

Your Guide To

Building Your Child's Resilience Through Play

"When I let my child cry, does it affect them psychologically? When something happens in the family, does it affect my child for life? What can I do to help my child feel safe?"

As parents, we hope to always be able to protect our children. Yet in reality, we cannot. How then can we help our children develop resilience such that they are able to cope with difficult situations or experiences?

Cheryl Ong, Senior Psychologist, **Jolene To**, Psychologist Assistant, and **Chiang Jing Jing**, Senior Occupational Therapist at the Child Development Unit, National University Hospital share how we can build resilience in children through play.



Why play?

Parents can encourage resilience in their young ones through positive relationships, providing a sense of safety and developing their socio-emotional capacity. When children are not yet able to talk about or process their feelings, the best way parents can help them cope is by playing with them.

Some common misconceptions about play

Myth	Fact
My child is not learning anything through play.	Your child is engaging in serious learning when he/she plays. It is an opportunity to grow in every aspect of development. It is a safe (place/space) to experience failure and try again.
Playing together is not a good use of time.	Playing with your child helps to build a positive relationship between you and your child. It is the best way to give them a sense of safety, especially when other routines have to change. It builds up your child's emotional 'bank account'.
Playing is time-consuming. I don't have time for that.	Make it a habit to engage your child regularly through play. Start with just 10 minutes a day or set aside 20 minutes on weekends and keep at it!

How can I build my child's socio-emotional capacity through play?

Be a Role Model

Children learn through imitation. As you play, model what you would like them to do or how you would like them to respond.



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Be a Coach

Help your child express what he/she thinks or feels. Suggest what you would like them to do and/or how you would like them to respond.



Being a role model	Type of skills parents can model/coach	Being a coach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "This puzzle has so many pieces. I feel so frustrated because it is so difficult." 	<p>Labelling emotions: Being able to identify and acknowledge emotions will help your child better manage them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I know you are feeling frustrated because this puzzle is so difficult." "I can see you are angry because your sister broke your dinosaur toy."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I'm so angry because you are not listening to the rules of the game. I'm going to walk away and calm down before I come back." 	<p>Regulating emotions: Learning to calm down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I know you're disappointed because you did not win the game. Would you like a hug to feel better or would you like to play again?"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I want to share my block with you." or "It is now your turn to kick the ball to the goal. I'll wait to go after you." 	<p>Social skills: Sharing, waiting, taking turns, requesting etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "If you really want this toy, you will need to ask, 'Can I have the toy please?'"

Useful tips



- 1) Remember to praise your child and enjoy the bonding time!
- 2) Modelling and coaching strategies are not limited to play time. They can also be used in everyday situations to teach your child other skills, even beyond socio-emotional skills or resilience.
- 3) Find more ideas for play [here](#).

For information on NUH Child Development Unit, visit: <https://www.nuh.com/nuhkids-cdu>

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