch how the adults around them react. Be present with your child. Get curious about what they know. Help them to understand what is going on in a way they can handle.

For example, children may know school is different, but they may not realize why it is different. They may be sad. It helps to let them know their feelings are valid and they are loved and supported. It helps to ask them how they might solve the present problem. Talking about problems with a supportive adult will help children to make better decisions and adjustments in the moment, and this will teach them invaluable life skills.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE AND CURIOSITY.

Focusing on gratitude cultivates a positive outlook and increases the opportunity to bring about a positive outcome. Curiosity is another tool that can be used to turn the tables on a negative situation to have a more positive outcome. A simple exercise is to ask a question out loud and be curious about how the answer will come. It's all about perspective.

*Debbie Radcliff, M.Ed, RMT, founder of Creatigo, is a special education teacher and holistic arts professional with more than 25 years of experience. Radcliff offers virtual workshops, and her style and professional training ease stress associated with the typical experience. She creatively combines holistic practices with research for a personalized approach. For more information, contact Debbie Radcliff at 401-793-0097 or visit Creatigo.org. **See ad on page 29.***

*Wendy Fachon is an environmental educator, a regular contributor to Natural Awakenings magazine and host of the Story Walking Radio Hour. She appreciates the power of words and helps people share their remarkable stories and ideas through writing and radio. To learn more, call 401 529-6830, email StoryWalkerWendy@gmail.com or visit StoryWalking.com. **See ad on page 13.***