

Family information: People bouncing back

If you are resilient you will be able to cope reasonably well with difficult situations and things that go wrong and then 'bounce back'. Throughout life, children will need skills and attitudes to help them to bounce back. They will encounter everyday challenges such as making mistakes, falling out with a friend, moving house or school

and losing in a sports competition. Many will also face challenges such as adapting to family break ups, a step-family, the illness or death of a family member, or being bullied. People bouncing back is the **Curriculum Unit** that teaches children the 10 **Bounce Back!** statements.

◆ Bounce Back! stands for:

Bad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.

Other people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.

Nobody is perfect – not you and not others.

Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.

Everybody experiences sadness, failure, hurt, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you.
They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others and to bad luck or circumstances?

Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can change first).

Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.

Keep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.

For younger children, the simpler coping statements in BOUNCE are taught, but 'bouncing back' from a setback, a mistake and bad times is still referred to.

Bad feelings always go away again.

Other people can help you feel better if you talk to them.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset Think again.

Nobody is perfect – not you and not others.

Concentrate on the things that are still good when things go wrong.

Everybody has unhappy times sometimes, not just you.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about 'bouncing back'

- Life is mainly good but now and then everyone has a difficult or unhappy time. Things always get better even though sometimes they may take a bit longer to improve than you would like. It is important to stay hopeful and expect things to get better.
- You will feel better and have more ideas about what to do if you talk to someone you trust about what's worrying or upsetting you.
- Unhelpful thinking isn't necessarily true and makes you feel worse. Helpful thinking makes you feel better because it is more accurate and helps you work out what to do.

Unhelpful thinking	Helpful thinking
I made a mistake, I'm really dumb.	I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes sometimes.
Jake doesn't like me. I must be a jerk.	Jake doesn't like me but other kids like me.

- No one is perfect. We all make mistakes and find out there are some things we can't do well.
- If you can find something positive or funny in a difficult situation, no matter how small, it can help you to cope better.
- We all need to take fair responsibility for the things we did or didn't do that contribute to a difficult or unhappy situation. However, we should not over-blame ourselves because circumstances, bad luck or what others did may have contributed to the difficult situation, too.
- If a situation can't be changed (e.g. having to move house or school or losing a pet) then you just have to accept it and live with it.
- Don't make yourself miserable by exaggerating how bad something is or by assuming the worst possible picture is the one that will happen.
- When something goes wrong it usually only affects one part of your life. Concentrate on the things in your life that are still going well.

◆ What can you do to help develop resilience in your child?

- Use the appropriate **Bounce Back!** statement with your child whenever you see the opportunity.
- Consider displaying the statements somewhere prominent so they serve as a useful prompt for your child (and the rest of the family!).
- Don't over-protect your child from the normal challenges that all children have at different ages (e.g. walking to school, looking after their own things, packing their own lunch). Start by giving your child small age-appropriate challenges that require small responsibilities. Using small steps moves them towards becoming more independent and competent. Don't do things for them without first checking whether they are capable of doing it for themselves.
- Encourage your child to talk about what's troubling them and help them to find a solution. Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling and what they are thinking about the problem, then help them to think about different solutions.
- Gently challenge self-defeating talk (e.g. I can't do this, I'm hopeless/dumb/useless) and helpless behaviour (giving up easily, expecting others to do things for them). Encourage them to use helpful thinking instead (e.g. I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes).
- Don't fight all your child's battles for them. Children need to experience some challenges so they can learn how to bounce back.
- Model effective solving of problems that are age appropriate for your child by thinking 'out loud'. Review different solutions to a problem and the possible good or bad consequences of the different solutions.
- Avoid offering 'quick fixes' or 'feel good' options when things get tough. Rather than distracting them with a movie or treats, let them sit with the bad feelings, knowing that you care that they are hurting, but that it is something they have to deal with, not escape from.

- Help your child to take responsibility for what happens. When something doesn't work out for them, draw up a pie chart with them and ask them to reflect on:

- How much was due to me?
- How much was due to others?
- How much was bad luck or circumstances (i.e. being in the wrong place at the wrong time)?

Also encourage them to consider the situation from the other person's viewpoint.

- When something bad happens to your child, help them to keep things in perspective by asking them:

- Does this really matter? Are you getting upset over very little?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is this to you?
- What's the worst thing that can happen? Do you think you can handle that?

These questions help your child to stop catastrophising (i.e. assuming that the worst will happen) and stop getting too upset over things that will get better or improve in time.

- Encourage them to think about the parts of their life that are still exactly the same and still good (e.g. they lost a friend but they still have other friends, their school work is going well, nothing has changed at home).