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Spring 2009

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Labeling their emotions helps kids relate better to others.



# Hardy Boys And Girls

## 5 things parents can do to raise resilient kids

Text...Dr. Jenn Berman

**R**esilient kids are adaptable, are able to handle life's difficulties, and are great problem solvers. They are equipped with the skills that allow them to bounce back from disappointment and loss. As a result, they believe in themselves and their abilities to handle whatever life throws their way, and they tend to have strong self-esteem. These are qualities that all parents hope their children will have, but many are unsure how to create an environment for them to develop. Here are some ways you can help foster them in your child.

**1 Give them a solid base.** For better or for worse, parents—through their words and actions—create the foundation for a child's sense of self. Creating a secure, loving attachment in the early years is

crucial. In later years, it is particularly important to have a mutually respectful relationship in which your child feels truly heard and understood. This base of love and understanding makes children feel more secure and more able to handle life's challenges. Furthermore, kids who feel that their parents are fair, empathetic, and respectful are more likely to use them as emotional resources.

**2 Be consistent and have firm boundaries.** Many parents are so concerned with being their child's friend that the role as parent is abdicated. Often, this comes at the expense of being able to set rules and boundaries. The truth is this: Your child has plenty of friends; what your child needs most is a parent. Children can sense when you are ambivalent about what you are saying, and they will almost always try to push the limits. Your child is not trying to be "bad" or manipulative but is performing the normal developmental task of testing his parents. Kids whose parents are consistent and have firm boundaries are used to not always getting their way and are better able to handle disappointment.



Dr. Jenn Berman is a licensed Marriage, Family and Child Therapist and is the author of *The A to Z Guide to Raising Happy, Confident Kids*.

**3 Let them make mistakes.** Force your children to face the consequences of their actions. Helping them to understand at an early age that they are responsible for the choices they make—as well as for the results of their actions—promotes a sense of mastery and self-confidence. One of the most difficult tasks for parents to conquer is allowing their kids to suffer the costs of their choices and actions. But in order for children to grow up to become responsible adults who are able to function in the world, this is a crucial developmental step for them to take.

**4 Help children understand and identify their emotions.** For children, intense emotions can be scary and overwhelming. Identifying and labeling their feelings can normalize those feelings and allow kids to identify emotional reactions in others, which ultimately helps them to develop empathy. Believe it or not, studies show that the act of labeling an emotion can have a soothing effect on the nervous system—an effect that allows kids to recover more quickly from upsetting events.

**5 Teach problem-solving skills.** The ability to solve problems is developed primarily from experience. Sometimes it is easier for parents to solve their children's problem rather than to teach them how to do it on their own. The key, however, is for parents to send the message that every problem has a solution. Parents who have the patience to help children find their own age-appropriate resolutions will give kids that skill. ✨

For more information about Dr. Jenn Berman, visit [www.doctorjenn.com](http://www.doctorjenn.com).

## good reads

Do you want your children to become more resilient? Here are a few books that may help:

- \* *Raising a Self-Disciplined Child* by Drs. Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein
- \* *The A to Z Guide to Raising Happy, Confident Kids* by Dr. Jenn Berman
- \* *Raising Children Who Think for Themselves* by Dr. Elisa Medhus
- \* *Positive Discipline* by Dr. Jane Nelsen



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