



you got this!

Coronavirus – an opportunity for resilience

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These are very strange times we're living in. There are many things we previously took for granted that we can't do, or have, right now.

There is something we do have, though - the opportunity to support the resilience of the tamariki in our whānau. (And yes, our own resilience as well!)

Resilience is the ability to develop well even during hard times. Despite what some people think, resilience isn't something that 'just happens', or something some children have while others don't. Resilience comes about through experiences. It can be learned. Whānau and other adults

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have an important role in this, by providing tamariki opportunities to develop their inner resources.

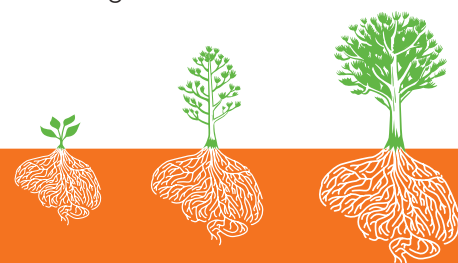
The 7 Cs of resilience

Resilience is made up of a number of ingredients, which have sometimes been referred to as the 7 Cs. Let's have a look at these. How can parents and whānau best support children to be resilient at this stressful time? What are some examples?

Competence

Competent tamariki know how to handle situations well.

Our tamariki are dealing with lots of disappointments at the moment – perhaps their birthday celebration had to change, or maybe they are missing beloved grandparents and friends. Making a point of noticing when they handle these situations well, or even take steps towards it, and letting them know you have noticed will help build their sense of competence. Helping them to recognise, and build on, their own individual strengths builds a sense of competence.



Let them know you appreciated their kindness or helpfulness.

Like all of us, siblings will have different strengths from each other. Age will make a difference here too. Giving them challenges that they are capable of meeting is important; there are, of course, things young children cannot be expected to be competent at.

There are many opportunities to develop competence at the moment, whether it's helping Dad stir the baking, or Mum weed the veg garden. Help them feel a sense of achievement.



Confidence

Being competent, as outlined above, is the basis for confidence. We need to be able to handle things, and to know we can handle things, in order to feel confident that we can be resilient when times get tough.

Parents and whānau can help children see when they have done well. Praise can be helpful, but it's important that it's honest and real. Every painting isn't a masterpiece, but might show imagination, concentration, effort, or highly creative use of colour. These are all qualities worth noticing.

In-between finding a shop that sells flour and queuing for groceries, it's great to 'catch our children when they're good.' Notice the time they share a favourite toy with their sister, help set the table or show kindness to their upset brother. Let them know you appreciated their kindness or helpfulness. You are letting them know that they have things to be confident about.

Connection

The sense of connection that pēpi and tamariki have with their whānau is vital to their resilience. There can be pluses and minuses with extra time together at the moment! Even times of conflict contain lots of opportunities for learning. When conflicts or arguments are resolved well, this can support a child's resilience. They see that, although conflict does happen, there are ways of resolving it without anyone getting hurt.



Face to face connection beyond our household is limited right now, but there are other ways children can connect with whānau. Video chatting or even just phone-calls with grandparents, for example, can help to keep these connections strong. If they enjoyed reading stories or singing songs together before, perhaps they can continue these things using technology.

A stressful situation has the potential to either harm or help a child's development and resilience. Supportive adults make all the difference.

Character

A 'sense of right and wrong' helps tamariki to make good choices. Learning the right thing to do, and choosing to do it, involves understanding the way in which their behaviour affects other people.

Putting teddy bears in windows and doing chalk drawings on driveways for other children to enjoy while they are out for a walk, and similar things, might help tamariki feel connected to others in their street and help to foster a sense of community. Find ways they can think of others and experience the joy this unselfishness brings.

There are plenty of opportunities to see good character in action around us at the moment. Most people are giving up many of the things they'd like to do, because they are all working towards a common goal in beating the virus.



Children will benefit from seeing this, as they are developing a strong sense of the right way to behave. "Look, they are doing the right thing" is a good thing to say when you come across people social distancing, caring for others and making sacrifices.

Contribution

Children who contribute to the wellbeing of others are likely to have a sense of purpose. Through contributing, they're increasing their competence, character and connection to others as well. They are 'helpful', not 'helpless' and this increases their resilience.

Following the rules around staying home and handwashing, for example, are important ways we can all contribute at the moment. Talking with tamariki can help them see the link between what they are doing and how it helps protect all our health, especially for our older whānau members.

There are many ways tamariki can contribute at the moment. Playing quietly for a few minutes to let a parent



finish some work, helping prepare kai, playing a game with their brother or sister or helping clear dishes away after dinner all may help them feel they are making a worthwhile contribution to their whānau and to the wider community effort.

Role modeling matters too. When tamariki see you washing your hands, following the guidelines in place for the pandemic, and making extra effort to call those who are more isolated at the moment, they're learning that contribution is valued in your whānau.

If tamariki are old enough to understand, make sure they know about those who are working hard in hospitals, schools and supermarkets, among other places, to help the rest of us.

Coping

Healthy ways of coping with stress are an important part of resilience. When parents model positive coping strategies this is a win-win! When we go for a local walk, call a friend, or pull some weeds to cope with our own stresses at the moment, we are also showing our tamariki ways to cope with stressful situations. It can be helpful to talk about this "I

was getting pretty grumpy, but I feel much calmer after my walk."

What works for one child, may not work for their sister or brother. Some need quiet time, others need to get rid of excess energy. And what helps us, might not help our tamariki. Maybe they have a favourite book, a tree to climb, or really love a cuddle. Share what you notice about what helps them, "Remember when you were sad the other day? Running around outside playing hide-and-seek seemed to help."

For all of us coping might be something we do best alone sometimes, but we also need other people at times too. Asking for help when you genuinely need it is an important part of coping. When tamariki see parents reaching out for help when needed, be it calling a friend or visiting the foodbank, they learn that we don't have to cope on our own.

Babies and young children are going to need their parents' support more at the moment than they usually would.

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Control

There's a lot we can't control right now. The sense of having some control is important in reducing the impact of a stressful experience, and in increasing resilience. Children are likely to have even less control over their lives than adults. So finding suitable ways to share control with tamariki is important.

Within the limits we face, give tamariki appropriate choices. Even things that might seem insignificant to us, can make a difference. The purple or green top? Banana or apple? Play dough or painting? "We can't visit Poppa at the moment, but you could call him on the phone, or draw a picture for when we do see him." That way they feel they have a little more control over how their day goes.

Children also sometimes feel responsible for, or guilty about, events that are not in their control. So it's important to make sure that children know they are not responsible for the coronavirus, or its spread.

Conclusions

We all have a lot to deal with right now. And this isn't a checklist to measure our parenting against. Chances are, you're already helping your child develop in many of these areas. We all have different strengths in our parenting and focus on some areas more than others. This is an opportunity to think about what other aspects we can support our tamariki with.

The pandemic is an opportunity to support our tamariki, of any age, to strengthen their resilience. This will stand them in good stead as they inevitably come across other challenges in the future.

Glossary of Māori terms:

Kai – food, meal

Pēpi – baby, infant

Tamariki - children

Whānau – extended family

If you enjoyed this article, here are some others that may be of interest:

Resilient Rangatahi

<https://www.brainwave.org.nz/resilient-rangatahi/>

Supporting children's social and emotional development

<https://www.brainwave.org.nz/supporting-childrens-social-and-emotional-development/>

Stress: the good, the bad and the ugly

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/stress-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>



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