

Managing life's ups and downs

Amelie's story



Two-year-old Amelie had a new baby brother. Amelie was much loved and her parents expected that she would welcome baby Noah with their support. Although Amelie was loving towards the baby, she became very clingy to her mother, started to show off when visitors came to admire the baby and no longer wanted to go to the playgroup that she had always loved. Her parents gave her as much time and love as they could and allowed her to decide for herself whether or not to go to playgroup. Over the next few weeks Amelie gradually became more like her old happy self and one day said that she would like to go to playgroup again.

Everybody's life has ups and downs. Adults sometimes look back on their childhood as a time when they were always happy, but life's ups and downs are a part of childhood too. Children need to build resilience skills to be able to both enjoy good times and deal with hard times. Helping children learn how to manage life's ups and downs and build their coping skills supports their mental health and wellbeing now and into the future.

Feeling good protects mental health and wellbeing.

Did you know that experiencing positive emotions such as joy, pleasure and having fun are essential experiences for building and maintaining a healthy mind across our whole lives?

Skills and qualities that help children cope with life's ups and downs

- ▶ Trust—that the world is safe and that there are caring people to help them.
- ▶ Belief—in their ability to do things for themselves and achieve their goals.
- ▶ Feeling good—about themselves and feeling valued for who they are by their parents and carers.
- ▶ Optimism—that things generally turn out well.
- ▶ Ability to manage their feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

Children develop these skills and qualities over time, initially through their experiences in coping with small stresses with help from supportive adults. When bigger stresses come along, even though at first they might feel quite distressed, children can draw on what they have learned about helping themselves to cope and feel better. Looking to others for support continues to be an effective way of coping.



How are your child's resilience skills developing?

Resilience is the ability to cope with life's ups and downs. Children's resilience is enhanced when they:

- ▶ are loved by someone unconditionally
- ▶ have an older person outside the home they can talk to about problems and feelings
- ▶ are praised for doing things on their own and striving to achieve
- ▶ can count on their family being there when needed
- ▶ know someone they want to be like
- ▶ believe things will turn out all right
- ▶ have a sense of a power greater than themselves
- ▶ are willing to try new things
- ▶ feel that what they do makes a difference in how things turn out
- ▶ like themselves
- ▶ can focus on a task and stay with it
- ▶ have a sense of humour
- ▶ make goals and plans, both short and longer term.

Adapted from the International Resilience Project¹.

Feeling optimistic and hopeful are key parts of mental health and wellbeing.

¹<http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb97a.html>.



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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