

FOUR PILLARS OF RESILIENCE



Relationship Tips 18.12.21

Life can be full of many challenges as well as joys. As new parents we are all confronted with disrupted routines, a loss of social interaction and opportunities, job changes, and uncertainty as we make the transition to parenthood.

New parenthood is well known to be a vulnerable time for many with some real struggles concerning mental health and emotional wellbeing. Whilst it is important to know that we cannot and should not try to 'control' our emotional experiences or 'change' how we may be feeling, there is much we can all try to do as individuals to take care of our emotional wellbeing, and ensure that our lives are as meaningful as possible during this time.

Resilience is a word that is used frequently by Psychologists. Resilience refers to how well we adapt or cope with stress, trauma, loss and general adversity. Building resilience allows us not only to survive these new experiences as parents but also to grow as individuals. Whilst some of us may find that we 'bounce back' or lean into adversity more readily than others, we all have the ability to build resilience at every stage of our lives. Resilience is like a muscle that only develops when it is used. Indeed, none of us can develop our resilience when life is smooth and we are within our comfort zone. The emotional discomfort we all experience from time to time is in fact our resilience muscles switching on and gaining strength.

There are several psychological processes we can engage with that will build resilience. We refer to them as the Four Pillars of Resilience. Drawing upon these abilities and skills when we feel overwhelmed and challenged will help you flex your resilience muscles.

1. **Grit.** Grit is one's ability to apply passion and perseverance to a long-term goal. When we show grit, we stay the course despite the discomfort we feel. It involves digging deep to find our inner reserves and reminding ourselves that we have survived hard things before. Remembering that as a species, humans have great capacity to do hard things and that

you are indeed part of this universal human experience.

2. **Perspective.** Although we can't always change the facts or our circumstances, we can change how we view them. Expanding our awareness or shifting our focus holds great power to shape how we respond to the situations we face. It is important to remind yourself that you are not alone in facing the challenges of pregnancy or new parenthood. Re-orientate your attention to what we can control. Try not to focus on what you can't control.
3. **Humour.** Laughing easily and frequently is a great tool during any stressful time even though it might feel a bit out of reach. When you are exhausted and overwhelmed holding our thoughts and feelings lightly and engaging with satire and the ridiculous eases our burdens, reduces stress and keeps us anchored to the present. Indeed, humour is a great tool to shift perspectives on our circumstances. Find what genres and activities appeal to your sense of humour and engage with them when you can.
4. **Gratitude.** Acknowledging the goodness that is present in our lives is a powerful tool in enhancing our experience of positive emotions, feeling more optimistic and more connected to others. Appreciating the good we do have, draws our awareness to the present moment, minimising rumination about the past or worry about the future. Writing down three things each day you feel thankful for is a great way to engage with gratitude. Older children can do this too!

Experiment with these processes and strategies to see what works for you. If however your coping resources are not proving effective enough or you are experiencing negative emotions that feel overwhelming and unrelenting please reach out to us at Gidget Foundation Australia. 🌸

