

EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

PARENT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018-2019

Welcome to the *Spring Extra Special Edition Newsletter* for 2018-2019. Each issue contains information for parents and caregivers regarding children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

Teach Your Child Resiliency by Robert Myers, PhD

Every parent wants their child to be resilient. Ask any child psychology or child development expert how valuable resiliency is and he or she will confirm that it is important.

First, let's take a look at what being resilient means. In basic terms, being resilient means the ability to rebound or spring back to original form. Of course, we as parents want to shield and protect our children from every mishap and hurt, but this is not realistic.

As children mature, especially during pubescent and adolescent years, we have to take a step back and bite our lips as we painfully watch our children maneuver their way through this tough time. However, if we step in and act for them, take on their battles, and defend them, we do not allow them the freedom and the space to grow.

Some ways to teach your child how to be resilient during tough times:

Talk It Out

Show your child that you know how bad they feel by being empathetic. Let them know that you are there to talk it out and also to listen. Make certain that your child knows that no one gets through middle school or high school unscathed. It's a rite of passage.

If your child knows that you have an empathetic ear, he or she will bounce back a lot quicker than going it alone.

Give Them Some Space

Make sure to give your child the space he needs to figure it out on his own. Sometimes we as parents want to fix it, make it all better, or just make it go away. However, when we do this we do not offer our child the opportunity to become resilient.

Learning that falls, trip-ups, setbacks, and mistakes are all a part of life does not mean that it has to be the whole of life. Learning that you survive, people forget, and that you can laugh at yourself later on in life are all tools to help them move on. Give them space to figure it out on their own. Let them know that you are there for them while giving them some elbow room.

Teach Them How to Laugh

One of the best ways to gain resiliency is to point out that one day they will look back and have the ability to put things in perspective. Teach them that sometimes they have to chalk it up to being human and, as a human, it's about making and learning from mistakes. Let them know that it's okay to laugh at yourself later on down the road. Teach them that it will get better.

One of the best ways to get them to laugh is to relate a story of yours when you were a young adult and things did not go as planned. Show them that not only did you survive but you thrived instead.

Point out situations where famous athletes and musicians were laughed at or scorned, sent away to find something else to do with their lives, only to succeed above and beyond the dreams, goals, or visions that they had.

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"It takes a person with a mission to succeed."
~Clarence Thomas



Reading Comprehension Through Connection Adapted from article from Gryphon House

It's no secret that children love stories! Reading, on the other hand, can sometimes be more difficult. When children are first learning to read, they can struggle to understand what is going on in a book. It can be difficult for young children to understand a character's actions or to predict what will happen next because they don't fully comprehend what's happening in the plotline.

Parents can facilitate reading comprehension with books to which their child can connect. If the situation in the story is something with which a child is familiar, they will more easily make connections and understand the text as they read it. Children can find connections in almost any story—they only need help identifying those similarities to get started. Shirley Raines and Robert Canady, authors of the Story S-T-R-E-T-C-H-E-R-S series, provide some activities below to help children connect to text and increase reading comprehension.

Silly Fred by Karen Wagner

This story is about a young boy whose silly antics amuse his parents but annoy his uptight neighbor. Young children are often lovingly called silly by their parents, so the setup alone is familiar to them. Many children have experienced sadness or anger when their peers or other adults do not react to their behavior the same way their family does. This story is very relevant to them.

Activity:

Ask the child if you have ever called him silly. Have him tell you what kind of nicknames you have given him like "Silly Monkey," "Silly Willy," etc.

Read the story aloud or take turns reading. After each page is read, ask your child to summarize what happened on the page.

At the end of the story, ask whether your child thinks he would have made the same decisions as Silly Fred. Why or why not?

Arthur's Baby by Marc Brown

Part of the highly popular Arthur series, this story goes through Arthur's fears and anxieties as his family prepares for the arrival of his new baby sibling. Many children experience the birth of their first younger sibling around the time they start school. Even an only child has likely experienced having other family members (such as aunts or cousins) entering their house and have had mixed feelings about it. The conflict is familiar and very important to young children.

Activity:

Ask your child what he thinks it will be like having a new baby in the house. If he has younger siblings, ask what the experience was like for him. If he doesn't, ask if he's ever been nervous about other family members coming to visit.

Read the story aloud or take turns reading a page of the story. After each page is read, ask your child to summarize what happened on the page.

At the end of the story, ask whether Arthur's worries came true or not. Emphasize his conflict and how he managed to work through these worrisome feelings.

Aaron's Shirt by Deborah Gould

This story talks about two things: having a favorite object and growing up. When children are young, they often have a favorite article of clothing, favorite toy, favorite coat, favorite blanket, etc. They also may be getting to the age where they outgrow these favorite items for the first time. Such an experience can be both sad and exciting, and very relatable when put in a story.

Activity

Ask your child about his favorite shirt or other article of clothing. Ask him to draw a picture of it before reading the story. Ask him why it's his favorite and how he would feel if he couldn't wear it anymore.

Read the story aloud or take turns reading it. After each page is read, ask your child to summarize what happened on the page.

Discuss the events of the story and how the child feels about it. What does he think it will be like when he has to give up his favorite object? How does Aaron handle it?

EMPATHY: Teaching Kids to Value Others by Parenting Today Staff

Empathy is one of those strange qualities – something almost everyone wants, but few know how to truly give or receive it. In a world where self-gratification is emphasized, it is in short supply but high demand. This is all the more reason to teach the next generation what it means to have empathy for those around them.

What Is Empathy?

Many people confuse sympathy and empathy, but they are two distinct values. Empathy is not just the ability to understand someone's feelings; criminals often take advantage of people by appearing to understand their feelings and subsequently gaining their trust. Empathy is more than that. Not only is it the ability to recognize how someone feels, but it also values and respects the feelings of another person. It means treating others with kindness, dignity, and understanding.

Kids Need To See Adults Show Empathy

While some children are gifted with naturally kind hearts, in most cases kids need to see empathy modeled by the adults around them. It begins with the way parents relate to their children. Parents who show an interest in the things that matter to their kids and respond to emotions in a positive and caring way are teaching the skill of empathy.

Meet Emotional Needs

When children have their emotional needs met, two things happen. They learn how to meet the emotional needs of others and they are anchored in what they are receiving, meaning that they are secure enough to give to others when the need arises but first they need to receive. An empty jug cannot fill a cup.

Talk To Kids About Emotional Needs

Many adults find it hard to talk about emotional needs or anything related to emotions. Consequently, they spend their lives tiptoeing around the subject of emotions. These are people who don't know how to handle the emotions of others and are uncomfortable with any situation that calls for an emotional response. Sometimes they are afraid of their own emotions because they have never learned how to deal with emotional needs.

It's a good idea to talk to kids about emotions and how other people experience them. Give their emotions names (for example, jealousy, anger, and love) and teach them that these are normal. Talk to them about how to handle emotions in a positive way and point out situations where other people are experiencing emotions. Teach them about respecting the emotions of others and show them how to act in a situation where a response is required.

Look for Real Life Situations to Practice Empathy

There is nothing like a real life example to model what you are teaching. Look for situations that affect another person and talk to your kids about what it means to the people involved and how they might feel. For example, if you see an ambulance speed past, talk about how the family members of the sick person might be feeling.

Play Games

Younger kids in particular love to pretend that they are someone or something else. You can use these fun times for teaching empathy. Get your kids playing the role of another person. This might be a character in a book or on TV, or even someone you know who has been through a significant experience lately. You can act out the story together and ask your kids to stop and imagine how their character might have been feeling at any given moment. This will focus their attention on the emotions that another person might experience when in that situation. You can ask them to make faces that reflect the feelings of their character.

Develop Their Inner Moral Compass

Teaching your kids the difference between right and wrong from a young age gives them a strong internal moral compass that will direct them to make good choices. In situations that require a decision, help them to see how our choices and behavior affect others. Talk to them about how wrongdoing harms others and help them to see the hurt and damage that it causes. It's a good idea to talk to them about the little things such as calling a sibling an unkind name that hurts her feelings or refusing to play with their brother when friends visit. When building a strong moral foundation, start small and begin with the basics.

Empathetic Kids: Givers Not Takers

By raising your kids to understand and practice empathy, you're giving them the gift of giving. In a world where great emphasis is placed on looking out for your own interests, people who are givers are all too rare. But they are the ones who enjoy the greatest satisfaction from life, live the most meaningful lives, and enjoy more rewarding relationships. Teaching your kids empathy is a worthwhile investment for their own futures and for the world they will inhabit.

Giving Your Teen Space by Parenting Today Staff

Raising a teenager is difficult for the best of parents, just as being a teenager is difficult for all teens, regardless of how easy a childhood they had. These are the years when parenting needs to be done delicately. Watching your teen draw away from you can be hurtful and worrying but this is when your child needs that space, and parents **need to give it to them**. Once children are born, they get progressively more distant from their parents, growing their **independence** so that they can become their own person. Teenagers are the culmination of this. They need space to discover themselves as separate beings from their families. It is valuable growing space.

Though it's hard to leave your teenager alone, especially as their behavior becomes more and more **worrisome**, you must create boundaries – for both you and them. This can be as formal or informal as you feel is necessary. Make sure they are aware that you will respect these boundaries that you've set for yourself. Consider giving your teen a say in the boundaries that they would like to see in place. Even if some of them are unreasonable, having this discussion should give you insight into what your teen is thinking, feeling and needing.

But don't let go of your teen entirely. During this phase it can be tempting to just give up entirely once you've started down this path, but resist that temptation. Your teen, more than ever, needs to know that you love them and are there for them. This is a time when many risky behaviors take place and when your teen will test your limits.

Everyone needs space, but no one more than teenagers. As they're slowly separating themselves from their family identity, they need room to discover themselves. Boundaries are important for giving teenagers their privacy but also important for safety and consistency. Let your teen know that they will have a little more space to themselves but don't allow that to create a license for chaos.

FIN News

What Does the Research Say?

30 years of research shows that students with mild to significant disabilities in inclusive settings:

- ◆ gain social and communication skills
- ◆ develop meaningful friendships and a sense of belonging
- ◆ increase participation and independence
- ◆ have more academic objectives in their IEPs
- ◆ increase academic achievement
- ◆ develop positive behaviors
- ◆ take part in more school activities •
- ◆ have fewer absences
- ◆ better prepared for college, career and community living



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Panhandle Area Educational Consortium
753 West Boulevard Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-6131 ~ (877) 873-7232 ~ Fax: (850) 638-6142
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