

Module 6. Building resilience and self-confidence in teenagers



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This module provides parents with effective strategies to foster emotional resilience and self-confidence in their teenagers. Throughout this document, you'll discover practical approaches to help your teen navigate challenges such as bullying and peer pressure, while developing crucial life skills that promote positive mental health and emotional well-being. From supporting resilience to encouraging self-reflection, managing peer pressure, and promoting positive role models, these evidence-based techniques will empower both you and your teen to face life's challenges with strength and confidence.

Understanding Teen Resilience

Resilience is not merely about toughness; it's the ability to adapt and recover from challenges, setbacks, and adversity. For teenagers, resilience serves as the foundation that helps them cope with difficult situations, whether facing bullying, academic struggles, or personal issues. Resilience enables children to bounce back from negative experiences and continue to grow stronger, both emotionally and mentally (Fraccaro, 2014).

Resilience plays a crucial role when children experience bullying. Rather than allowing these negative experiences to define them, resilient children can learn how to deal with the hurt, seek support, and find healthy ways to move forward. Studies show that by fostering resilience, you can empower your child to face adversity with strength and perseverance (Cahill et al., 2014).

Provide Support

Being there for your teen creates a foundation for resilience. When teens feel loved and supported, they're more likely to bounce back from challenges.

- Listen actively when your teen shares their struggles
- Reassure them that failures and mistakes are part of learning and growing
- Avoid judgment or criticism during tough times; offer encouragement instead

Encourage Problem-Solving

Problem-solving ability develops when children have opportunities to experiment with problems in a free-play atmosphere (Thompson & Hixson, 1984).

- Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think we can do about this?"
- Guide them through breaking down issues and exploring options
- Teach them to weigh risks and make thoughtful decisions

Foster Positive Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is part of personality and builds through life challenges that demonstrate success (Mineev et al., 2018).

- Acknowledge efforts, not just successes
- Encourage engagement in enjoyable activities
- Help reframe negative self-talk by focusing on strengths

Consider this example of resilience in action: A teen who is teased about their appearance decides to calmly walk away instead of reacting with anger or sadness. Later, they talk to a trusted teacher about the bullying and seek support from friends who uplift them. They remind themselves of their strengths and practice self-compassion, refusing to let the bully's words define their self-worth. This demonstrates resilience through emotional control, seeking help, and maintaining a positive self-image despite negativity.

Encouraging Hobbies and Group Activities

Encouraging children to participate in hobbies or groups they enjoy is a powerful way to build their self-esteem and foster healthy friendships. When children are involved in activities they genuinely enjoy, they're more likely to stick with them, gain confidence, and develop a sense of accomplishment (Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013).

Finding the Right Activities

Start by understanding what your child enjoys doing in their free time. Whether it's drawing, playing a sport, coding, or volunteering, the key is to help them find activities that resonate with their unique passions. Observe what your child is naturally drawn to, and have conversations about their likes and dislikes.

Ask open-ended questions such as "What do you love doing when you have free time?" or "Is there something new you'd like to try?" These conversations can reveal interests your child might want to explore further, providing opportunities for growth and confidence-building.

Benefits of Group Activities

Group activities like sports teams, music ensembles, drama clubs, or community volunteer work offer children the opportunity to make friends, learn teamwork, and develop social skills. Look for local clubs, teams, or classes that match your child's interests, and help them get involved.

If your child is shy or hesitant about joining a new group, consider helping them reach out to a friend or family member who can attend with them for a few sessions to ease the transition. You can also encourage your child to invite a friend along to a new activity or even join a sibling in a group activity to make them feel more comfortable.

Activity: Consider your child's current challenges and strengths. What challenges might they face? How do they respond to tough situations? What resilience skills (like problem-solving, optimism) can you encourage? Note a few ways you can help your child build resilience.

Building Self-Confidence in Children

Self-confidence is an important aspect of personality in everyday life. Individuals who are confident trust in their abilities and maintain realistic expectations. Even if these expectations are not met, they remain optimistic and are able to accept outcomes. Confidence reflects a mental or psychological state in which a person has a strong sense of self-assurance, empowering them to take action.

In contrast, people who lack confidence tend to have a negative self-view and doubt their abilities, often becoming withdrawn (Sarkowi & Faizatul, 2023). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2019 it was stated that 41% of students who reported being bullied at school indicated that they think the bullying would happen again, data that suggests lacking confidence can be one of the main reasons why bullying in school persists.

41%

Bullying Recurrence

Students who reported being bullied at school indicated they think the bullying would happen again

Parents and educators are expected to help develop self-confidence in children with proper stimulation. In practice, many young students still lack self-confidence, particularly in early childhood. Observations show that a significant number of young children depend on their parents during school activities. This suggests that fostering children's independence could be more effective, as they tend to rely heavily on parental involvement in their tasks (Sarkowi & Faizatul, 2023).

The need to build self-confidence in children stems from several common issues: some students struggle to socialize at school, others are hesitant to share their work with classmates, some prefer to be alone, and many still rely on their parents. Enhancing children's self-confidence is crucial to equip them with the skills they need to face future challenges independently.

The Power of Self-Reflection

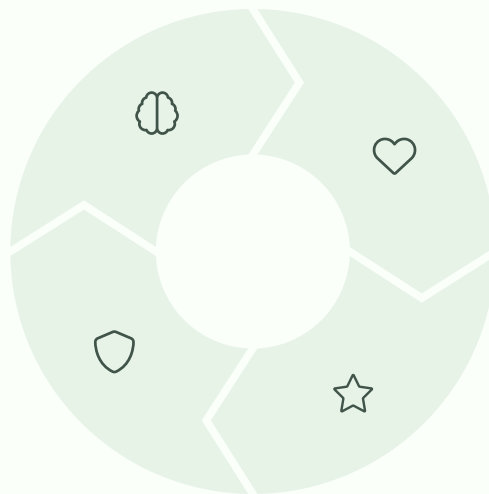
According to the theory of self-awareness, also referred to as objective self-awareness theory, a person's attention at any given moment can either be directed inward, toward themselves, or outward, toward the external environment. When attention is self-directed, or in a state of objective self-awareness, a person's consciousness is focused solely on themselves. This inward focus leads them to reflect on their thoughts, personal history, physical body, or other personal attributes (Gerace et al., 2017).

Enhanced Emotional Awareness

Self-reflection helps children become more in touch with their emotions, gaining insights into what they feel and why. This process is especially valuable in helping them understand their reactions to challenging experiences, such as bullying or peer pressure.

Reduces Anxiety

By recognizing their feelings about challenging experiences, children can experience a reduction in anxiety and feel a greater sense of control over their responses.



Promotes Empathy

When children reflect on their interactions, they begin to see situations from others' perspectives, which helps them approach conflicts or misunderstandings with calmness and compassion.

Builds Confidence

When children focus on their own strengths and successes, they develop a more positive self-image. This strengthened sense of self equips them to face challenges with greater resilience and self-assurance.

Self-reflection encourages children to understand their emotional reactions, recognize their strengths, and identify areas they can improve on. These self-reflective practices help children develop the emotional skills necessary to navigate life's difficulties with resilience and confidence.

When children regularly acknowledge their strengths and accomplishments through self-reflection, they are less likely to internalize negative comments or hurtful actions from others. This focus on positivity strengthens their self-concept and reduces the emotional impact of bullying.

Additionally, these practices encourage more positive peer interactions. When children feel confident and secure in themselves, they are less driven by a need to conform or seek validation from others, which can help reduce the pressures of fitting in.

Journaling as a Tool for Building Confidence

Journaling is a powerful tool for children to safely express their thoughts and feelings, and build confidence. It provides a private space, allowing them to process experiences without fear of judgment. Writing things down helps to clarify thoughts, manage emotions, and provide perspective on their day-to-day lives.

Gratitude Entries

Encourage your children to write down three things they are grateful for each day. This fosters positive thinking and helps counterbalance negative feelings from bullying or peer pressure.

Daily Highlights

Have children focus on a "highlight of the day," such as an accomplishment, a fun moment, or a compliment they received. This reinforces the positive aspects of their day.

Affirmation Statements

Encourage them to write one positive thing about themselves each day, like "I am brave" or "I am a good friend." This builds self-confidence over time.

Mood Tracking

Let them rate their mood each day with a color, emoji, or number, which can help parents and children understand emotional patterns and triggers.

Tips for Parents on Encouraging Journaling

- **Set a routine:** Help your child make journaling a daily habit, perhaps at bedtime or after school.
- **Provide a comfortable space:** A quiet, comfortable area and a dedicated journal can make the activity feel special and meaningful.
- **Keep it low-pressure:** Remind yourself that it's okay if a child only writes a sentence or draws a picture. The goal is regular reflection, not perfect entries.

Activity: Each evening, parents write down one positive action their child took that day, then share it with their child as specific praise, reflecting afterward on how it felt for both of them.

Celebrating Children's Achievements

Celebrating children's achievements is essential for building their confidence, as it reinforces a positive self-image and helps them feel valued for their unique qualities and efforts. When you acknowledge your child's accomplishments, it sends a message of appreciation and respect, boosting the child's self-esteem. Additionally, celebrating both big successes and small efforts, such as trying a new activity or showing kindness, promotes a growth mindset. This teaches children that growth and effort are as valuable as results, which is key for developing resilience.

Moreover, celebrating achievements strengthens the bond between parent and child. Positive reinforcement fosters a sense of support and security, which is particularly beneficial if the child is facing challenges like bullying. Feeling encouraged and safe within the family builds the emotional foundation children need to face difficulties with confidence and perseverance.

Ways Parents Can Celebrate Achievements

- **Verbal praise:** Simple acknowledgments like "I'm proud of you for trying your best" or "That was very thoughtful of you" make a big impact on children.
- **Special time together:** When a child reaches a milestone, spend dedicated time with them, such as a "mini-celebration" where they choose a fun activity together.
- **Achievements board:** Creating a family board or space on the fridge where achievements are highlighted can give children a tangible reminder of their accomplishments.



In conclusion, small daily habits such as journaling, reflecting, and celebrating achievements can significantly strengthen children's emotional resilience. Encouraging self-reflection and positivity helps children focus on their strengths, allowing them to approach negative experiences with greater confidence. Parental support is key; when you actively recognize your child's efforts and encourage growth, children feel empowered and secure, better equipped to face challenges like bullying.

Understanding Peer Pressure

Peer pressure in schools refers to the influence that peers exert on one another to conform to certain behaviors, attitudes, or decisions. This can include positive influences, such as encouraging healthy habits, or negative influences, such as persuading someone to engage in unsafe or unhealthy activities.



Positive Peer Pressure

A group of friends encourages a teen to join the school's debate team, praising their speaking skills and reassuring them that they'll excel. This support motivates the teen to try something new, boosting their confidence and helping them develop valuable skills.



Negative Peer Pressure

A teen feels pressured by their friends to skip class and hang out at a nearby park. Despite knowing it's wrong, the teen agrees because they fear being excluded or judged by the group.

Studies have shown that adolescents who are part of peer groups that accept or encourage bullying are more likely to engage in such behavior themselves. Peer groups can have a significant influence on adolescent behavior and can also affect adult behavior. This influence may stem from a desire for group acceptance, an effort to improve one's social status, or a wish to conform to the values and norms of the group (Ibimiluyi, 2023).

In their quest for identity, teenagers seek to break away from parental control, influences, and protection. However, this independence often brings feelings of uncertainty, prompting them to seek validation and support from their peers. As adolescents engage more with their peers, they become more vulnerable to peer pressure and are at greater risk of encountering problematic behaviors. The influence between nondeviant and deviant peers depends on the level of susceptibility to peer pressure. Peer pressure has been recognized as a key factor in many behavioral issues among youth (Chan & Chan, 2013).

An experiment done at Temple University by psychologists Jason Chein and Lawrence Steinberg tested if teenagers are more likely to take risks when surrounded by peers. The results showed that, compared to adults, **teens were more likely to be vulnerable to making risky choices when they had company** (Albert et al., 2013).

Managing Peer Pressure

Ways Teens Can Manage Peer Pressure



Learn to Say No

Teach your children to assertively refuse behaviors or actions they're uncomfortable with, using phrases like "No, I'm not okay with that."



Choose Supportive Friends

Encourage your children to surround themselves with friends who respect their values and don't pressure them into negative behaviors.



Practice Decision-Making

Help your children think through potential scenarios and decide in advance how they will respond to peer pressure.



Focus on Goals and Values

When teens have a clear sense of their goals and personal values, they are less likely to be swayed by peer pressure.

How Parents Can Teach Their Teens About Managing Peer Pressure

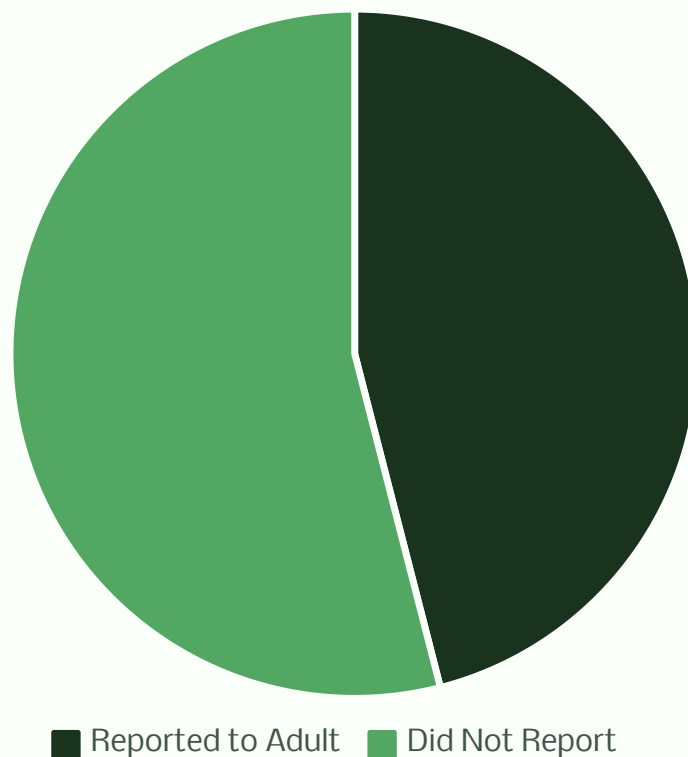
- **Open communication:** Create a safe space for teens to share their experiences without fear of judgment, so they feel comfortable discussing peer pressure.
- **Model assertive behavior:** Demonstrate to your children how to say no respectfully and stand by personal values, showing teens that it's okay to set boundaries.
- **Role-playing scenarios:** Practice potential situations with your children, like how to handle being pressured to try harmful activities, so they feel prepared.
- **Highlight real-life examples:** Share stories of individuals who resisted peer pressure and achieved positive outcomes to inspire confidence in saying no.
- **Teach problem-solving skills:** Help your child learn to weigh the consequences of their actions and make decisions aligned with their values.
- **Seek trusted adults:** Remind your children that they can always talk to parents, teachers, or counselors for advice and support when dealing with peer pressure.

Activity: Role-play a scenario where your child is pressured by friends to do something unsafe, with you acting as the peer; afterward, discuss how your child felt and brainstorm ways to respond confidently.

The Importance of Positive Role Models

By observing individuals who demonstrate resilience, kindness, and integrity, teens can learn how to approach difficult situations constructively. For instance, a role model who stands up for others or handles conflict calmly can inspire your child to act with courage and composure.

Role models also provide teens with a clear example of how to make ethical and responsible decisions. During challenging times, teens often feel uncertain about how to respond, and having a positive figure to emulate can guide them toward productive choices. Furthermore, role models who encourage perseverance can help teens stay motivated when facing setbacks, whether it's failing a test or dealing with social rejection. Seeing someone they admire overcome adversity fosters a sense of hope and empowers teens to believe they can do the same.



According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 46% of bullied students report notifying an adult at school about the incident. This is why in difficult school environments it is important to have positive role models, because they serve as anchors, showing teens the value of patience, empathy, and strength. This influence not only helps your child resolve immediate challenges but also equips them with life skills they can carry into adulthood.

Qualities Teens Benefit Most From in Role Models

- Exemplify respect - treat others with kindness and fairness
- Show leadership - lead by example and stand up for what is right
- Value hard work - inspire teens to pursue their goals and overcome challenges
- Promote inclusivity - encourage acceptance and celebrate diversity among peers

Promoting Positive Role Models

Encourage Exposure to Inspiring Individuals

Parents can introduce teens to people who embody positive values, such as teachers, coaches, family members, or community leaders. These direct connections provide teens with accessible examples of positive behavior and values in action.

Model Positive Behavior

Parents can act as role models by demonstrating empathy, honesty, and resilience in their daily lives. Your actions speak louder than words, and teens are constantly observing how you handle challenges and treat others.

Discuss Media Role Models

Help teens critically analyze celebrities or public figures, emphasizing qualities like kindness, perseverance, and integrity. This helps teens develop media literacy while identifying positive traits to emulate.

Foster Connections with Mentors

Encourage teens to build relationships with mentors who can provide guidance and encouragement, such as school counselors or older peers. These relationships offer additional support and perspective beyond the family unit.

Examples of Public Figures as Positive Role Models

Jessica Alba on Responsible Social Media

The actress Jessica Alba has spoken about responsible social media use, providing an example of how celebrities can model healthy digital behavior for teens. Her approach emphasizes authenticity and safety online, important values for today's teenagers who navigate complex social media environments.

Michelle Obama as an Empathy Role Model

Michelle Obama serves as a role model for empathy, demonstrating how to connect with others across different backgrounds and experiences. Her emphasis on understanding others' perspectives and showing compassion provides teens with an example of emotional intelligence and social awareness.

Activity: Ask your teen to write down three qualities they admire in a role model, then discuss how they can apply those traits in their own life or friendships.

The Power of Positive Peer Influence

Positive peer influence has a profound impact on a teen's behavior, choices, and overall well-being, especially during formative school years. When surrounded by friends who encourage good habits and respect shared values, teens are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors. For example, teens in positive peer groups might feel inspired to work hard academically, participate in extracurricular activities, or engage in acts of kindness.

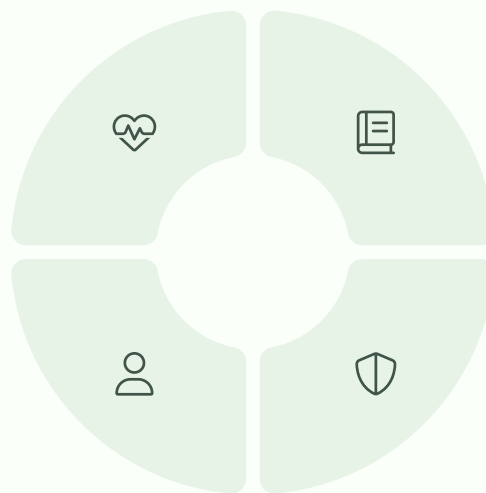
This influence is particularly powerful because it reinforces a sense of belonging and acceptance, which is essential for emotional development. Positive peer interactions help boost confidence and self-esteem, showing teens that they can be valued for who they truly are. Teens who experience supportive friendships are also better equipped to resist negative influences, such as pressure to engage in risky behaviors.

Emotional Support

Positive peers provide comfort during difficult times and celebrate successes, creating a sense of security and belonging.

Social Skill Development

Positive friendships provide opportunities to practice communication, conflict resolution, and empathy.



Academic Motivation

Friends who value education can inspire greater effort in school and create a culture of learning and achievement.

Protective Influence

Supportive peers help resist negative pressures and make healthier choices when faced with risky situations.

In addition, positive peer influence creates a ripple effect within the school environment. When teens choose kindness, cooperation, and inclusivity, it sets the tone for healthier and more uplifting social dynamics. By fostering these positive connections, teens not only support each other but also contribute to a stronger, more compassionate school community.

Fostering Positive Peer Influence

Strategies for Parents

Encourage Group Activities

Guide teens toward clubs, sports, or volunteer opportunities where they can meet like-minded peers who share similar values and interests. These structured activities provide natural environments for positive relationships to form.

Talk About Friendship Qualities

Discuss the traits of a good friend, such as trustworthiness, respect, and supportiveness. Help your teen identify these qualities in their current friendships and consider what they value most in their relationships.

Celebrate Positive Friendships

Recognize and praise teens for maintaining supportive and healthy relationships. Acknowledge when you see your teen and their friends making good choices or supporting each other in positive ways.

Address Negative Influences Early

Help teens recognize and distance themselves from toxic friendships. Have open conversations about concerning behaviors you observe, while respecting your teen's autonomy in managing their relationships.



When helping your teen navigate peer relationships, maintain a balance between guidance and autonomy. While it's important to steer them toward positive influences, teens also need space to make their own decisions about friendships. This balance helps them develop judgment skills while knowing they have your support.

Remember that your home environment sets the foundation for how your teen approaches relationships. By modeling healthy relationships within your family and welcoming your teen's friends into your home, you create opportunities to observe and subtly influence their social circle in positive ways.

Putting It All Together: A Comprehensive Approach

Building resilience and self-confidence in teenagers requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various aspects of their development. By combining strategies for emotional support, self-reflection, peer pressure management, and positive role modeling, parents can create a comprehensive framework that helps teens navigate challenges effectively.



The foundation of this approach is creating a supportive environment where teens feel safe, valued, and understood. This includes active listening, providing consistent encouragement, and maintaining open communication. When teens know they have a secure base at home, they're better equipped to face challenges in the outside world.

Building on this foundation, fostering positive relationships with peers and role models gives teens additional sources of support and guidance. These relationships provide opportunities to practice social skills, develop empathy, and learn from diverse perspectives. By encouraging connections with supportive friends and mentors, parents help teens create a network that reinforces positive values and behaviors.

Developing specific resilience skills is the next layer of support. These include problem-solving abilities, emotional regulation, assertiveness in the face of peer pressure, and healthy coping mechanisms like journaling and self-reflection. By teaching these skills explicitly and providing opportunities to practice them, parents equip teens with tools they can use throughout their lives.

At the top of the pyramid is self-confidence—the ultimate goal of these combined efforts. When teens have a supportive environment, positive relationships, and strong resilience skills, they develop a sense of self-assurance that helps them navigate challenges with courage and optimism. This confidence becomes self-reinforcing as teens successfully overcome obstacles and recognize their own capabilities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Throughout this guide, we've explored various strategies to help parents foster resilience and self-confidence in their teenagers. From understanding the fundamentals of resilience to promoting positive peer influences, these approaches provide a comprehensive toolkit for supporting teens through the challenges they face, particularly bullying and peer pressure.

Remember that building resilience is an ongoing process that requires patience, consistency, and adaptability. Each teen is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. Be willing to adjust your approach based on your child's individual needs and responses. The goal is not perfection but progress—helping your teen develop the emotional strength to face life's challenges with increasing confidence and skill.

As you implement these strategies, pay attention to your teen's growth over time. Celebrate small victories and acknowledge the effort they put into developing resilience. By recognizing their progress, you reinforce the value of these skills and motivate continued growth.

Key Takeaways

- Resilience is the ability to adapt and recover from challenges, not just being tough
- Self-reflection and journaling help teens process emotions and build self-awareness
- Celebrating achievements, both big and small, reinforces positive self-image
- Teaching specific strategies for managing peer pressure empowers teens to make healthy choices
- Positive role models and peer influences create a supportive environment for growth
- Parents play a crucial role in modeling resilience and providing consistent support