

WELLBEING

Developing mental resilience



The American Psychological Association defines mental resilience as: “The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress.”

What is mental resilience?

Throughout our lives, we will likely encounter numerous situations which will cause symptoms of stress, anxiety and in some cases, depression. The capacity to stay mentally well during these times is what’s known as ‘resilience’.

When you are mentally resilient, you have the ability to not only “bounce back” from setbacks, such as suffering a bereavement, serious illness or being made redundant, but have the ability to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances, while maintaining a stable mental wellbeing.

If you lack mental resilience, you may dwell on problems, become easily overwhelmed or rely on unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol or excessive eating.

Although mental resilience won’t make your problems disappear - it can give you the ability to find more enjoyment in life and handle stress in a healthier way.

Resilience and mental health

Being mentally resilient can help you offset factors that increase the risk of mental health conditions, such as being bullied or remembering a traumatic experience.

As well as a proactive measure, resilience can also improve your ability to cope with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

How to develop your resilience

Embrace change: An essential tool in developing your resilience, being flexible will help you become better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis.

Social network: Sharing your problems with someone in your support network won’t fix anything immediately. However, it allows you to share your feelings, get support, receive positive feedback and discover possible solutions to your problems.

Look after yourself: Eating a healthy diet, engaging in regular physical activity, ensuring you have plenty of sleep - all of these things will help you develop a resilient mindset. If you want to try something new, yoga, meditation and deep breathing are all associated with developing mental resilience.

Think short term: Resilient people have the ability to reassure themselves that stressful situations do not last forever and that the associated negative feelings will eventually dissipate. The ability to

establish goals will also help you view these situations in a realistic way and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem.

Ask for help: Many people believe that being resilient is to be mentally strong enough to take on challenges alone. But in fact, the ability to know when to reach out to others for support is a key component of being resilient.

How do I know if I am resilient?

Becoming mentally resilient is a journey that develops over a lifetime. It takes a lot of time and practise, and requires your discipline, patience and commitment. It’s a mindset that continues to develop and grow at different rates, depending on the number of life events you experience.

However, the results can be immeasurable, such as greater autonomy, self-esteem and confidence. This can then go onto effect many aspects of your life, such as increased job satisfaction and developing stronger, more meaningful relationships.

If you would like more information on mental resilience, or if you have any other wellbeing concerns, please call our free, 24-hour helpline on: **0800 030 5182**

Or alternatively, visit our portal to view advice articles, webinars and 4-week programmes all aimed at improving your physical and mental wellbeing: www.healthassuredeap.com

TOPICAL

World Breastfeeding Week

1st – 7th August 2019



According to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the UK has one of the lowest rates of breastfeeding in Europe.

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is an annual awareness campaign organised by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) - a global network of individuals and organisations dedicated to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide.

Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding
The slogan for this year's campaign is 'Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding'. According to the WABA, the focus behind the slogan is to support not just mothers, but partners and family members to help them realise their breastfeeding goals.

The WABA says that "breastfeeding is in the mother's domain and when fathers, partners, families, workplaces, and communities support her, breastfeeding improves."

Breastfeeding in the UK

An analysis of global breastfeeding prevalence found that in the UK only 34% of babies are receiving some breast milk at 6 months, compared with 49% in the USA and 71% in Norway.

Making the decision to breastfeed a child

is a very personal one. It's also one that is likely to attract strong opinions from friends and family members. However, it's recommended by medical professionals that newborn babies should be exclusively breastfed for six months, and then alongside family foods afterwards (e.g. fruit, vegetables, grain, protein) until the parent decides otherwise.

In this guidance, we have listed a selection of key benefits to breastfeeding infants, they include:

Infant health benefits

Breast milk provides the ideal nutrition for infants. It has a nearly perfect mix of vitamins, protein, and fat - everything a baby needs to grow. Breast milk also contains antibodies that help infants fight off a variety of health concerns, such as:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Childhood leukaemia
- Obesity
- Cardiovascular disease in adulthood

Maternal health benefits

As well as providing a number of health benefits for a baby, breastfeeding can help mothers lower their risk of developing:

- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Osteoporosis (weak bones)

Due to the physical closeness, skin-to-skin touching, and eye contact, the act of breastfeeding also helps build a strong emotional bond between the mother and her baby.

Financial benefits

Along with having many health benefits, breastfeeding can also provide financial rewards for young families by avoiding the regular expense of purchasing formula milk. Breastfeeding infants can also be financially beneficial in the long-term, as the likelihood of future medical expenses reduces due to their improved health.

As well as positively affecting personal finances, breastfeeding also contributes to significant savings for the NHS, due to fewer hospital admissions and GP consultations.

Environmental benefits

The health of our planet is affected by the way babies are fed. Breast milk is a natural, renewable food that is produced and delivered without pollution, packaging or waste. The breast milk substitute industry, on the other hand, carries a negative environmental impact that is not commonly recognised.

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LEGAL

Keeping children safe



Keeping children safe from harm, abuse and exploitation presents many challenges for parents and legal guardians.

Many factors within society can influence a child's growth and development. Thus, there is increased pressure on parents to keep children safe and ensure their emotional, educational and social development.

Internet use and social media

Online predatory behaviour and cyberbullying is a concern for many parents with children who have access to social media platforms and apps. Online safety is paramount for children who may not fully understand the online dangers, such as interacting with strangers, identify theft, cyberbullying and fraud.

Protecting children from grooming and predatory behaviour by adults or teenagers posing as a young child is crucial, as children can be naive and vulnerable to manipulation. Being aware of, and observant of your children's internet activity and social media use is imperative to keep children safe online.

Mental health

Mental health problems within the family unit may influence a child's psychological, emotional and physical health if they are not cared for appropriately. For example, a child may be neglected as a result of a parent struggling with a mental health problem. Moreover, children can

occasionally become the unwitting carer without choice and may assume the role of a responsible person.

Nonetheless, mental health problems can vary in terms of severity and impact, and the influence on a child is subject to the parent/carer, the circumstances and the support available.

Divorce & family breakdown

A family breakdown can cause a lot of uncertainty and anxiety for children and parents, potentially affecting a child's wellbeing and development. An unsettled home can lead to arguments and tension and during this time, considering a child's emotional and psychological security is paramount. Feelings of uncertainty and unfamiliarity can impact on a child's education and cause potential feelings of isolation. This may often be an unintended situation caused by stressed parents who become embroiled in issues of their own and on occasion, domestic abuse matters, where support and intervention are required to protect children. It is important for parents to maintain a strong and positive relationship to help children cope during this time. For example, avoid exposing children to arguments and disputes.

Educational needs

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school and should take an active role in ensuring a child's educational needs are met. This can otherwise have a detrimental effect on a child's development and preparation for adult life. Frequent school absences can impact a child's success in school and can have

serious consequences on their social development. School attendance enables children to interact with peers and adults and share experiences. Complex issues of frequent absence may require parental engagement with their child's school or the local authority's Education Welfare Service.

Financial hardship

Financial stress and living with debt can put children at risk of developing mental health problems, often as an indirect result of financial hardship. Parents may struggle to provide for their children, which could result in poor diet and malnutrition. In addition, children may be exposed to harassment from creditors, causing them to feel anxious, stressed and ashamed. The risk of homelessness through rent or mortgage arrears is another concern, as maintaining a stable and secure residency is crucial to ensure a child's basic needs are met. It is important to seek practical advice and support in such circumstances, Step Change Debt Charity (0800 138 1111) offer free impartial debt advice and solutions.

NSPPC (UK): 0808 800 5000

ISPCC (Ireland): 01 6767 960

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