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How To Teach Your Children To Beat Stress

By Art Turner

We are sending our children into a future filled with stress and conflict. Parents and teachers have the responsibility to model behaviors and teach skills that will enable our children to be productive, accepting, healthy, and above all, resilient.

1. Self-understanding and acceptance

Self-esteem is a realistic estimate of your own capabilities and worth. People with high self-esteem are productive, responsive, imaginative, and attentive to the needs of others. Encourage your children to develop their natural aptitudes and interests. Set them up for success. Empower them to be more responsible.

2. Adults' understanding and acceptance

Give your children regular, focused, undivided attention. This, more than anything else, communicates your unconditional love.

3. Constructive thinking

We are what we think. Fill your language with statements that help your children see change in a positive way, to view adversity as manageable, to persist until they are successful, and to become more oriented to the needs of others. Prepare your children for the reality that others may not think or believe like they do. Teach your children to identify positive and negative feelings in themselves and others. Replacing destructive thinking with constructive thinking increases self-esteem and improves coping skills.

4. Good decision-making strategies

Making a good decision requires the ability to generate alternative solutions to a problem, predict consequences, view the problem from the perspective of others, and consider how to implement alternatives to reach a solution. Children as young as four or five can usually generate alternatives and

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predict consequences, but advanced decision making skills come later. Model good decision making for your children. Show children how characters in stories make decisions. Let your children make their own decisions whenever possible.

5. Stress-coping strategies

It's not too early to teach children physical relaxation exercises like breathing techniques, some forms of meditation, imagery, and muscle relaxation exercises. Help your children learn to recognize their own stress triggers and responses, and identify which relaxation methods work best for them. And help your kids laugh—read funny stories, watch age-appropriate comedies, and laugh at their jokes.

6. Good nutrition and exercise

Good nutrition optimizes the way your mind and body works. A well-functioning mind and healthy body

increase our self-esteem and resiliency. Make aerobic exercise and recreation a family affair. If your children see you exercise, they are more likely to take it up themselves and develop a lifelong positive habit.

7. A sense of purpose and commitment to personal and social goals

Commitment to goals gives meaning and value to life, and a reason for existence. Children should have more than one goal, and their goals should be realistic. Teach them to be flexible in how they achieve their goals, and help them learn persistence when progress is slow.

8. Social skills and social supports

Healthy relationships build self-esteem and protect from the negative effects of stress. Help your children to build self-awareness skills and to see situations from another's point of view. Teach them to positively manage conflict and disagreement.

Resilient children grow up to be adults who have a sense of control, a positive view of change, and an ability to find meaning and value in life. Now doesn't that describe the kind of people you want to have running the world when you retire?

Art Turner is a writer, musician, and creator of Relaxation Emporium, where you can learn more about stress, stress management, and relaxation techniques. Visit

<http://www.relaxationemporium.com>

Develop Your Child's Critical Thinking Skills

By Marie Magdala Roker

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1. Encourage Questions.

Don't answer every question, instead ask what do they think. Asking questions stimulates conversation between you and your child.

2. Don't Criticize.

Criticism invites low self-esteem. Children feel that they have failed or disappointed their parents when they are criticized. Find alternate ways of correcting the problem. A child will likely shut down communication if they feel that their parents are not supportive.

3. Respect Your Child's Opinions.

Your child is not an extension of you. Although it is difficult to accept at times, it is normal and healthy for your child to have their own opinion. Children who are confident in expressing their opinions are less likely to join gangs or succumb to peer pressure.

4. Teach Your Child To Embrace Diversity.

Encourage your child to learn about different cultures and ethnicities. A well informed child can will understand and respect other people's values.

5. Teach Your Child To Set Personal Boundaries.

Children need to have their personal space respected in order for them to respect other people's personal space. Help your child to establish their boundaries and insist that he/she enforce them with their peers.

6. Establish A Nurturing Environment.

Children thrive in environments in which they know they are loved and respected. Remind them every day that you love them and support them.

7. Understand Your Child's Thinking Process.

In order for you to be an advocate for your child in school, you must know and understand how your child learns. Is he/she creative, logical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic? Know your child's capabilities and accept their creativity.

8. Let Them Think For Themselves.

Encourage independent thinking. Let your child decide (within reason) what is appropriate for them. Give them enough room to make decisions, but also be there in case their plans don't work out.

9. Teach Them Stress Management Skills.

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Help your child to effectively deal with stress. Try not to contribute to their stress with demands and unrealistic expectations. Make learning fun!

10. Teach Your Child To Trust His/Her Instincts.

In order for children to be successful in life, they must learn how to trust their decisions. Your child needs to be confident in trusting his/her instincts and feelings. Children who trust themselves are less likely to participate in unhealthy behaviors.

Marie Magdala Roker is a Family Coach and Certified Breakthrough Parenting Instructor. She is completing her Masters in Health Education at Columbia University's Teachers College. She helps parents to reclaim their lives and students to unlock their academic potential. She is committed to helping build healthy families, one family member at a time.

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