

# THE SEVEN C'S OF RESILIENCE BUILDING WITH TEENAGERS

## 1. COMPETENCE: *SPECIFIC ABILITIES/SKILLS* TO HANDLE SITUATIONS EFFECTIVELY.

-must be earned the hard way by getting in the game of life, in winning *and especially* in losing

-acquired through *actual experience*

-helps teens learn to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations

### COMPETENCE BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:

- Encourage any/all activities, *structured or not*. Baseball and debate teams are great; so are “useless” rock n’ roll bands
- Say lots about what they do well; say little as possible about what they do poorly
- When pointing out a mistake, stay narrow focused: don’t say “*you always do this*”; instead try “*if you had to do over again, what would you do differently?*”
- Don’t lecture with answers; do force thinking with questions
- Let them make non-lethal mistakes; don’t try to excessively protect them: *bad decisions made well* (by your kid) *are more strengthening than good decisions made poorly* (forced by you)
- Don’t compare them to others (especially to sibs)

## **2. CONFIDENCE: A BELIEF IN SELF THAT PROJECTS COMPETENCE THE INTO FUTURE**

### **CONFIDENCE BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- Expect the best: *not of achievements*, but personal qualities such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness; “*I know you’re better than that decision you made.*”
- Don’t treat them as stupid; do treat as someone who is learning to navigate the world. *Frame mistakes as learning opportunities*
- Praise them *often but honestly* about *specific achievements* (“wins”), and even more about *good efforts that fail* (“losses”)
- Encourage *them* to push *themselves*, don’t push them: say “*What do you have to lose by trying?*” and “*How will you feel if you don’t try?*”
- Avoid shame: frame bad decisions as *symptoms*, not *sins*

## **3. CONNECTIONS: THE INVISIBLE LIFELINES THAT BUILD RESILIENCE MORE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR**

### **CONNECTION BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- Promote physical safety and emotional security within the home: avoid fear-based parenting (yelling, ridiculing and punishing). Try respect-based methods (e.g. pre-informed consequences)
- Remind them that you are crazy in love with them *especially* in conflict, “*love you too much to help you to hurt yourself*”
- Be like the mafia: *take their failures as business errors, not personal attacks*
- Allow them to express *all* emotions as long as not abusive: “*I understand that you hate me right now. I feel bad for that, but I love you too much to let you do something that can hurt you.*”

- **Model positive conflict resolution:** (*“I love you even though we disagree”*) vs negative (avoiding/exploding)
- **Use consequences (pre-informed outcomes of decisions) vs. punishments (hurting them for being hurtful)**

#### **4. CHARACTER: *WHAT YOU DO WHEN NO ONE’S LOOKING***

##### **CHARACTER BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- **Show how your kid’s behaviors affect other people in good and bad ways as *ripples in the pond*:** “you have no idea how happy you made grandmom when you...”
- **Allow them to clarify their own values *especially if you disagree*:** “How the heck can you be a Giants fan?” vs. “Tell me what you love about the Giants”
- **Model the importance of caring for others and *what that does for you***
- **Demonstrate the importance of community: emphasize how, for better and for worse, we are all connected, and how character makes that connection better:** *“I love helping out your coach. She’s an incredible lady to give so much of her time. Look at how she cares about your teammates...”*
- **Help them develop a sense of purpose and meaning in life:** *“What is this all about, for you?”* Give them *questions, not answers*
- **Proactively stand up to hateful prejudice. Be very clear how you see that stuff.**
- **Show how you think of others’ needs when making decisions: talk out loud to yourself in front of your kid:** *“I’d love to play golf today, but mom could really use a break.”*
- **Share own experiences:** *“I once did a nice thing and no one knew about it but me. That felt great. It felt less great the more people found out.”* (the hero’s dilemma)

## **5. CONTRIBUTION: *CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE PEBBLE AT A TIME***

### **CONTRIBUTION BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- Continually reference the “real world” of people in need vs. the “Disney world” many of us take for granted.
- Model generosity with your own time and money
- Show how we really change the world with one pebble at a time: *“That one person we fed today might disagree with you that small acts are pointless.”*
- Create opportunities for each child to contribute in some way. Don’t forget the power of a well-placed bribe (e.g. an incentive for working in the homeless shelter); *extrinsic rewards can shape intrinsic beliefs when accompanied by thought-provoking questions.*

## **6. COPING SKILLS: *THE MARTIAL ARTS OF RESILIENCE***

### **COPING SKILLS BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- Help them with perspective to distinguish life *horrors* from *frustrations* (i.e. genocide vs. social rejection): *“What is an example of a recent horror in the world? Ok. Now think: Is getting rejected a horror, or a frustration?”*
- Model positive coping strategies by narrating your own process: *“This feels scary right now, but I know the sun will come up; can’t let my fear make my decisions.”*
- Allow some unstructured “wasted” time. Fantasy and playtime build problem solving skills and promote creativity.
- Model the serenity prayer: *“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”*

- **Model/narrate (vs. preach) the importance of exercise, nutrition, and adequate sleep: “I feel so much better when I...”**

## **7. CONTROL: HOPE IN ACTION**

### **CONTROL BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- **Show how most things happen as a direct result of someone’s actions and choices**
- **Constantly point out their successes (big and small) to remind them that they can succeed. Kids experience much more failure than success**
- **Link autonomy with responsibility: “You can earn use of the car by showing emotional control.”**
- **Use consequences versus punishment. Be the respectful (vs. angry) cop in conflict**

Seven “Cs” from *Building Resilience in Children and Teens* courtesy of The American Academy of Pediatrics

Handout courtesy of Michael Bradley, Ed.D.

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**\*\*\*\*\*Check out the website for details on how you can get reimbursed for Crazy-Stressed by posting a review on Amazon.\*\*\*\*\***

To stay up to date on current teen issues, visit Dr. Bradley at [www.doctormikebradley.com](http://www.doctormikebradley.com) and/or like him on Facebook.

**\*\*\*\*Dr. Bradley is available for phone consultations! Details at [www.doctormikebradley.com](http://www.doctormikebradley.com)\*\*\*\***

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