



# **SEL Toolkit: Fostering Resilience**

## **Helping You and Your Child Build Strength, Optimism, and Confidence Through Challenges**

**Resilience is the ability to adapt and stay healthy when facing stress or challenges.**

Over fifty years of research show it's a key factor in success and life satisfaction—and it begins with parent self-care. A tired body and mind make it much harder to handle daily stressors.

When children build resilience, they gain confidence, learn to navigate adversity, and see challenges as opportunities to grow. One of the most powerful ways they learn is by watching you. How you care for yourself and respond to setbacks teaches your child how to face their own with courage and determination.

This toolkit will help you strengthen your resilience, support your child through obstacles, and create a home environment that fosters optimism, problem-solving, and perseverance.

### **This toolkit is for YOU if:**

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- You struggle to maintain your own well-being while caring for others
- You tend to protect your child from failure or disappointment
- You find it hard to bounce back from your own setbacks
- You want to model a more positive, optimistic mindset when facing adversity

### **This toolkit is for your FAMILY if:**

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- Your child gives up easily when facing challenges
- Your child shows anxiety or avoidance when trying new things
- Your family is navigating significant changes or stress
- Your child lacks confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles

### **Questions?**

Visit [www.thinkgiveproject.org](http://www.thinkgiveproject.org) or reach out to us directly.

We hope this toolkit sparks meaningful connection in your family.



## Tool 1: Prioritize Physical Movement

### Parents/Guardians-only

A simple way to boost resilience, reduce stress, and model healthy coping



#### Feeling drained, stressed, or struggling to bounce back?

Regular physical movement is one of the most effective—and most accessible—ways to strengthen resilience. Even short bursts of activity, like a walk, stretching, yoga, or dancing to a favorite song, can lift your mood and help you reset.

Why it Works: Exercise triggers the release of “feel-good” brain chemicals like serotonin and dopamine, while also supporting brain growth and flexibility. Research shows that regular, consistent movement can reduce stress, ease symptoms of depression, and boost overall well-being—sometimes as effectively as medication. Importantly, it doesn’t need to be intense or time-consuming. The key is finding activities that fit your lifestyle and sticking with them consistently.

#### How To Do It

- **Start small.** Choose something you enjoy—like walking, dancing, or stretching—and aim for 10 minutes a day.
- **Build it in.** Link it to something you already do: a walk after dinner, stretches before bed, or a quick game of tag with your child before school.
- **Make it fun.** Involve your child when you can—ride bikes, kick a ball, or have a living room dance party.
- **Stay consistent.** Small, regular bursts of movement are more effective than occasional intense workouts.

You don’t need to exercise perfectly—or even every day. What matters most is weaving movement into your life in ways that feel doable and sustainable. Every bit of activity strengthens your resilience and shows your child that caring for your body is a simple, powerful way to manage stress.



## Tool 2: Practice Gratitude

### Parents/Guardians-only

A powerful way to build resilience, shift perspective, and model optimism



### Feeling weighed down by stress, negativity, or daily challenges?

Practicing gratitude is a simple, proven way to boost emotional well-being and strengthen resilience. By intentionally focusing on what you're thankful for—big or small—you train your brain to notice the positive, even in tough times.

**Why it Works:** Research shows that practicing gratitude boosts happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction. It can also ease stress, reduce anxiety and envy, improve sleep, and strengthen relationships. Gratitude nurtures kindness, creating a ripple effect of positivity throughout families.

### How To Do It

- **Start a gratitude list.** Write down three things you're thankful for at the end of each day (a good conversation, a delicious meal, a moment of laughter).
- **Share it out loud.** Say thank you to someone in your life, or share with your child something you appreciated today.
- **Reframe challenges.** When something difficult happens, ask yourself: What's one small thing I can be grateful for in this situation?
- **Make it a ritual.** Try a "gratitude round" at dinner or bedtime, where each family member shares one thing they're thankful for.

Gratitude doesn't erase challenges, but it does change how you and your family move through them. Over time, this simple practice builds a more hopeful mindset, strengthens connections, and shows your child that even small moments of appreciation can make a big difference.



## Tool 3: The ABC Model for Resilience

### Parents/Guardians-only

A simple way to shift perspective and respond with strength



### Do you ever notice how two people can face the same situation—but react completely differently?

That's because it's not the event itself that drives our emotions, but how we interpret it. The ABC Model is an easy, research-based tool that helps you spot unhelpful thoughts and replace them with healthier ones. Over time, this practice strengthens resilience by building flexibility, optimism, and problem-solving skills.

Why Does It Work? The ABC Model shows that our reactions come from our beliefs—not the situation itself. By noticing those beliefs, you can interrupt negative patterns, manage emotions more calmly, and choose healthier responses.

### How To Do It

- **A – Adversity.** Name the situation or trigger (e.g., your child won't do homework).
- **B – Beliefs.** Notice the automatic thoughts you have about the situation ("She's being disrespectful; I can't handle this").
- **C – Consequences.** Notice the emotions and behaviors that follow (e.g., anger, yelling, conflict).
- **Reframe.** Ask yourself: "Is there another way to see this?" (e.g., "She's frustrated and tired, not trying to disrespect me").
- **Choose a new response.** Respond calmly and constructively; this models resilience for your child.

The ABC Model helps you pause, reflect, and turn challenges into growth. With practice, you'll respond with more calm and confidence—and show your child that setbacks don't define them. What matters is how they think about them.



## Tool 4: The Hard Thing Rule

### Parent/Guardian + Child Together

A practical way to build grit, perseverance, and family teamwork



#### Want to help your family face challenges with courage and persistence?

The Hard Thing Rule is a fun and meaningful way to do it. Each family member chooses a personal challenge that takes effort and persistence over time. Instead of giving up when it gets hard or boring, everyone supports each other and views mistakes as chances to learn.

Why It Works: Research shows that working on difficult tasks helps build perseverance, confidence, and new skills. Sticking with something even when it's tough—called grit—is important for reaching goals. When families tackle challenges together, they build resilience, learn to recover from setbacks, and see that effort leads to real accomplishments.

#### How To Do It

- **Choose your “hard thing.”** Each family member picks a goal that requires consistent effort, like learning a skill, completing a project, or improving a habit.
- **Take small steps.** Break your goal into smaller, manageable tasks and track your progress.
- **Support each other.** Encourage each other, celebrate wins, and help each other through challenges.
- **Talk about it.** Share what's working, what's hard, and what you're learning along the way.

The Hard Thing Rule teaches children and adults that growth comes from facing challenges, not avoiding them. By persisting and supporting one another, families build grit, resilience, and teamwork—gaining confidence, stronger bonds, and the belief that effort leads to accomplishment.



## Tool 5: Family Gratitude Practices

### Parent + Child Together

A simple way to boost positivity, connection, and resilience



**Want to help your family notice the good things, even on stressful days—and bounce back from challenges?**

Family gratitude practices are fun, easy ways to acknowledge what's going well and show appreciation for each other. Gratitude is about recognizing the benefits, big or small, that you receive—and expressing thanks for them.

**Why It Works:** Research shows that practicing gratitude regularly increases happiness, optimism, and overall life satisfaction. Families who share appreciation often feel closer, more connected, and better able to recover from difficulties.

### How To Do It

- **Share highs, lows, and gratitude:** At mealtime or bedtime, take turns sharing the best part of your day, the most challenging part, and one thing you're thankful for.
- **Create a Gratitude Jar:** Each family member writes something they're grateful for on a slip of paper and adds it to the jar. Read them together at the end of the week.
- **Say Thank You:** Notice acts of kindness—at home and beyond—and take a moment to express your appreciation.

Practicing gratitude together helps children learn that noticing and appreciating the positive is a skill they can use for life. It boosts well-being, increases happiness, and strengthens the sense of connection and joy within your family.



## Tool 6: Family Storytelling Night

### Parent + Child Together

A simple way to strengthen family bonds, share experiences, and build resilience



### Want to help your family feel closer and more connected?

Family Storytelling Night is a fun, meaningful way to do just that. By taking time to share stories about your strengths, challenges you've overcome, or moments of pride, families can create a shared sense of identity and resilience.

**Why It Works:** Regular storytelling strengthens communication, encourages connection, and provides shared emotional experiences in a safe environment. Children develop clearer narratives about challenges, which supports confidence, self-esteem, and coping skills. Parents also benefit by reflecting on their experiences and modeling resilience, helping the whole family grow stronger together.

### How To Do It

- **Choose a time.** Set aside a regular evening for your storytelling night—weekly or monthly works well.
- **Share stories.** Each family member takes a turn telling a story about a challenge, a proud moment, or a personal strength.
- **Ask questions.** Encourage curiosity and empathy: "How did that feel?" or "What did you learn?"
- **Celebrate your resilience.** After each story, acknowledge the courage, creativity, or perseverance shown.

Family Storytelling Night helps children and parents alike recognize their strengths, process challenges, and build lasting connections. Over time, these shared stories create a resilient, supportive family culture.



## Tool 7: Family Acts of Kindness Challenge

### Parent + Child Together

A simple way to build joy, connection, and resilience as a family



#### Feeling stressed or caught up in daily worries?

The Family Acts of Kindness Challenge is a fun way to lift spirits, strengthen family bonds, and teach children that generosity and care are skills they can use every day. By planning and completing simple acts of kindness together—like helping a neighbor, writing a thank-you note, or giving each other encouragement—you create meaningful experiences that benefit everyone.

**Why It Works:** Research shows that doing kind things for others boosts happiness, positivity, and self-confidence. Kindness also helps shift focus away from stress, making challenges easier to handle. Focusing several kind actions on a single “kindness day” each week can amplify the benefits and keep the challenge fun.

### How To Do It

- **Start small.** Hold the door open, send a supportive text, or share a snack.
- **Choose a Kindness Day.** Pick one day each week to plan 3–5 simple acts as a family.
- **Make it creative.** Invite your child to brainstorm imaginative ways to be kind—at home, school, or in your community.
- **Reflect together.** At the end of the day, share how it felt to give kindness and notice the responses of others.

Kindness doesn’t just brighten someone else’s day—it strengthens your family too. Over time, these shared acts of kindness build empathy, resilience, and lasting connections.

