

Supporting children to cope with everyday stress

Optimising children's positive experiences

Helping children develop optimism

Helping children to reframe their unhelpful thoughts, feelings and behaviours into helpful ones

Reconnection and repair when things go wrong



Children who cope better with life's everyday setbacks develop good mental health and wellbeing. Some ways adults can support children's developing coping skills include:

Optimising children's positive experiences

- ▶ Keep stress within a manageable everyday range
- ▶ Arrange opportunities for 'ups' that involve fun, joy, and pleasure which provide a bank of positive emotions to buffer against life's everyday 'downs' that may involve hurt, disappointment, frustration or conflict.

Helping children develop optimism

- ▶ Children learn by observing others. Show them how to be optimistic by your own attitude and what you say when things go wrong for you
- ▶ Look for solutions and avoid blaming others or yourself
- ▶ Give children opportunities to succeed
- ▶ Give realistic praise and encouragement.

Helping children to reframe their unhelpful thoughts, feelings and behaviours into helpful ones

- ▶ Help children turn setbacks into a drive to try again
- ▶ Help children to think positively. 'I know that puzzle was hard today, but yesterday I saw you get a hard puzzle out. You kept trying until you found the right place to put the pieces.'

Reconnection and repair when things go wrong

When things go wrong between parents and carers and a child, the most important thing to do is to reconnect and repair the relationship. This is not only essential for the child's mental health and wellbeing but also enables them to learn to deal with relationship problems.

It may not be possible to reconnect right at the time because of strong feelings, but as soon as you can, offer a hug and some words to show that you understand and accept how the child felt.



Maya's story



Three-year-old Maya had a day when things went wrong and thought her father should have been able to make it alright. At bedtime she started to kick and pinch him. He asked her to stop but she continued. He said she would not let her hurt him or anyone else and held her hands to prevent her pinching. She became very upset. He was angry too because he had been doing his best to help her that day. After a little time, Maya's father put his arms around her and said it was not okay to kick and pinch, and asked if she was upset and confused. Maya nodded, cuddled in to him and stopped trying to hurt him. Maya's father said he could not always prevent things going wrong but would always keep her safe and take care of her.

When things go wrong between you and a child, whether small or more important, the chance to repair and reconnect allows the child to feel safe and secure in their relationship with you and in themselves.



HAPPY Principles

The HAPPY Principles also offer some ways to help your child have an optimistic outlook.

Have a go	Accept both success and loss	Practise	Plan for the best outcome	Getting to Yes!
Break tasks and games into manageable pieces so children can succeed. Try to celebrate your child's successes.	Keep an eye on your helpful and unhelpful thinking as this may influence your child.	Allow your child to watch you practise and persevere at activities you enjoy. This will teach your child to do the same.	Encourage children to think situations over and choose outcomes that are enjoyable and build confidence.	Optimism and resilience arise from succeeding even after setbacks.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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