



Building Resiliency During the Holidays

TIPS FROM OUR EXPERTS AT ST. VINCENT FAMILY CENTER

This holiday season may feel more stressful than most. Check out some tips from our behavioral health experts around how to build resiliency in your family over the holidays.

1. Resilience needs relationships - Spend positive time connecting with each other (and others over the phone, facetime or video if possible). Brainstorm ways to create a new family tradition to make 2020 Christmas fun and joyful. Enjoy a break from the responsibilities and battles related to school work. Lean on each other. Family members together can take turns between drawing strength from others in the family and being a source of strength.

2. Build executive functioning - When the brain is under stress, an individual's executive functioning (logic, reasoning skills) get compromised. Easy things to support building executive functioning include establish and maintain routines which can easily be lost when there is no school schedule, play board games, (particularly games that include memory, reason, and strategy), provide opportunities for kids to make decisions and think independently, and above all else: *encourage play and creativity.*

3. Nurture optimism, teach children how to reframe, purposeful practice of gratitude - Acknowledge feelings, but support the child seeing a situation from a positive point of view. Encouraging thinking about the things we do have instead of what we might not have. Research studies have shown that actively practicing gratitude builds resilience to hard things and develops more positive emotional health.

4. Exercise - Exercise strengthens and reorganizes the brain to make it more resilient to stress. Try exercising as a family. Play basketball together or turn on some music and take turns leading an "exercise class" for each other in the family.

5. Model resiliency - Without getting too deep, parents can let children see how they deal with disappointment. (Model the ability to adapt - sad that Christmas doesn't look the same as it usually does, but we should make some new traditions and think about ways that we can still make this holiday fun for our family)

6. Try 'how' not 'why' - When things go wrong - as they will - when kids make mistakes and make poor choices, asking kids 'why' will often end in 'I don't know.' Who knows why any of us do silly things? (Remember stress impacts brain functioning in children and can cause impulsive behaviors that are not thought out). Instead of asking why did you do this, try asking, "How can we fix this?" Teach kids to practice finding solutions and making better choices instead of having to explain their poor behavior when they may really not have an answer.

Happy Holidays from our St. Vincent Family!