

## EVERYDAY STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING YOUNG CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS

Early childhood education providers play an important role in the development of young children and are often a significant source of support during times of adversity. Below are several strategies that early care providers can use to help children develop resilience, organized into categories from the 7 C's Model.

### COMPETENCE

Provide children with opportunities to learn new skills every day – from basic self-care (hand washing) to more complicated social skills (like problem solving). Below are three different approaches that can be used to teach skills to children:

#### 1. INSTRUCTIONS: TEACH SKILLS BY TELLING

This is simply teaching a child how to do something by explaining how to do it. Just be sure to give good instructions:

- First, make sure you have the child's attention
- Get down to the child's eye level
- Use words that the child understands
- Repeat the instructions as often as needed
- As the child gets better at remembering what to do, begin to phase out your instructions

Use an image to help the child picture the instructions you are giving. The child can eventually look at the picture by him or herself when ready to work independently. Pictures are particularly helpful with children who have trouble understanding words.

#### 2. MODELING: TEACHING KIDS BY SHOWING

Modeling is one of the best ways to teach a child a new skill. This involves showing a child how to do something instead of telling them how to do it.

Consider the following:

Use modeling to teach a child skills that involve non-verbal communication, like a thumbs up means

**“good job”** or **“okay”**

As you are modeling, point out the important parts of what you are doing. For example, **“see how I am ...”**

Give lots of opportunities for the child to practice after you have modeled the skill.

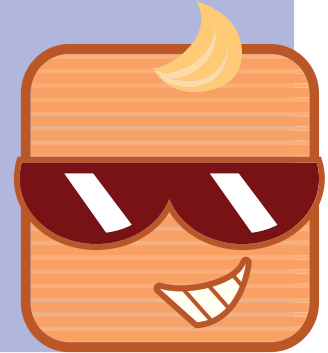
### 3. STEP BY STEP: TEACHING SKILLS BY BREAKING DOWN TASKS

Teach new skills by breaking down tasks into smaller steps so that the child is only learning one step at a time. Once the child has learned the first step, then you teach the next step, then the next, and so on.

#### STEP BY STEP TEACHING EXAMPLE

Here is how you can break down the task of washing hands:

1. Climb up on stool
2. Turn on cold water
3. Hold both hands under water
4. Push pump of soap dispenser
5. Sing Happy Birthday/ ABC twice
6. Dry hands with a clean towel



#### CONFIDENCE

#### HELP CHILDREN OVERCOME THE FEAR OF FAILURE:

Consider deliberately making mistakes in front of your group of students and follow those mistakes with statements like

**“Oh well, I’ll have to try that again, that didn’t work”.**

Use positive language and punctuate your interactions by using phrases like

**“Oh gee, we might have to try that again ... Let’s build the tower again, it fell over ... You can do it ... keep trying”.**

#### HELP CHILDREN DISCOVER THEIR INTERESTS:

Include opportunities for creativity. Do activities beyond drawing or painting. Consider photography, music, working with clay, wood, water or shadows. Give children time to explore different materials and come up with their own projects and designs.

#### FOCUS ON PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:

Consider activities that provide direct opportunities to problem solve. For example, ask children to build a simple bridge between two tables by working together in a group.

Provide prompts to help children think through the situations they are facing. For instance, if a child is teased by a peer, ask questions like:

**“What do we do? What do we say to someone if they do something we don’t like? We say stop. Now go and say something in a kind way”.**

## OTHER IDEAS

Practice positive self-talk with children. For instance, when you hear a child say **“I can’t do this”** teach him or her to say **“I’m going to keep trying”** or **“I CAN do this”**

Give children an opportunity to lead appropriate activities. For instance, they can lead a dance to a familiar song during music time.

Avoid comparing children to others. Do not make statements like **“Look how well David does it, why can’t you do it like that too.”**

Provide support and encouragement. Notice small positive achievements and praise the child by telling them what a great job they’re doing, and specify what they’re doing rather than just saying **“good job.”** You can say things like **“I really like the way you returned the toys where they belong. You’ve done a great job.”**

## CHARACTER



### NOTICE CHILDREN’S ACTS OF KINDNESS:

Praise children for accomplishing a new task. Catch them being kind, generous and thoughtful and tell them how pleased you are

### NOTICE ACTS OF KINDNESS IN OTHERS

Notice and point out the positive things other people do. For instance, if a parent brings treats for all of the children in a group, say something like

**“That was very kind of David’s mother to bring in a treat for us all!”**

## PROMOTE RESPONSIBILITY

Help children take responsibility for their behaviors, including failures and mistakes. For instance, if a child spills their drink, ask them to help clean up their mess or if a child makes a mean statement about a peer, ask them think about how the peer may have felt and then have them apologize.

## REINFORCE THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN

In group settings children will naturally form stronger bonds with specific peers; however, caregivers should help children realize the importance of other children’s feelings while still maintaining best friendships. Consider the following:

- Plan group activities or games and make it a point to say that the activity can’t be done unless everyone participates. Have the children help get the attention of peers who perhaps are distracted or are finishing another task.
- Put a spin on classical games or songs to create group activities. For example, pair children up facing one another with knees bent in front of them and holding hands. Play the song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and instruct the

children to rock back and forth in time to the song. They will need to work together and pay attention to each other in order to keep synchronized.

- If a child expresses dislike of a peer ask what is going on. For instance, if David says ‘I don’t like Julia anymore. I don’t want to play with her,’ go out of your way to figure out what the problem was and encourage the children to solve their differences.

## CONTRIBUTION

### ACKNOWLEDGE CHILDREN’S CONTRIBUTIONS:

- Point out spontaneous acts of kindness such as holding the door open for someone, helping a peer finish a task or when children are taking turns
- Give children age-appropriate “special tasks” to help with – like setting the table at lunch time or helping a younger child. Acknowledge the child for their contribution.

### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE:

- Organize opportunities for children to contribute to a particular need. For example, arrange to draw pictures and mail them to children impacted by a natural disaster.
- Ask children to bring in a canned food item and donate the goods to a local food bank. Teach children how food banks help families when they need food and acknowledge that their contribution will help someone in need.

### ALLOW CHILDREN TO CONTRIBUTE IDEAS:

- Contribution isn’t only about good deeds or actions, children also need to know that they can contribute ideas that will be taken seriously and respected. When a child gives an idea (like suggests a particular song during music time), consider it and even solicit ideas.

## COPING

### FOCUS ON MANAGING EMOTIONS

- Use sensory experiences to help children become calm. For example, the use of water trays, slime trays or finger paints may help foster feelings of reassurance and coping.
- When a child is distressed, acknowledge their feelings in the moment. Consider saying to the child, “I can see you’re sad”, and “It’s okay to cry.”
- Help young children put words to they feel. For instance, you may say to a child who is developing language

**“You’re smiling – you seem to feel happy!”**

- Teach strategies to manage uncomfortable emotions – like deep breathing. Use strategies like elephant breathing to help children remember deep breathing.



#### ELEPHANT BREATHING

Stand with your feet wide apart and your arms dangling in front of your body like an elephant’s trunk. As you breathe in deeply through your nose, raise your arms up high above your head. Then slowly swing your arms down again as you breathe out through your mouth.

## CONTROL

### FOSTER INDEPENDENCE & RESPONSIBILITY

- Allow children to complete tasks on their own at developmentally appropriate times. For instance, hand washing or unpacking their bag.
- Have children retrieve their own hidden objects or replace toys in their proper location when they are finished.

### PROVIDE STRUCTURE, ROUTINE & CHOICES

- Always keep a well-established routine so children know what is expected of them and what to expect; this helps children feel safe.
- Give children opportunities to make decisions. Children need structure, but when they are offered choices within that structure this can foster their sense of belonging and autonomy. You can give children choices like selecting a song from a selection of music or the option to choose if they'd like to use a red glue stick vs. a white one.
- Foster Belonging by having a designated space for each child. This can be a small container, basket or cubby where they can keep their belongings. Have a space to display any artwork or projects children complete.

## CONNECTION

### BUILD SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

- Look for opportunities to help children practice empathy. For instance, if you are reading a book about a character who is having a difficult time, ask the children how they would feel if they were experiencing the same things as the character.
- If you have several children of the same age, include 'Circle Time' in your daily schedule. You can pass a ball around the circle and the person with the ball takes a turn to speak or to share a special object or toy they brought from home.
- If child is out sick have peers prepare a 'get well soon' note or drawing and make arrangements for the peer to receive it



### TEACH CHILDREN TO RESPECT DIFFERENCES:

- Consider using children's books & videos:
  - Read books that show examples of different people and traditions of the world. After reading these books, prepare a cultural dish for children to taste.
  - Look for videos that teach about children of different abilities and specialties. For example, Sesame Street videos of Julia – a character with Autism.
- Teach children greetings from around the world. For example, in the United States people say 'hello.' In other countries, like India, people bow and put hands together and say 'namaste.'
- In addition to understanding differences, help children find similarities between them and their classmates. For instance, they may have the same favorite color or enjoy the same snacks.

## CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH UNCONDITIONAL LOVE:

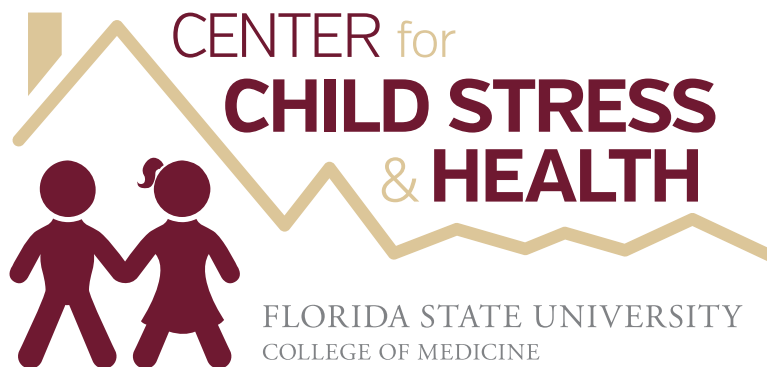
- Build relationships with love, respect, fairness and trust
- Provide correction when needed, but always sending the message that 'I love you no matter what, even when you are misbehaving.

## TEACH GENTLY:

- The caregiver's **presence** should convey peace, protection and caring by being calming and welcoming
- The Caregiver's **eyes** should be soft and accepting – providing warm gazes
- **Hands** offer physical contact in a safe manner
- **Words** consist of uplifting and positive messages speaking of unconditional acceptance and love bringing encouragement to the child

### UNCONDITIONAL LOVE IN THE CLASSROOM

They don't **care** what you know  
until  
they know you **care**.



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