Recognizing, Teaching and Celebrating Resilience to Reduce Anxiety

Amanda Morin for Hill Learning Center
April 14, 2021
How have you dealt with adversity this year?

Drop your thoughts in the chat
Let’s take a minute to breathe with this image.

Breathe in

Image here: http://gph.is/2cBwk7G
Amanda Morin

- Associate Director, Thought Leadership & Expertise, Understood
- Former classroom teacher and early intervention specialist
- Mother of 3, all of whom have faced adversity this year
- Author of several books including
What does the word “resilience” mean to you?

Drop your thoughts in the chat.
Resilience isn't like Silly Putty.

It's not about always being able to “bounce back.”
What resilience *isn’t*

- A fixed trait
- Bouncing back
- Pushing through
- Ignoring adversity
- Moving forward
My resilience has been challenged...

...to the point that I couldn't keep quiet in ways I had before.

A Year of Loss Is a Year to Lead

By Amanda Morin

With the coronavirus pandemic, all of us are experiencing loss of some kind. Many people have lost loved ones. Others have lost jobs. Some losses have been larger than others, but the common thread is that we’re all feeling a collective sense of loss and lack of control over our lives.

For me, the biggest loss has been my ability to handle “cognitive load” — to move information around quickly and multitask with precision. My thoughts are still moving quickly, but not very productively.
In reality, resilience is more like a repotted plant, slowly finding what it needs in the soil while growing courageously into something more.

-Dr. Ellen Braaten
It’s made me realize that there are losses that leave a hole, and then there are losses that can make you whole. The loss of worrying about being stigmatized is making me whole.

~Amanda Morin
What is resilience?
Dr. Ginsburg’s 7 C’s of resilience

- Confidence
- Connection
- Character
- Competence
- Control
- Coping
- Contribution
5 pillars of resilience

1. Self-awareness
2. Mindfulness
3. Self-care
4. Positive relationships
5. Purpose
What does resilience look like?
Signs of resilience

- Sees lessons in setbacks
- Goes back and tries again
- Asks for help
- Believes things will improve
- Sets goals
- Recognizes strengths

Read more: 6 signs your child is resilient
Building and modeling resilience
How do we help kids build resilience?

- Acknowledge their feelings.
- Talk honestly about strengths.
- Offer support without jumping in right away.
- Talk about lessons learned.
- Encourage them to ask for help.
- Build confidence that things can improve.

Read more: How to build resilience in kids
Take the "Three Good Things" challenge

Each day for at least one week, write down three things that went well for you today, and provide an explanation for why they went well.
Challenge mindsets

15 growth mindset questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What made you think hard today?</th>
<th>How will you challenge yourself today?</th>
<th>What can you learn from this experience or mistake?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would you do differently next time to make things work better?</td>
<td>What else do you want to learn?</td>
<td>What strategy can you try?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can you ask for honest feedback?</td>
<td>Did you work as hard as you could have?</td>
<td>If it was too easy, how can you make it more challenging?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you hold yourself to high expectations or did you accept “good enough”?</td>
<td>Did you ask for help if you needed it?</td>
<td>What can you do to manage distractions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you reviewed your work or logic for errors or flaws?</td>
<td>Are you proud of the end result? Why or why not?</td>
<td>What’s the next challenge to tackle?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read more: Growth mindset activities for kids
Teach self-regulation skills

Self-regulation is about having ways to calm down in the face of stress and anxiety. It’s a skill that develops over time and with practice.

Being able to self-soothe is an important step to being more resilient.
Starfish breathing

Matching the movement of your finger to the natural flow of your breath.

Starfish Breathing
zerotothree.org/mindfulness

Video here: https://vimeo.com/410207426
The 5-4-3-2-1 method

- **5 things you can see**, like a desk or a clock or a water stain on the ceiling. It doesn’t matter how large or small.

- **4 things you can feel or touch**, like the pencil you’re holding, your shirt, or even the ground under your feet.

- **3 things you can hear**, like the tick of the clock, the buzz of an overhead light, or the sound of your own breathing.

- **2 things you can smell**. You could sniff your hands for a whiff of soap or hand sanitizer.

- **1 thing you can taste**. It’s not always easy to find a pleasant taste, but even a sip of water has a taste to it.
Other self-regulation skills for kids

- **Repeat an affirmation.** An affirmation is an empowering statement that you can repeat to yourself in times of stress. It might be “I can only do my best” or “I know I can do this.”

- **Take a walk to get some air.** Moving around can help with self-regulation. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, which makes it easier to think clearly.

- **Rock (or roll).** If you’re experiencing strong emotions or sensory overload, rocking or swaying can help calm your nervous system.

- **Put emotions into words or art.** Journaling, drawing, or even talking out loud to yourself can help you self-regulate. To help get started, use “draw what you see in your head” as a prompt.

Read more: Self-care for kids: 6 ways to self-regulate
What self-regulation skills are you using to cope?

Drop your thoughts in the chat
One more resource: Calming strategies worksheet

**Calming strategies worksheet**
Find strategies to help your child manage anxiety. Your child may have helpful insights, so look for a calm moment to brainstorm together. You can ask your child’s teacher or doctor for ideas, too.

**Your child’s temperament**
- Do any of these descriptions sound like your child?  
  - My child recently started showing signs of anxiety.  
  - My child started showing signs of anxiety a while ago.  
  - Separation anxiety was a big issue in preschool.  
  - Separation anxiety is still an issue with my child.  
  - My child is anxious in social situations.  
  - My child has one or more relatives who show signs of anxiety:  

  **Other:**

**Tips**
- It’s a good idea to look for help early, especially if kids start showing signs of anxiety at a young age.
- Sudden changes in personality can be a sign that something specific is causing the anxiety.
- Anxiety can run in families. That’s why it helps to think about family history.

**Calming strategies for your child**
- What helps ease your child’s anxiety?  
  - Quiet time alone  
  - Quiet time with a trusted adult  
  - Hearing the voice of a trusted adult  
  - Being hugged or held  
  - More time to prepare  
  - Less time to prepare  

**Tips**
- Different kids need different strategies. For example, having more time to prepare makes some kids feel less anxious. With others, it helps to wait to tell them about an upcoming event.
- During a calm moment, ask your child which strategies make things better or worse.

**Calming strategies for yourself**
- What helps you stay cool during heated moments?  
  - Leaving the room  
  - Counting to 10  
  - Exercising  
  - Getting more sleep  

**Tips**
- Many caregivers don’t realize their behavior may fuel their child’s anxiety.
- “Stay calm” is easy to say but hard to do.
- Taking notes can help you see which strategies help you keep your cool.

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Read more: Anxiety Log to Find Out Why Your Child Gets Anxious
Questions (and answers)
About Understood

Understood is the only lifelong guide for people who learn and think differently. Every year, it helps individuals discover their potential, find community, and stay on a positive path through each stage of life’s journey. One in five Americans have learning and thinking differences, such as ADHD and dyslexia.

Understood believes that when others embrace their differences, everyone thrives. By shaping our economy, our classrooms, and our communities for differences, all of our lives are strengthened. And everyone can — and will — be Understood.

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