

What is Family Resilience?

In simple terms, resilience can be thought of as the ability to handle stressful situations and bounce forward following difficult times. The idea of resilience is to move away from just trying to cope with problems to preparing for future problems by building the strength of a family.

Resilient families are better able to face life's stresses 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.

A resilient family is much like a balloon: strong yet flexible and able to regain its 'shape' quickly after a period of pressure or pile up of multiple stresses. With a little bit of support, all families can be resilient and have the capacity to bounce forward following challenging times.

It is very important to acknowledge that the word 'family' will mean many different things to each person and what is unique to all families are the family members themselves, each with their own special set of strengths. Family members can provide support to one another during difficult times to prevent a 'pile up' and provide the family's' balloon with extra support during times of stress.

Building a resilient family is a continuous process that requires the input of all family members. As shown in Figure 1 below, the key to building the resilience of a family is family members working together to:

- build a sense of family;
- recognise other family and community members and services that are there to support them during difficult times;
- learn new ways of building the strength of the family; and
- prepare for future challenging times.

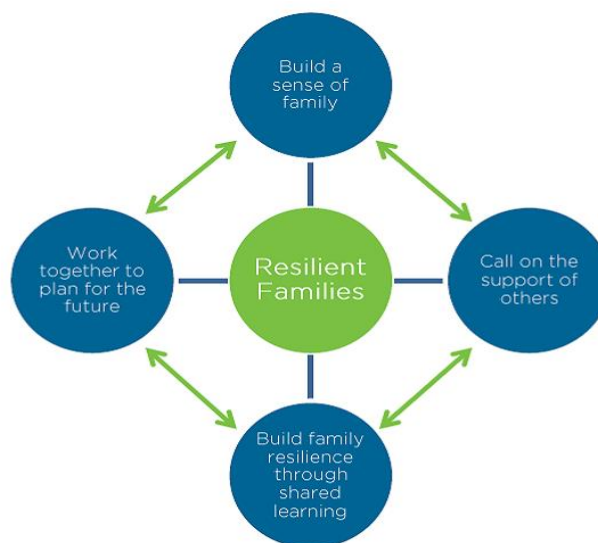


Figure 1: CHiRP Family Resilience and Wellbeing model

The important role of parents in building the resilience of their family

There is a great deal of evidence which looks at the resilience of parents as being one of the most influential factors in ensuring the resilience of other family members; including children and young people. When a parent is strong, flexible and able to look after themselves in a healthy way, this acts as a very strong role model for children and young people in the family.

Many things are beyond our control, but parents have the opportunity to influence and shape the lives of children and young people in the family. Helping children and young people to develop the confidence and skills to face, overcome or even be strengthened by hardship is a powerful thing to teach them.

For more information on useful tips and strategies to build the resilience and wellbeing of your family please visit the CHiRP webpage: www.everymind.org.au/familyresilience

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