THE SEVEN C’S OF RESILIENCE BUILDING WITH CHILDREN (K-12)

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 kids learn to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations.

**COMPETENCE BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

- Encourage any/all activities, *structured or not.* Soccer and dance teams are great; so are “useless” rock n’ roll bands and playing with pots and pans.
- Say lots about what they do well; say as little as possible about what they do poorly.
- When pointing out a mistake, stay narrowly focused with questions, not answers. Don’t say “you always do this”; instead try “if you had to do this over again, what would you do differently?”
- Let them make 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 upon your kid).*
- 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. When correcting, don’t directly criticize but focus on growth potential: “I know you’re better than that…”
- Don’t treat them as stupid; do treat as someone who is learning to navigate the world. *Frame mistakes as wonderful learning opportunities:* “Great! Now you learned how to not do that! So what should you try next?”
- Praise them *often but honestly* about specific achievements (“wins”), and even more about good efforts that fail (“losses”): “I am so impressed with how you kept playing hard ESPECIALLY when you were losing! That’s easy when you’re winning.”
- Encourage them to push themselves, don’t push them: “What do you have to lose by trying?” “How will you feel if you don’t try?”
- Avoid shame. Frame bad decisions as symptoms (benchmarks of learning), not sins (things that bad people do).

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, hitting, ridiculing and punishments). Instead use previously informed consequences (outcomes of choices).
- Remind them that you are crazy in love with them especially in conflict: “I 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’m sorry 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 (emotional withdrawal, anger).

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

**CHARACTER BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:**

• Show how the 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 with those flowers.”

• 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 narrate *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 for the better*: “I love helping out your coach. She’s an incredible lady to give so much of her time. Look at how she helps your teammates…”

• Help them develop a sense of purpose and meaningfulness of life: “How did you feel after you shared your cookies with that girl who had none?” “What is this life all about, for you?” Give them age appropriate *questions, not answers.*

• 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” in which many of us live.
• 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 kindnesses are pointless.”
• Create opportunities for each child to contribute in some way; don’t forget the power of a well-placed bribe (allowance for working in the homeless shelter); extrinsic rewards become intrinsic payoffs as they feel good about helping.

6. COPING SKILLS: THE MARTIAL ARTS OF RESILIENCE

COPING SKILLS BUILDING JOBS FOR PARENTS:
• Help them with perspectives to distinguish life frustrations from horrors (e.g. no ice cream vs. no food; social rejection vs. mass shootings).
• Model positive coping strategies: narrate your own responses: “This feels scary right now, but I know I’ll be OK. I can’t let my fear make my decisions.”
• Allow some unstructured “wasted” time: fantasy and unstructured play are great relaxation techniques and they promote creativity.
• Model the serenity prayer: “Grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
• Model and narrate (share your own feelings vs. preaching) 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: “I feel great that I fixed our roof versus golf yesterday. Now we’re fine even though it’s pouring outside.”
• Constantly point out their small successes to remind them that they can and do succeed; kids hear much more about their failures than successes.
• Link autonomy with responsibility: “If you get your bath by 7PM, you can stay up another 15 minutes.” “Each day you do well with your temper you earn 30 minutes of supervised driving time towards your driver’s license.”
• Always be the calm cop in conflict/disciplining. Model emotional control especially in the face of provocation. Losing it in front of our kids teaches them how to lose control. They already know all about that.
Seven “Cs” from *Building Resilience in Children and Teens* courtesy of The American Academy of Pediatrics


To book Dr. Bradley for a speaking engagement, contact Sandy McWilliams – 253-468-3010 (sandyhshb@gmail.com), or visit his website, www.docmikebradley.com.

(Rev. 11/9/2021)