

# Teach them

Communicating and building relationships within families



Families are so important – this is where children are brought up to be the next generation of adults.

But families these days are often different to when we were children – children are cared for in so many different ways: households with only one adult, households with a young person as the head, households with grandparents, households with extended family members.

Whatever kind of household children find themselves in, we need to know that every minute we put into teach-

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ing our children skills is a minute put into their future, our future, and our community.

## What should I teach them?

- Help them understand that they are good people: teach them good values.
- Help them realise that they are strong and can make plans: teach them to see and name their strengths.
- Teach them new things and skills to make them stronger.
- Help them name and voice their feelings: tantrums come from not being able to say "I am angry," or "I am disappointed!"
- Teach them how to make strong, good decisions: gather facts, think about the good things and the bad things, and decide which is the best thing.
- Teach them that bad things - like death and sickness – happen to good people.
- Teach them how to deal with problems: do what you can, get help for the rest.
- Teach them that by working through bad times we learn skills and strengths.
- All of these make children tougher or "more resilient". A resilient child copes more easily with big problems and heals faster, because they are emotionally tough. We want our children to be resilient!

## The resilient child...

- Understands their feelings, can name them and can express them in words.

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- Has memories about his life, remembers people he loved, good things and kindness felt.
- Can find help from his family, school, community or church: the child knows that other people care and that he may ask for help.
- Feels the need to help others and is willing to reach out.
- Knows what is right and wrong.
- Has religion. Allow them to hold onto it, even if it is not the same as yours. Pray with them.
- Can imagine a future and can create goals to reach.
- Is creative, loves trying new things and use his imagination.
- Has a sense of humour.
- Feels proud of who she is and what she can do.



Remember that children develop at different rates.

## How can I make them resilient?

Children cope better with bad things if they...

- Have enough food, a place to live, and clothing and can get health care if needed. This make them feel secure.

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- Are close to and spend time with at least one caregiver. Listen to and play with your children, be interested in what they do and feel.
- Are allowed to make mistakes – we all do, and we all learn from our mistakes. Help them to correct wrongs.
- Are involved in day-to-day activities, family rituals and routines. Children like clear plans for the day.
- Are trusted with chores and tasks.
- Are kept in school as long as you can. In times of sadness and loss, teachers can help. School brings routine, trust and care. Know their teachers.
- Know about their far-off family and how they can be reached in time of crises. Make lists of telephone numbers and addresses and put it up somewhere where it can be seen easily.
- Take part in community and church outings, knows and visit neighbours, the local health care worker and social worker.
- Know how money works and how much money is needed in the family: teach your children about money and savings.



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## 'I am an ordinary person. What can I do?'

You can do a whole lot!

- Allow children to take part in chats with your friends; give them a turn to speak.
- Let them carry out small tasks.
- Tell them stories, rhymes, jokes and riddles.
- Talk about what you are doing and why.
- Tell them about sad, serious or funny things that happened to you: name the feelings you had at the time.
- Tell stories about when you were small.
- Let your children see you read lots of things: newspapers for news, books for fun. Show them what you read, let them see if they can see a word they know.
- Play looking games to help them notice detail. "I spy with my little eye..."
- Point out colours and textures.
- Help them plan their afternoon: can they watch TV? Before or after homework or outside play?
- Look at the nature: do trees/the moon/sky look different today? Why?
- Draw pictures with your child and talk about it. Draw in sand or on misted glass if you do not have paper.
- Let children see you work with letters, accounts and forms and tell them what it is about.

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- Tell your child what you are writing and why: "I am making a shopping list to remind me what to buy."
- Gather shells, stones, leaves. Compare shapes, sizes, roughness, colour.



- Teach them about respect by showing respect.
- Teach them about honesty by being honest.
- Teach them about love by loving them.

Children will teach others these things in turn; they love sharing what they know! Your small effort will make a large change in your whole community.

- Need help?  
Call Childline toll free at **0800 055 555**.
- If you want to know more about positive parenting, visit **www.childlinesa.org.za**

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