

Kids That Bounce!!

We've all experienced life's ups and downs. Things don't always go our way or as planned. Ever wonder why some people have difficulty moving forward after a challenging situation, while others seem to be able to overcome their difficulties and carry on?

How well we cope with hardship and change is based on a concept called resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from setbacks and cope with adversity. In other words, it is our ability to react positively and adapt well to change when things go poorly.

There are a number of factors which influence resiliency, many of which are beyond our control such as the family in which we grew up, the conditions in which we live, the amount of money we have to live on and/or the loss of our health or loved ones. However, skills associated with resiliency give us the ability to control our reaction to these events and our attitudes towards them. Also, people who are resilient are more likely to have the confidence to seek support from others in times of trouble. Children who are resilient typically have at least one significant person in their life – a parent, family member or other caregiver. You may be that significant person.

You as the parent or caregiver play a vital role in helping your children respond well – even flourish – when life throws them a curve ball. What happens in infancy and early childhood plays a critical role in the development of our emotions, perceptions and behaviors, and forever impacts our well-being. Helping children develop self-confidence, problem solving skills, emotional regulation and empathy skills will equip them to be successful in life.

The best teaching tool for your child is a strong relationship with you. When you provide loving care and help meet your child's needs you create an emotional bond that gives your child strength, trust and security he or she needs to take on life's challenges.

Play is not only fun; it is the best way for children to learn to solve problems, build relationships and foster learning and well-being. Play is how children cope with understanding their world.

All children are unique. Know your child's temperament. Some are quiet and sensitive. Others are boisterous and courageous. Tailor activities and ideas to match your child's individual and unique personality.

Parenting is one of the most important roles in our society. Like any other important work, staying healthy, balanced and connected with others will help you be a flexible and resilient parent. Here are some tips to ensure your own health and well-being:

- Keep in touch with other parents and make a time to connect with friends and family members, even if it is only a phone call during nap time.

- Look for resources in your community to learn more about fostering resiliency.
- Like other important roles, parenting and care-giving can be stressful. Little breaks and small vacations on a regular basis may be just what you need to keep going, re-energize and practice self-care.
- Get enough sleep, exercise and eat well
- Arrange for a babysitter on occasion
- Don't take on too much – too many structured activities for your toddler and preschooler are not necessary and can wear out you and your child. Play and free time are very valuable to both of you.

Alberta Mental Health Board website offers information and resources as well as the Bounce Back Books that can be downloaded for ideas on teaching and supporting resiliency in children from birth to 4 years of age.

Check it out at www.amhb.ab.ca and Keep Bouncing!

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