



**DR KATHY WESTON**

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO PARENTING

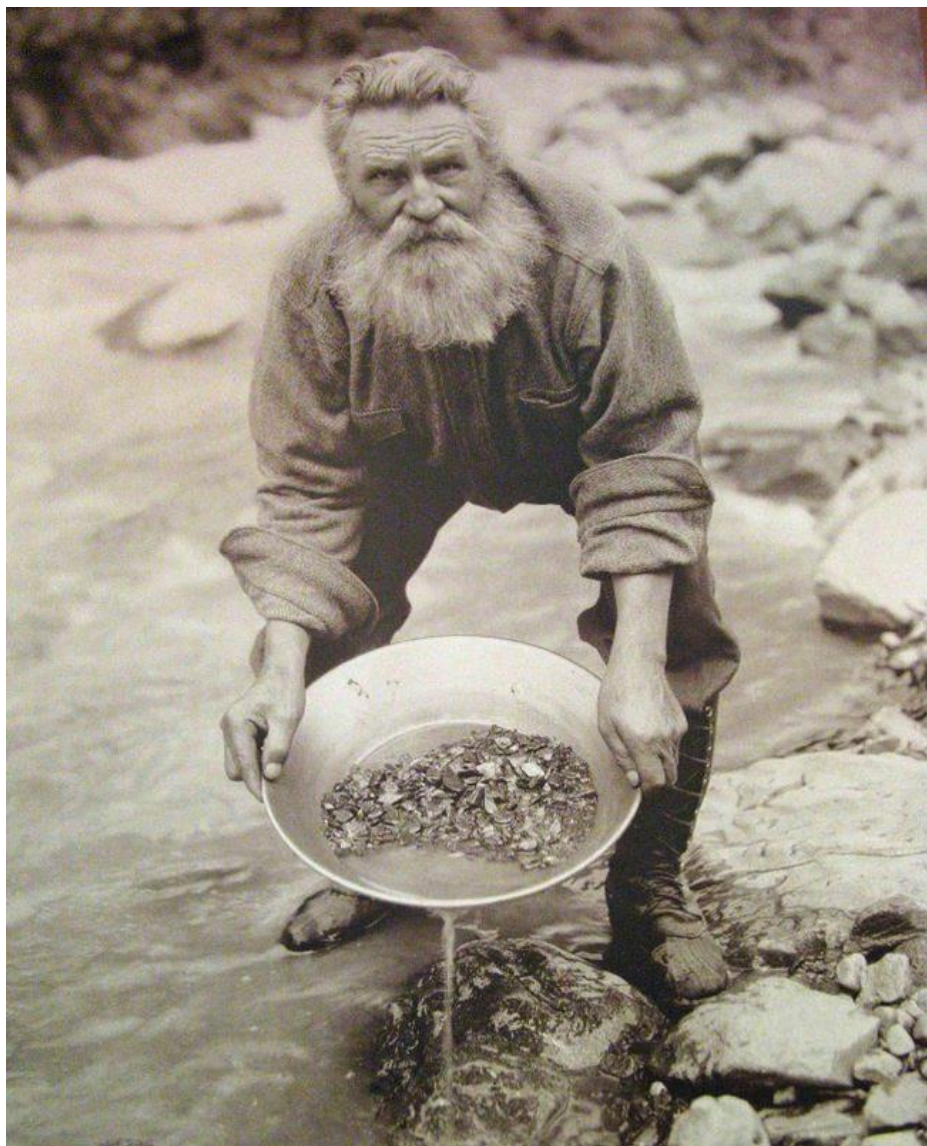
# **Building Resilient Families:** ***an evidence-based approach***



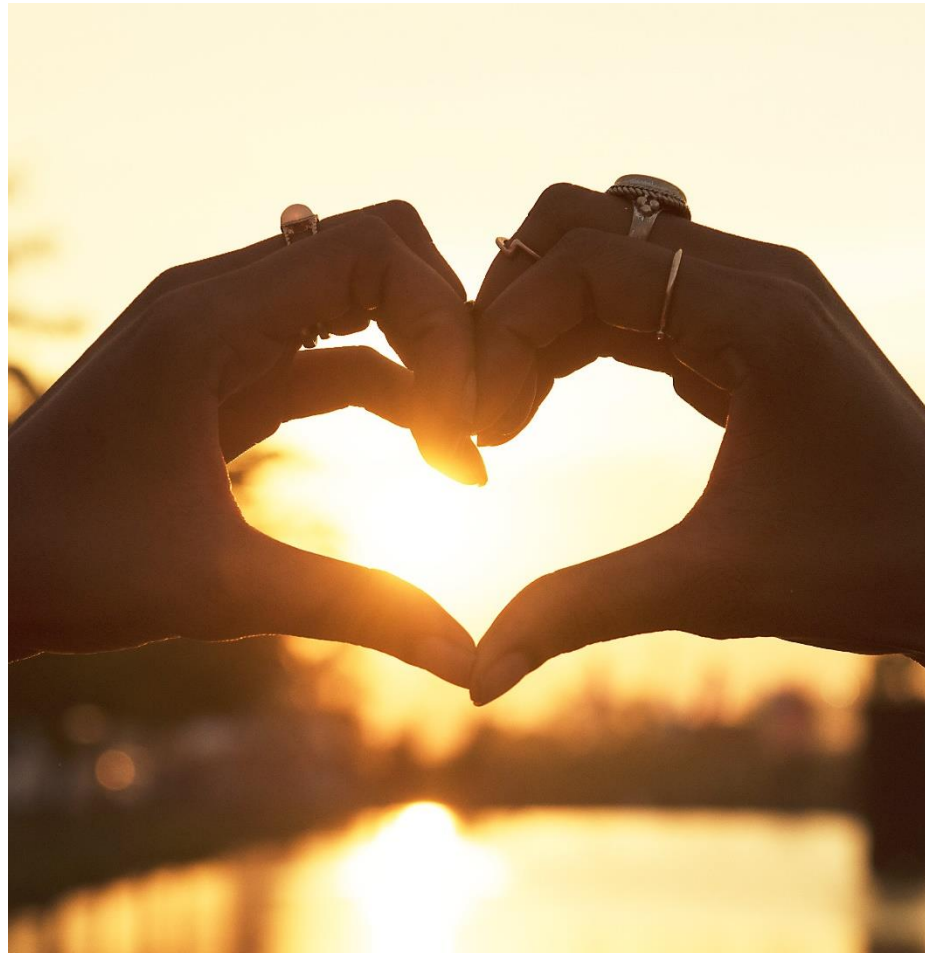
**Dr Kathy Weston**  
**DSPL 8 Resilience Conference**  
**South Hill Centre**  
**23rd October 2019**

# Céad míle fáilte





# Why are you here?





# Who is here for you?

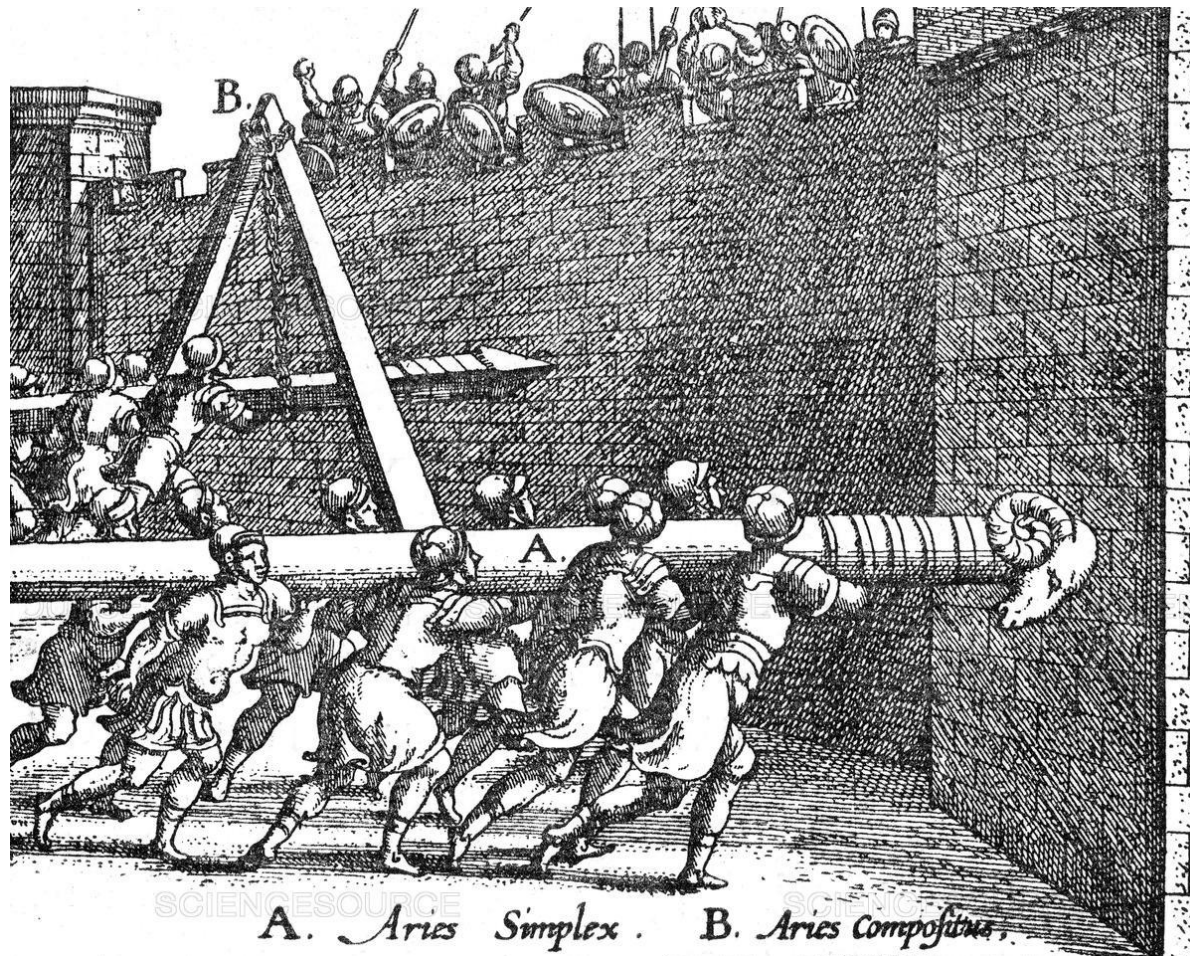


# Everyone has a 'resilience' story





Sometimes it feels like this.





# What today is about



# What Lies Ahead



# Characteristics of Resilience

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Resilient people are **creative**

Resilient people are **flexible**

Resilient people can **reframe** challenges and failures

Resilient people use **humour** to reframe fear and tragedy.

Resilient people **know** when things cannot be changed.

Resilient people can **regulate** their emotions.

Resilient people **explore** different viewpoints.





# How does resilience *feel*?

**I HAVE:** people who love and trust me/set limits for me/show me how to do things right/want me to learn to do things for myself/help me when I am sick/in danger/or need to learn.



**I AM:** a person people can like and love/glad to do nice things for others/be respectful of myself and others/willing to be responsible for what I do/sure things will be alright.



**I CAN:** talk to others about things that frighten or bother me/ find ways to solve problems/control myself when I feel like doing something not right/find someone to help me when I need it (Grotberg, 1995).

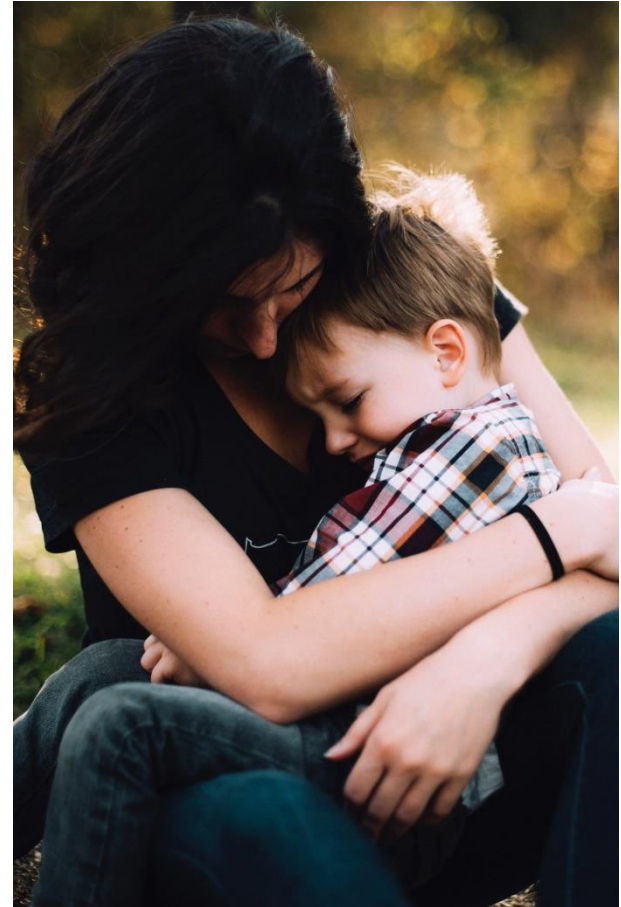


# Resilience is key to coping



# Superhero Extraordinary Network

Parents of children with SEN continually overcome setbacks and start over again as they face challenging situations while simultaneously advocating on behalf of their children. Parents undergo confounding conditions in the realms of medical systems, educational systems, and within society at large.



(Landsman, 1998)



# Resilient Families



Scorgie & Sobsey (2000) identified what they called 'transformations' or life-changing experiences of parents of children with disabilities.

*Personal transformations – new roles form in the family, community or careers/gaining new traits/new convictions or faith*

*Relational transformations: changes in the ways parents and family members of children with disability related to other people.*

Parents in the study reported stronger marriages, healthy family outcomes and acquisition of gained friendship networks with other families who had children with disabilities.

**You are not alone.**



# Self-care.

- Recognise your assets
- Recognise your own resilience
- Tap into relevant parent/carer or professional community.
- Surround yourself with beautiful memories.
- Make sure you have regular things to look forward to.
- Avoiding repeating things that don't work
- Have at least 3 dial-a-friends.
- Anticipate trouble and distract!
- Outsource and delegate where you can.
- Stay as optimistic and as grateful as possible.
- Give yourself a pat on the back.





# Cultivating resilience at home



Speak nicely to yourself.



**What doesn't kill us, teaches us**





# Remember to Laugh.

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Correlates positively with well-being variables such as self-esteem, optimism, cheerfulness and negatively with depression, anxiety and stress

(Dozios, 2018)



# Modelling

“Resilience needs to be taught, practised and modelled”

(Timmins, 2017)



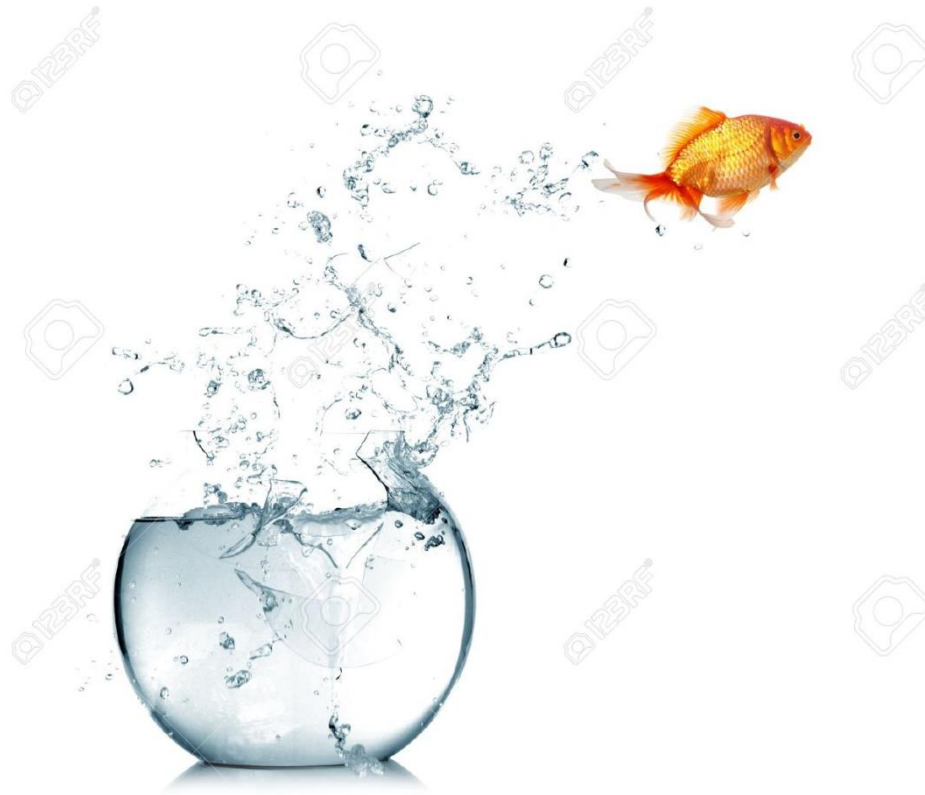
# Recognising family resilience

- Can we make meaning of adversity?
- Can we maintain a positive outlook?
- Can we reframe challenges?

Are we organised? Do we possess qualities such as flexibility, connectedness, communication? Are we able to access resources? (Walsh 2003)



# If something isn't working....





# Family Life: the soil



# You love makes a difference.

“Parents can be re-energized by their ability to express profound and unconditional love for their child with special needs”

(Harland, 2007)



# Who is there for me?



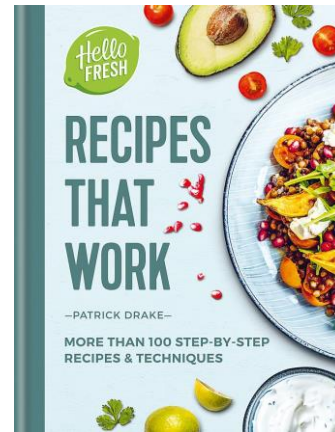
# Importance of self-esteem



High self-esteem: “represents a feeling that one is good enough and a **positive sense of one's value as a person.**”



# Recipe for a Positive *Sense of Self*



- We need a sense of **'continuity over time'**
- We need to experience ourselves as **distinct from others**
- **We need to know we 'fit in' and belong?**
- **We need feedback from others.**

# High self-esteem predicts resilience

- ✓ Attune to their social world
- ✓ Spot their “*signature strengths*” or “*islands of competence*” (Brooks, 1994).
- ✓ Help them set goals.
- ✓ Nurture their **self-worth** Give them and create opportunities for them to receive **feedback**
- ✓ Help them **collate and chart progress**
- ✓ Encourage pro-social behaviour.



# Worries



What **parents** worry about:

- the achievement of independence and social inclusion.
- Worry about bullying...(mixed evidence)
- Their children making friends.

What the **children** care about:

**Help, support, fun and laughter** to help them achieve the things that are important to them as individuals.

Both parents and children view other people's behaviour towards them as crucial, wanting friends, family and professionals who are more accepting and knowledgeable (Lindsay et al, 2010).

# What gives them joy?





**Give them the chance to feel  
competent and courageous**





*“Wow, you tried this new thing, I know you found it difficult and were nervous beforehand but you had a go so well done. What did you do to help you be brave and have a go? Is there anything else you do that helps?”*

Professor Tamsin Ford



# Nurture self-efficacy



When relationships promote self-efficacy and mastery, they afford children **skills for responding to stress** that permit more resilient adaptation.

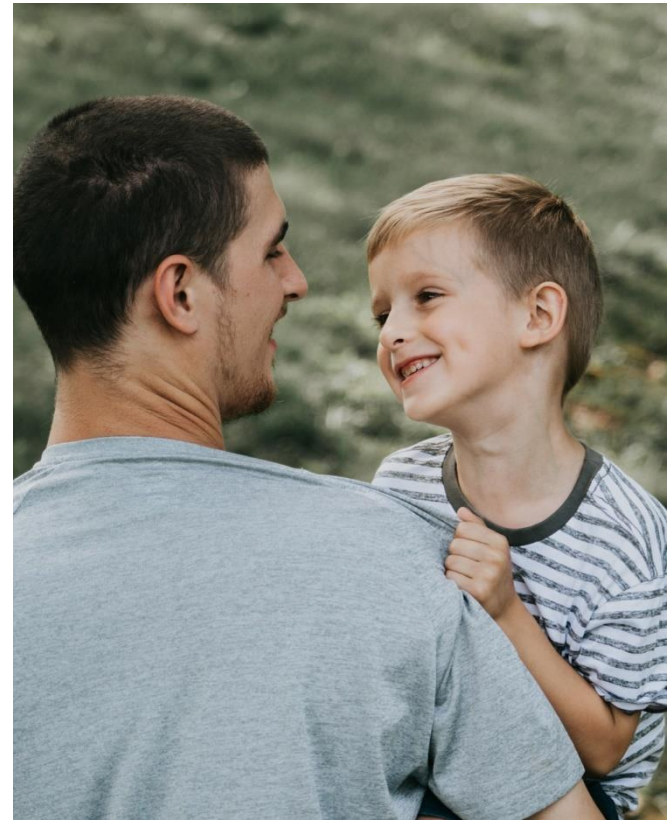


# How can you build their autonomy?



# Experiencing feedback

“Children **actively constructed their multiple identities** and were affirmed when their desired identities (such as being competent, well-behaved, socially attractive) were **affirmed by others**”  
(Lyons and Roulstone, 2017)



# Keep a record of “overcoming”





# Sometimes they need a 'script'

*"Never mind, there are worse things in the world".*

*"Never mind, we tried our best. We gave it our best shot."*

*"Let's be happy for what we do have."*

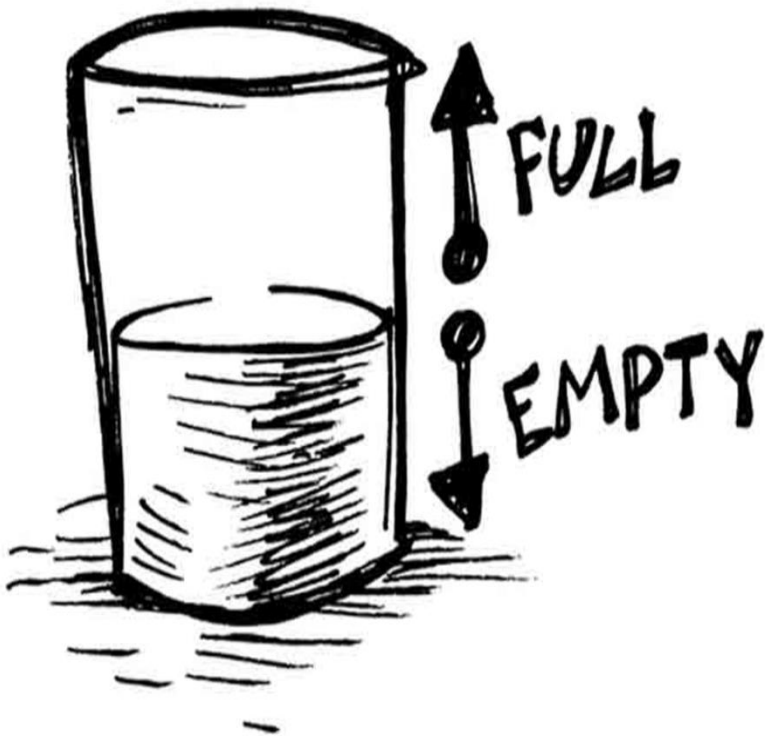
*"Onwards and upwards!"*

*"We will get through this".*





# Can you nurture optimism?



Zolkoski & Bullock (2012) identified key factors in facilitating resilience which included:

Having goals;

Educational aspirations;

Hope;

and belief in a bright future.

# Future Goals

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- Set *realistic* but high expectations
- Don't molly-cuddle – *autonomy, agency, mastery* are key
- Model 'aiming higher'
- Help them find role-models
- Give them opportunities to succeed, win, thrive.



# Nurture altruism



# Play and pro-sociality protect



On the whole  
individuals with  
DLD have poor  
social and  
behavioural  
outcomes

(St Clair et al,  
2011)



Our work shows  
that there are  
considerable  
individual  
differences  
within groups of  
individuals with  
DLD and  
**psychosocial  
difficulties are  
not inevitable**  
(Toseeb et al.,  
2017)



**Play and  
Prosociality are  
protective  
against  
psychosocial  
difficulties in  
individuals with  
DLD** – maybe  
because they  
don't require as  
much language  
(Toseeb et al., in  
prep)



Shared genetic  
markers of  
language and  
psychosocial  
difficulties may  
explain  
individual  
differences in  
psychosocial  
outcomes  
(Newbury et al.,  
in prep)



# Digital Resilience: key messages

## DO:

Appreciate the value & opportunities of digital technologies to YPs with SEN.

Tune into their interests.

Encourage them *engage constructively* with the technology.

Give them the opportunity to teach you.

Avoid background noise during engagement.

Actively encourage moderate amounts of video gaming

Let the YP see themselves as motivated, enthusiastic about learning/able to successfully interact with peers.

Help the YP use automated social interaction tools.

## Don't

Express blanket disapproval...

Leave them to do their own thing

Express too much computer anxiety!

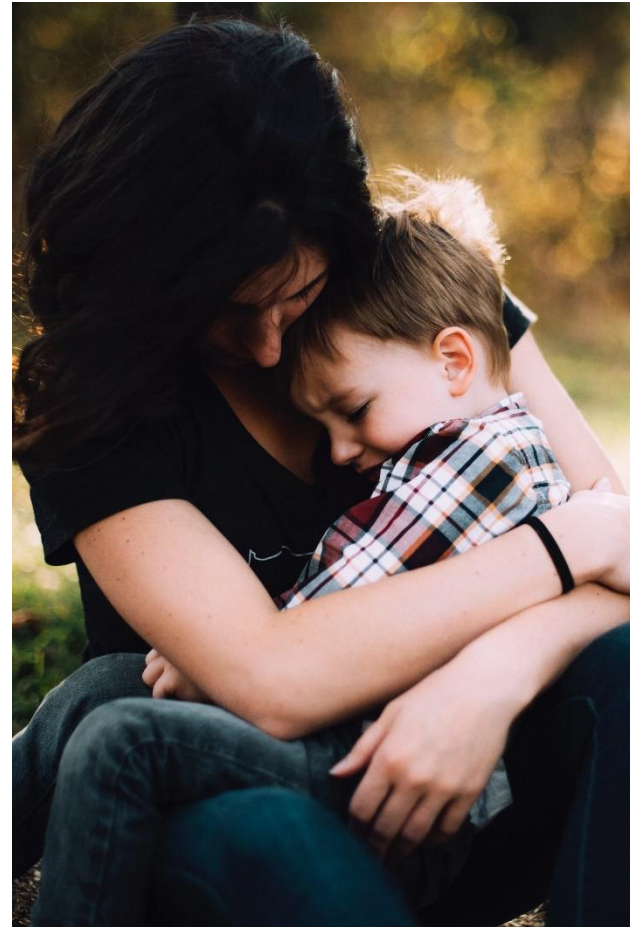


# Supporting anxious children

- Spot **anxious thinking**: are they “*on the lookout for threat*”
- Spotting **unhelpful thoughts** (*these are making you anxious*)
- Ask nice, open questions...
- Check you have understood.

Try to disrupt their anxious thinking habits

**‘COACH rather than SOOTHE’.**



# Thinking Traps!

Fortune-telling: “I know I will fail.”

Overgeneralizing: “I always make mistakes.”

Mind-reading: “Others think I’m stupid.”

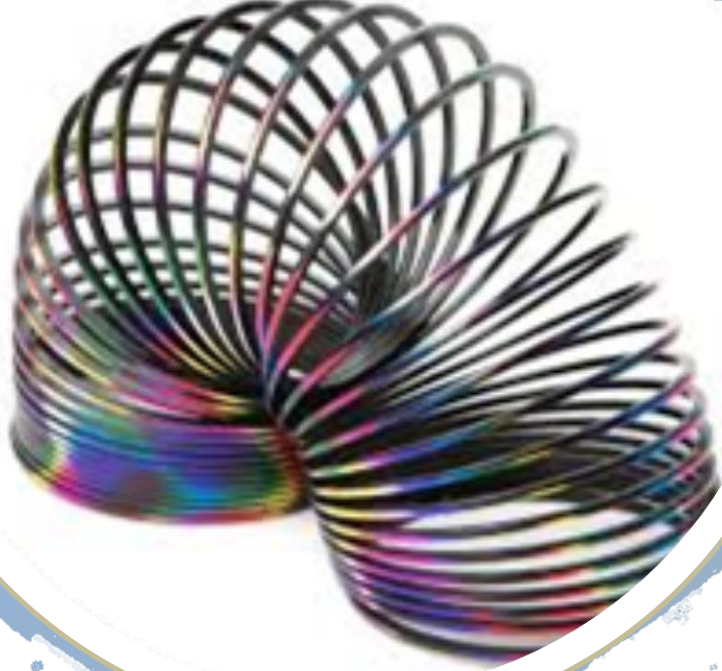
Labelling: “I’m a failure.”

Filtering: When we take note of all the bad things that happen, but ignore any good things.

Catastrophizing: This is when we imagine the worst possible thing is about to happen and we will be unable to cope with it. “I’ll embarrass myself and everyone will laugh.”



# Use visual metaphors

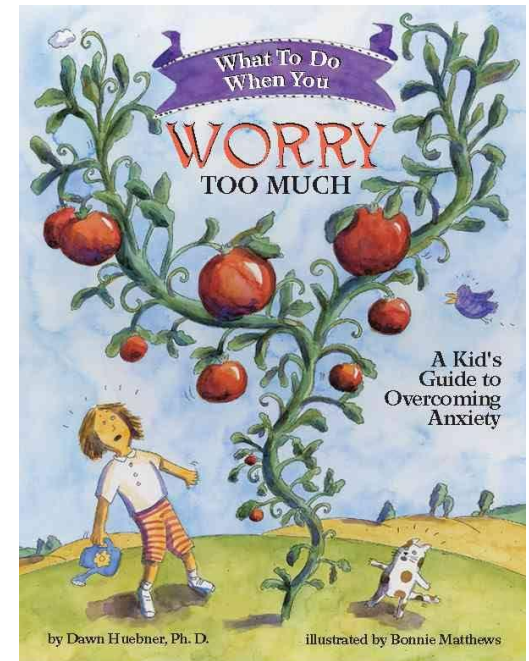
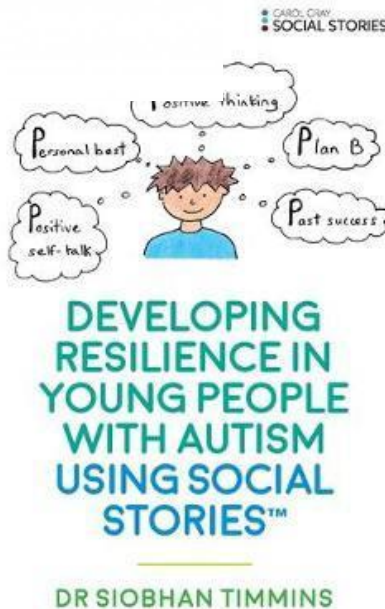




# Fav resources.

<https://braininhand.co.uk/>

<https://incentiveplus.co.uk/>



# Engaging Families

- Be as informed as possible.
- Start with the positives.
- Call with good news.
- Ask for their help and value their expertise.
- Coach families into identifying their own needs.
- Be yourself.
- Be warm.
- Listen *actively*.
- Be innovative.
- Respect, rapport, relationship.
- What else matters?



# Show you are listening

*“Tell me what has happened since we last met?”*

*What makes you think it might be time for a change?*

*“I appreciate how hard it gets to have to hear this again.”*

*“I can see this is upsetting. Thanks for staying through it.”*

*“Can I just check I understand?...”*



# Nurture 'Meaning-making'

- Key process in family resilience.
- Your outlook counts.
- Positive perception of impact on family.
- Ability to see new perspectives.





# When Life hits Hard

- “identity crisis” – literally means a ‘parting of ways’
- Trauma (overwhelming and unexpected life event occurs) – can be experience of stigma
- Trauma, grief, unexpected change challenges our beliefs about the world
- Identity fundamentally affected/ ‘spoiled’
- Biography disrupted.



The  
power of  
re-telling  
one's  
story



# Can you help them make sense of it?

- **“Self-stories are hugely important for coping.**
- Children may need to learn to re-story or re-author themselves in more agentic and powerful roles  
(Adler, 2012)



# What can professionals DO?



- Evaluate the extent to which potential protective factors are present.
- Help them identify their strengths (**what do I have going for me?**).
- Help them identify their assets (**who is there for me?**)
- Help them with meaning-making: know your role is critical in facilitating the story-telling (**through feedback and positive affirmations**)
- Incorporate **hope-enhancing influences** into interactions and interventions with children and young people.
- Explore children's concerns and worries.
- Encourage **prosocial behaviour**.
- Help them become **active participants** in their self-story.
- Sign-post.



# Trauma resources



[www.childtraumarecovery.com](http://www.childtraumarecovery.com)

See: PTSD symptom scale/why it is good to talk about trauma/listen to podcast with Professor Sarah Halligan:  
[www.drkathyweston.com/podcast](http://www.drkathyweston.com/podcast)

<https://childhoodtraumarecovery.com>

(800+ free articles)

Trauma informed practice:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=zg8ahtHIRxU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=zg8ahtHIRxU)

# SLD Resources



- **AFASIC** (see Margo Sharp's article! *Article for Parents and Professionals: SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DISORDER (SCD) DSM-5 (Semantic Pragmatic Disorder)*)
- <https://www.radioverulam.com/podcast/speech-language-disorders-in-children/> (from 09.17)
- **ICAN Charity** (parent hotline)
- **The Communication Trust**  
(<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/>)
- (<https://www.voice21.org/>)
- (<http://www.eif.org.uk/>)
- (<http://www.lucid.ac.uk/>)
- <https://www.mcri.edu.au/research/centres/centre-research-excellence-child-language>).
- <https://www.rcslt.org/get-involved/giving-voice>

# Parents remember...

You are trying your best

To use positive self-talk

To chart your own  
progress

To call your radiator!

To share your stories

To connect with others

**I CAN, I HAVE, I AM**



# Sustaining Resilience

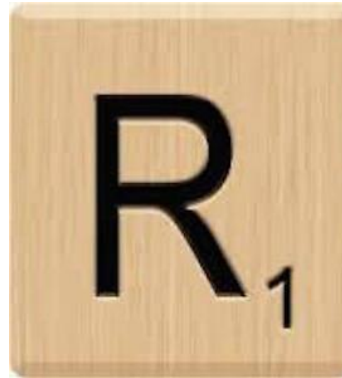
- Continuity
- Exposure to positive people
- Structural support
- Repetition of words, routine
- Opportunities for 'emerging self' to flourish
- Reminding them how far they have come.
- Praise the behaviour you wish to see.





# The 10 Rs of Resilience

1. Relationships
2. Respect
3. Recognition
4. Role modelling
5. Retrospection
6. Risk-taking
7. Reflection
8. Reframing
9. Recalibration
10. Remembering to laugh.



# Remember...

- To find me on Facebook: Dr Kathy Weston
- Follow me on Twitter: @parentengage
- Review my talk on Google!
- Listen to my podcast:  
[www.drkathyweston.com/podcast](http://www.drkathyweston.com/podcast) and  
download the accompanying notes for free!