

INTRODUCTION

Hi and welcome to the Cerebral Palsy Foundation's ParentWise Podcast series. I'm Robyn Cummins.

How can relaxation and helpful thinking build your child's resilience? This is the question that social work consultant, Jenny Griffiths, addresses in the final part of our resilience podcasts.

YOUR TOOLBOX

Hi, I'm Jenny Griffiths.

We all need to develop skills throughout life to cope with stressful situations. That's particularly true for kids with disabilities who will often have to face ongoing therapy and painful medical interventions, surgery and fatigue, among other things.

Relaxation and helpful thinking are effective tools in developing your child's resilience to deal with stress and challenging experiences.

RELAXATION

In today's busy world, the ability to relax does not come naturally to everyone, but can be learnt and improved with practice.

You are a powerful role model to your child and your ability to handle stressful situations and to relax will be keenly observed at home.

By helping your child to firstly be aware of when they are stressed, and then teaching them when to use appropriate relaxation strategies, your child will develop critical coping skills.

Role model and teach your child to relax by:

- Doing something soothing and enjoyable that may distract your child from their stressful situation or worrying thoughts.
- Learning yourself, and then teaching your child relaxation techniques, such as taking slow deep breaths, relaxing their muscles and using visualisation.
- Discovering what works best for your child to help them relax, such as listening to music, reading a story or walking the dog.
- Building relaxation time into your child's daily routine.
- Learning how to cool off and calm down.

POSITIVE THINKING AND SELF TALK

There are several steps to effective problem solving.

A key to building resilience is positive thinking and self talk, which can be particularly useful in anxiety provoking situations. It is important that you help to teach your child to be aware of:

- Helpful versus unhelpful thinking (for example, 'No one will want to talk to me, 'I know I can't do it').
- The impact of self talk on a situation (for example 'I *can* do this', 'I *can* do certain things really well'). Explain to your child that the way they think about something affects the way they feel.
- Challenging unhelpful talk (for example, 'What makes you so sure no one will speak to you?', 'Why is your friend better at this than you are?')

Encourage your child to use relaxation and helpful thinking strategies when dealing with stressful life events and give them lots of praise for their attempts. The more they (and you!) practice and develop these skills, the easier it will be to apply them and the more resilient they will become.

CLOSE

Thanks for listening. We hope you've found these strategies and ideas useful.

You can download or listen to more episodes in the ParentWise Podcast series at the Cerebral Palsy Foundation's website - www.cpfoundation.com.au