




# Building Resilience for Children

A simple guide to help you and your family feel calm, centred and in control.





A man with a beard and a young boy are in a park, planting a small tree. The man is on the left, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt, and the boy is on the right, wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are both looking at the tree they are planting. The background is a sunlit park with trees and grass.

**The Building Resilience program by MediHerb® has been specially designed to help you work with your healthcare practitioner to build on your child's existing strengths, develop new ones and improve your child's ability to cope when times are tough.**

This empowering program also includes helpful information and lifestyle strategies to help you better support your child with stress, anxiety and insomnia.

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## Important

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The information in this booklet has been specially designed for use under the guidance of a suitably qualified healthcare professional and is not suitable for everyone. Your practitioner will determine which parts of this program are suitable for your child and which need to be modified for their personal circumstances.









# Supporting Children with Stress and Anxiety

As much as we'd like to, we can't protect our children from every possible source of stress. In fact, to do so would be detrimental, because coping with and overcoming adversity is one of the ways they become increasingly resilient as they get older.

Nevertheless, if your child is anxious or isn't coping well, it's important to take steps to relieve their distress and address what's going on for them.

## What Causes Stress and Anxiety in Children?

Children and teens often experience stress and/or anxiety during times of change or adjustment, especially situations that have a significant impact on their sense of safety and stability, such as:

	Experiencing the loss of a parent or grandparent		Experiencing pain or illness
	Family separation or divorce		Bodily changes (e.g. puberty)
	Being bullied, abused or neglected		Financial hardship
	Moving to a new house or changing school		Living in an unsafe environment

In other cases, childhood anxiety and stress are often related to doubts about whether they are 'good enough' or pressure to perform at their best. For example, they may worry about their school marks or sports performance, whether people like them, or whether they fit in with their peers.



### References

Beyond Blue Ltd. Building resilience in children aged 0-12: A practice guide. Published 2017 and accessed March 2019 from [http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1810\\_A](http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1810_A)

National Institutes of Health (US), MedLine Plus Medical Encyclopedia. Stress in childhood. Published 2019 and accessed April 2019 from: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002059.htm>

# Is My Child Stressed or Anxious?

Children aren't always capable of identifying, understanding or expressing their feelings, so it's important to be alert to signs that your child is stressed or distressed. Some of the most common include:

 Physical	 Emotional	Other Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Disturbed sleep</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares or night terrors</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reduced appetite</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Headache</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stomach ache</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bedwetting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Talking about anxieties, worries or fears</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased shyness or clinginess</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Weepiness or whinging</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Temper tantrums or obstinance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Naughtiness</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Inability to concentrate</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor school performance</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Being socially withdrawn e.g. not participating in family or school activities</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Regression to behaviour they've previously grown out of</li></ul>
<p>Add your own:</p> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<p>Add your own:</p> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<p>Add your own:</p> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>



# Helping Children Build Resilience for Stress

**Just like adults, kids do best when they feel empowered and supported and can develop coping strategies that help them manage and recover from stress.**

The “I AM, I CAN, I HAVE” model was originally developed for children, so it’s an excellent framework to think about and work with when your goal is to help your child build resilience.

Use this version to identify the personal strengths, skills and support structures available to your child, involving them in the process wherever possible.

You can then acknowledge and reinforce these resilience-building factors when talking to them, facilitating increased confidence in their own coping abilities and helping them feel safe and supported.

<b>‘I AM...’</b> (Examples of personal strengths to acknowledge and reinforce in your child)	<b>‘I CAN...’</b> (Examples of skills your child has learned or is developing)	<b>‘I HAVE...’</b> (Examples of external resources available)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Lovable</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Responsible</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Persistent</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Caring</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Determined</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Brave</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk about my fears and feelings with my parents and teachers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Calm myself down when I feel upset or sad</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Tell my teacher when I don’t understand or am feeling bullied at school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents and teachers that make me feel safe and protected</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Positive role models in my life</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> People who encourage me to learn and be independent</li></ul>
<b>Add your own:</b> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<b>Add your own:</b> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<b>Add your own:</b> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

## References

Grotberg, E. A guide to promoting resilience in children: strengthening the human spirit. Early Childhood Development: Practice & Reflections Number 8. Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1995.

Worsley, L. Building Resilience in Three Australian High Schools, Using The Resilience Doughnut Framework. In Resilience Interventions for Youth in Diverse Populations, (Eds, Prince-Embury, S. & Saklofske, D.H.) Springer Science and Business Media, New York, 2014.

# Don't Forget

**Weaving several of these factors together can provide an even stronger sense of resilience than employing any of them in isolation.**

Help your child to connect the dots between their feelings, their actions and the supportive resources at their disposal by coming up with strategies they can employ in specific situations where they're prone to feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

**For example:** If I get confused at school, I'll use my determination [personal strength] to ask my teacher for help [skill].

I know I can ask my dad when I get home too, because he loves helping me learn new things [external resources].

## Family Tip

Ensure the whole family makes time for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Food = fuel, so filling the 'tank' will encourage feelings of calm and promote energy.



# Creating A Healthy Lifestyle for Your Child

**Your child relies on you to help them establish a lifestyle that enables them to thrive.**

Laying down healthy habits now teaches children the importance of looking after themselves, helps them express and manage their emotions, and helps them develop the internal and external resources that will equip them for a lifetime of resilience. From this perspective, consider which of the factors below already exist and are working well in your child's world, and which you can introduce to their daily routine or increase in prominence.



## References

Beyond Blue Ltd. Building resilience in children aged 0-12: A practice guide. Published 2017 and accessed March 2019 from [http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1810\\_A](http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1810_A)

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Bennett, C. et al. Little people, big lives report: foundations for healthy Australian children in the 21st century. Sydney: University of Notre Dame and Sanitarium, 2019.

# Your Child's Healthy Lifestyle Tracker

**A visual tracker can assist in motivating your child to develop new, healthier lifestyle habits. It's a great form of encouragement for both you and them.**

Use this template with the guidance and support of your healthcare practitioner to choose the key lifestyle changes that your child can implement and track. Pop it up on the fridge or their bedroom door, to remind them of these lifestyle changes and encourage them to fill it out daily. Remember to share this tracker with your healthcare practitioner at each appointment.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
 I played outside today							
 I did something fun with my family or friends							
 I read my book today							
 I went to bed on time							
 Number of hours of sleep							
 I ate all my vegetables today							
Other							

**Your Observations:**


**Practitioner Recommendations:**




# Sleep and Your Child

Since they're growing so fast and learning so much along the way, children and teenagers need much more sleep than adults, ranging from up to 13 hours for those 3-5 years old to up to 10 hours for teenagers.

Not getting enough sleep can leave kids feeling tired, grumpy and irritable. It can also be associated with reduced cognitive performance (i.e. learning and brain function), poor memory, hyperactivity, mood swings, temper tantrums, increased appetite and weight problems.

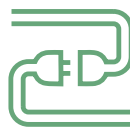
Some of the most important considerations to encourage sleep for children are:



## Consistent Routine

Create a calming bedtime routine.

**Tip:** Get them to put their pyjamas on, brush their teeth, kiss the family good night then read quietly in bed before lights out.



## Unplug

No devices in the evening, and none stored in their room.

**Tip:** Unplug the Wi-Fi in the evening and place smartphones at the front door.



## Get Moving

Ensure your children are getting enough time to play outdoors during the day. This increases their feelings of well-being and encourages 'happy thoughts'.

## Recommended Amount of Sleep

Preschool (3- 5 years)	8-9	10-13	14
School age (6 - 16 years)	7-8	9-11	12
Teenager (14 - 17 years)	7	8-10	11

 Optimal Range

## Did You Know?

The World Health Organization recommends that children 2-4 years spend one hour or less using devices each day, including TV and smartphones. Children should be active for at least 3-hours a day to improve their mental health and well-being.

## References

HealthDirect. Sleep tips for children. Published 2017 and accessed April 2019 from <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/sleep-tips-for-children>

Bennett, C. et al. Little people, big lives report: foundations for healthy Australian children in the 21st century. Sydney: University of Notre Dame and Sanitarium, 2019.

World Health Organization News, World Health Organization. To grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more. Published 24 April 2019. Accessed 25 April 2019 from <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/24-04-2019-to-grow-up-healthy-children-need-to-sit-less-and-play-more>

# Nourish with Food

**Food is fuel. Children require the correct food and nutrients to lay the foundation for a healthier nervous system, brain and body.**

Your healthcare practitioner may advise you on specific healthy eating plans for your child. However, as a general guide, it is important that your child eats a wide variety of foods. This can be achieved by serving foods from each of the five food groups below. By eating from all 5 food groups, you can ensure your child is receiving the nutrients required for their development, growth and wellbeing. Speak to your practitioner to personalise it for your family's needs and dietary requirements.



## Tip

To get the most out of the Vegetables and Legumes group, select a wide variety of vegetables in different colours. For fussy vegetable eaters, try adding them to pasta sauce or incorporate into mashed potato.

# How Much Food Does My Child Need?

Children need to eat more as they grow. As a guide, your child should eat these foods every day:

## 2 to 3 years

1 serve of fruit; 2½ serves of vegetables;  
4 serves of grains; 1 serve of meat/poultry;  
1½ serves of dairy

## 4 to 8 years

1½ serves of fruit; 4½ serves of vegetables;  
4 serves of grains; 1½ serves of meat/poultry;  
1½ to 2 serves of dairy

## 9 to 11 years

2 serves of fruit; 5 serves of vegetables;  
4 to 5 serves of grains; 2½ serves of  
meat/poultry; 2½ to 3 serves of dairy

## 12 to 13 years

2 serves of fruit; 5 to 5½ serves of vegetables;  
5 to 6 serves of grains; 2½ serves meat/poultry;  
3½ serves dairy

## Tips to Encourage Healthy Eating Habits

Teaching your child how to eat healthily now means they will be more likely to make their own healthy choices as they get older.



Make meal time family time, without any screens



Try out new foods and show your children where food comes from; let them help you buy food from the shops



Make healthy foods fun, for example by cutting fruit or sandwiches into interesting shapes



Keep a bowl of fruit handy for a snack



Encourage your children to sit with you at the table



Wash your hands and make sure food is prepared and stored safely



Eat a healthy breakfast every day



Cook and try new recipes together



Don't keep junk food in the house



### References

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-eating-for-children>



# Nourish with Nutrients

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## B Vitamins

B vitamins help support a healthy nervous system and improve energy levels. If levels of these vital nutrients are low, symptoms such as low mood, headaches, poor concentration and irritability may occur.



## Magnesium

Magnesium is an essential mineral that cannot be made by your body. When stressed, the body uses higher amounts of magnesium, so replenishing these stores is vital. Some of the benefits include increased cellular energy production, reduced feelings of anxiety, and it provides support for muscular cramps and tension.



## Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential fats, that we need to obtain from our diets as our bodies can't produce them. These good fats can help to reduce anxiety, reduce the frequency of mood swings and help with improving sleep.

# Your Building Resilience Shopping List

Below is a handy list of foods that may support your family during times of stress. They're rich in key nutrients that will help build resilience and nourish the body.<sup>†</sup>

	Fruit	Vegetables	Meat / Poultry	Seafood	Nuts	Seeds	Dairy & Eggs
<b>Magnesium</b>	Avocados	Spinach	Red Meat		Almonds	Sunflower	Eggs
	Kiwifruit	Leafy green vegetables	Chicken		Cashews	Sesame	Goat's milk
	Blackberries	Parsley	Liver		Brazil nuts		
	Raspberries	Cabbage	Turkey		Hazelnuts		
	Passionfruit	Green Beans			Walnuts		
	Bananas						
<b>B Vitamins</b>	Passionfruit	Broccoli	Chicken	Salmon	Cashews	Sunflower	Eggs
		Mushrooms	Turkey	Sardines	Peanuts	Sesame	Cheese
		Eggplant		Anchovies	Almonds		
		Silverbeet		Tuna			
		Spinach		White fish			
		Cabbage					
<b>Omega 3 Fatty Acids</b>	Avocados			Salmon	Walnuts	Chia	
				Tuna	Almonds	Flaxseeds	
				Sardines	Brazil nuts	Hemp	
				Mackerel			
<b>Tryptophan</b>			Turkey		Almonds	Sunflower	Eggs
			Red meat		Cashews	Sesame	Cheese
			Chicken		Brazil nuts		
					Hazelnuts		
<b>Zinc</b>	Tomatoes	Spinach	Turkey	Oysters	Brazil nuts	Sunflower	Eggs
		Mushrooms	Red meat		Almonds	Sesame	Cheese
		Green peas	Chicken		Cashew		
		Parsley	Duck		Walnuts		
<b>Glycine</b>			Turkey	Salmon	Almonds		Eggs
			Red meat	Sardines	Cashews		Cow's and Goat's dairy products
			Chicken	Anchovies	Brazil		
			Duck	Tuna	Hazelnuts		
				White fish	Walnut		

<sup>†</sup>**Note:** Speak to your healthcare practitioner to determine which foods are right for your child.

# Nourish with Herbs

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## Chamomile and Passionflower

These herbs calm the mind and body, whilst reducing symptoms of irritability and anxiety.



## Lemon Balm, Lavender and Oats Green

Used in times of emotional stress, nervous fatigue and/or anxiety. These herbs can help improve sleep quality.

## Withania

Withania is used traditionally for improving energy levels, reducing physical stress and promoting resilience.



## Skullcap and Vervain

Nourishing nervous system tonics, used for feelings of stress. Skullcap is useful for anxiousness, while vervain provides a mood lift.

## Bacopa

Bacopa is a nervous system tonic that can also help with memory, concentration and feelings of anxiety.



## Supportive Herbal Teas

Dried herbs can be blended to make a tea, which is the perfect way to help you feel calm, whilst increasing your fluid intake too.

Your healthcare practitioner can assist you with formulating a herbal blend based on your child's current needs. This ensures that you are using high quality products that help to achieve optimal health.

**Talk to your healthcare practitioner to know which herbs would suit your family as a tea!**



# Further Assistance

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**Important:** In an emergency or crisis, call "000" for immediate assistance, contact your local mental health crisis service or go to your local hospital emergency department.

**Other resources that may help include:**

**Kids Helpline** – a free Australian telephone and online counselling service for young people aged between 5 and 25.

[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au) | 1800 55 1800

**Lifeline** – Crisis care and suicide prevention

[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au) | 13 11 14

**Beyondblue** – Support for anxiety and depression

[beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au) | [youthbeyondblue.org.au](http://youthbeyondblue.org.au) | 1300 224 636

**Head to Health** – Government directory of online mental health resources

[headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)

**Reach Out** – Mental health support for young people and their parents

[reachout.com](http://reachout.com)

**Healthdirect** – Free government-funded health advice

[healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-and-active-children](http://healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-and-active-children)

**Raising Children Network** – An Australian website supported by the Government, with up-to-date information for supporting parents and their children

[raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)

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