

WEEK 4: BUILDING RESILIENCE

Teaching Kids to Bounce Back

WEEK 4 OVERVIEW

The Focus:

How parents model handling disappointment and setbacks

The Challenge:

Share a story with your child about a time YOU failed and what you learned

Connection Tool:

“This week, share a story with your child about a time YOU failed at something and what you learned. Show them resilience is real.”

THE TRUTH ABOUT RESILIENCE

We all want our kids to be resilient - to handle disappointment, bounce back from failure, and keep going when things get hard.

But here's what we often miss:

Resilience isn't just taught through talks. It's also caught through observation.

Our kids don't just learn resilience from us telling them “it's okay to fail.”

They learn it by watching how we handle failure.

WHAT OUR KIDS ARE WATCHING

Every day, your children are observing how you handle setbacks, mistakes, and disappointments.

They're watching: - How you react when you make a mistake - What you say about yourself when things don't go your way - How you talk about your own setbacks and disappointments - Whether you give yourself grace or beat yourself up - If you try again after failing or give up - How you handle criticism or rejection - What you do when something is hard

The question isn't “How do I teach my child resilience?”

The question is: “What am I modeling about failure, setbacks, and bouncing back?”

WHAT KIDS NEED TO SEE

Research shows that kids who develop healthy resilience have parents who:

- ✓ **Talk openly about their own failures** (not just their successes)
- ✓ **Model self-compassion** (not self-criticism) after mistakes
- ✓ **Normalize struggle** as part of growth
- ✓ **Focus on effort and learning** over outcomes
- ✓ **Show that failure doesn't define worth**
- ✓ **Demonstrate that trying again is valuable**
- ✓ **Let their kids see them struggle and persist**

The bottom line: Sometimes our kids need to see that we are human, that we fail, and that we keep going anyway.

THE PROBLEM: WE HIDE OUR FAILURES

Parents work hard to strive for perfection. We don't often talk about our failures. It's easy to share our wins.

When kids don't see their parents fail and recover, they could learn:

- Failure is something to hide
- Mistakes are shameful
- Struggling means you're weak
- Only success is worth celebrating
- Perfection is the standard

This can create anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of trying new things.

THE SOLUTION: MODEL RESILIENCE

Real resilience looks like:

- ✓ Talking about a mistake at work and what you learned
 - ✓ Letting your child see you struggle with something and keep trying
 - ✓ Talking about setbacks as normal, not catastrophic
 - ✓ Showing self-compassion instead of self-criticism
 - ✓ Celebrating effort and learning, not just outcomes
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HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAILURE STORY

STEP 1: Pick a Real Story

Choose a story that feels authentic and relatable to your child's experience.

Good examples: - A time you didn't make the team or get cut from a sport - A job you didn't get - A project that flopped or a goal you didn't reach - A test you failed or a class you struggled in - A mistake you made that had real consequences - A time you embarrassed yourself

Avoid: - Stories where you failed but then became wildly successful (that's not the point) - Stories that are too heavy or traumatic for your child's age - Stories where there could be blame on someone else

STEP 2: Be Honest About How You Felt

Learning happens when we feel the big emotions.

Say things like: - "I felt so embarrassed." - "I was really disappointed." - "I was really upset." - "I felt like I wasn't good enough." - "I was frustrated and didn't want to try again."

Why this matters: When you name the hard feelings, you give your child permission to feel them too.

STEP 3: Share What You Learned

This is where resilience lives - in the moving forward.

Say things like: - "Here's what I learned from that experience..." - "It took me a while, but I realized..." - "That failure taught me..." - "I'm actually grateful for that now because..."

Focus on: - What the failure taught you about yourself - How you grew from the experience - What you would do differently now - Why the failure was valuable (even if it didn't feel like it at the time)

STEP 4: Show How You Moved Forward

Say things like: - "So here's what I did next..." - "I decided to try again, but this time I..." - "I gave myself time to feel disappointed, and then I..." - "It didn't work out the way I wanted, but I learned to..."

The message: “I failed. I felt bad. I learned. I kept going. And I’m okay.”

WHAT TO SAY (AND WHAT NOT TO SAY) AFTER YOUR CHILD FAILS

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

✗ **“It’s fine, don’t worry about it.”**

Why it doesn’t work: Dismisses their feelings and minimizes the experience.

✗ **“You’ll do better next time.”**

Why it doesn’t work: Focuses on future performance instead of present emotion. Adds pressure.

✗ **“At least you tried.”**

Why it doesn’t work: Feels like a consolation prize. Doesn’t validate the disappointment.

✗ **“Failure builds character.”**

Why it doesn’t work: True, but not helpful in the moment. Feels dismissive.

✗ **“It’s just a game / just a test / not a big deal.”**

Why it doesn’t work: Minimizes something that IS a big deal to them.

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD:

✓ **Validate the feeling first:**

“That’s really disappointing. It’s okay to feel upset about it.”

Why this works: Acknowledges their emotion and gives them permission to feel it.

✓ **Normalize failure:**

“Everyone fails sometimes. It doesn’t mean anything is wrong with you.”

Why this works: Removes shame and shows that failure is part of being human.

✓ **Share your own experience:**

“I remember when I failed at [specific thing]. I felt terrible. Here’s what I learned...”

Why this works: Shows them they’re not alone and models resilience.

✔ **Focus on what they learned:**

“What did you learn from this? What would you do differently next time?”

Why this works: Shifts focus from outcome to growth. Treats failure as feedback.

✔ **Separate failure from identity:**

“You had a tough game. That doesn’t make you a bad player. It makes you human.”

Why this works: Protects their self-worth. Failure is something that happened, not who they are.

✔ **Celebrate the effort:**

“I’m proud of how hard you worked, even though it didn’t turn out the way you wanted.”

Why this works: Values the process, not just the outcome.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

1. Failure Is Feedback, Not Identity

Don’t say: “You’re a failure.”

Do say: “That didn’t work. What can we learn from it?”

The difference: One attacks their identity. The other treats failure as information.

Model this: When YOU fail, say out loud: “That didn’t work. What can I learn from this?”

2. Effort Matters More Than Outcome

Don’t say: “You didn’t win, so it doesn’t matter how hard you tried.”

Do say: “I’m proud of how hard you worked, regardless of the outcome.”

The difference: One ties worth to results. The other values the process.

Model this: Celebrate your own effort, even when things don’t work out.

3. Struggle Is Normal, Not Shameful

Don’t say: “Why is this so hard for you?”

Do say: “This is hard. Hard things take time and practice.”

The difference: One creates shame. The other normalizes struggle.

Model this: Let your child see you struggle with something and keep trying.

4. Self-Compassion > Self-Criticism

Model this: “I messed up that presentation today. I’m frustrated, but I’ll prepare differently next time.”

Not this: “I can’t believe I screwed that up. I’m terrible at this.”

Your child is listening. They’re learning how to talk to themselves by how you talk to yourself.

Ask yourself: Would I talk to my child the way I talk to myself?

5. Resilience Takes Practice

Resilience isn’t built in one moment. It’s built over time through: - Small failures and recoveries - Consistent modeling from parents - Safe spaces to struggle without judgment - Encouragement to try again - Celebrating effort and learning, not just success

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Before you share your failure story with your child, reflect on these questions:

About Your Beliefs: - What do I believe about failure? Is it shameful or normal? - Do I see failure as an ending or as part of the process? - What messages did I receive about failure growing up?

About Your Behavior: - How do I talk to myself when I make a mistake? - Do I let my child see me struggle, or do I hide it? - What am I modeling about perfection vs. growth?

About Your Story: - What story from my own life could help my child see that failure is part of life? - How can I show my child that I’m still learning and growing too?

REMEMBER

The goal has never been perfection. The goal is connection.

Your kids don’t need perfect parents who never fail.

They need REAL parents who: - Show up - Admit mistakes - Keep trying - Model self-compassion - Love them unconditionally - win or lose

We can't shield our children from failure, but we can show them how to bounce back.

RESOURCES

Need more support? Email me: rachel@tideandorchardcounseling.com

Want to dive deeper? Check out these resources: - "The Gift of Failure" by Jessica Lahey - "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success" by Carol Dweck - "How to Raise an Adult" by Julie Lythcott-Haims - Positive Coaching Alliance: www.positivecoach.org

FINAL THOUGHTS

Over the past four weeks, we've covered:

Week 1: From Pressure to Presence - Being Your Child's Biggest Fan

Week 2: The Sideline Influence - How Parents Shape the Game

Week 3: The Post-Game Car Ride - What to Say (and What NOT to Say)

Week 4: Building Resilience - Teaching Kids to Bounce Back

These tools work together to create a foundation of: - Connection over performance - Presence over pressure - Growth over perfection - Resilience over shame

You're not just changing how you show up at games. You're changing how your child sees themselves, handles challenges, and navigates life.

That's powerful.