

Children and adolescents with learning disabilities experience numerous challenges in their day-to-day lives including academic, social and behavioural struggles. Resilience, the ability to cope with and overcome adversity, is essential for all children, particularly those with learning disabilities. Resilience is a powerful force in helping children overcome not only significant adversity but also everyday stresses. Resilience is a major protective factor for at-risk children and youth. It is also essential for the healthy development of all children.

How is resilience developed?

Resilience is developed through successfully navigating challenging situations. This entails trial and error, bouncing back from disappointments, setting realistic goals, solving problems successfully, relating comfortably with others and treating oneself and others with respect.

Parents play a key role in the development of resilience in their children. Parents need to recognize that simply fixing the problems of their children is not sufficient. Having parents fix their problems will not assist children to identify and use their strengths in order to meet the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis.

How can parents help a child or adolescent with learning disabilities to develop resilience?

The following is not a comprehensive list. It is meant to be a starting point, with strategies that are readily available to most parents.

- ↩ Help your child to feel special and appreciated
 - Recognize, praise and reinforce effort, not just results

- ↩ Help your child find areas of ability and competence
 - Find an activity that your child is able to do and enjoys doing
- ↩ Provide your child an opportunity to contribute
 - Taking care of a pet, assisting a senior citizen, volunteering in the community all build competence
- ↩ Help your child learn to solve problems and make decisions
 - Offer them several options and help them think about how to make a decision
- ↩ Help your child to set realistic expectations and goals
 - Make sure you fully understand the child's strengths and needs
 - Research shows that others' perceptions, particularly parents' perceptions, are strongly related to children's self-perceptions. Children are swayed by the reactions of others. So how you feel about the child will be transmitted verbally and/or non-verbally
 - Don't measure your child's success by how you think he/she should do
- ↩ Help children recognize mistakes as opportunities to learn
- ↩ Use positive discipline methods (not shaming methods)
 - All children thrive with structure, consistency, appropriate expectations, support, and reassurance
- ↩ Provide an atmosphere at home that tolerates/accepts differences

- ↩ If there is a parent or other significant adult who has similar difficulties, that individual may be able to offer support and empathy, which can feel validating
- ↩ Adults who are significant in the lives of individuals with learning disabilities can take on the role of benefactors, offering support, encouragement and guidance
- ↩ Intervene directly when needed, e.g., if child/adolescent is being bullied, if the school program is not meeting his/her needs, if the child/adolescent needs help with homework, if the child/adolescent needs assistive devices or if the child/adolescent needs mental health support (depression, anxiety, risk of self-harm)
- ↩ Intervention often requires involving the child, key adults and institutions in his/her environment in order to build a comprehensive framework of support.

For more information, we recommend *Raising Resilient Children: Fostering Strength, Hope, and Optimism in Your Child*, by Robert Brooks, Ph.D. and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D., Contemporary Books, Chicago, 2001.



Integra, founded in 1967 by parents and professionals, is an accredited Children's Mental Health Centre dedicated to helping children and adolescents who experience social, emotional and behavioural problems related to their learning disabilities. We are a charitable organization administered by a Board of Directors comprised of dedicated volunteers from the community.

Integra has an experienced and multidisciplinary professional staff that is dedicated to creating and implementing a range of programs. Integra serves as a centre for research, practicum placement and continuing education.

Integra is committed to the promotion of a community-wide understanding of the mental health needs of children and adolescents who have learning disabilities, and to improving community-based services for them and their families. A range of clinical services is provided by Integra, as well as related activities in research and evaluation, and in training, consultation, collaboration and advocacy.



Improving the Lives of Children &
Youth with Learning Disabilities

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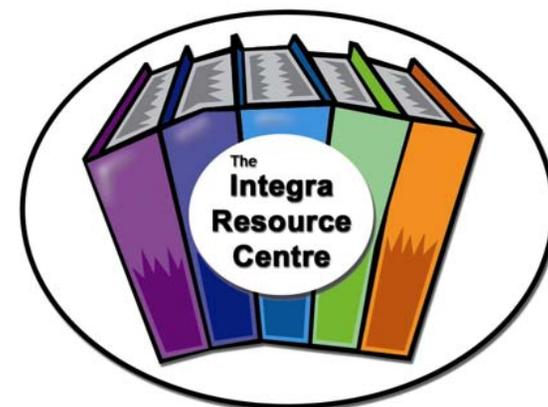


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Tips for Parents

Developing resilience in children and youth with learning disabilities

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