

**Talk Title:** Raising Resilient Kids

**Talk Synopsis:**

We live in an increasingly fast-paced and competitive society and the pressure to succeed academically could leave our children feeling panic-stricken and overwhelmed. More children under 12 are seeking help at the Institute of Mental Health due to academic anxiety, peer pressure and family problems. Find out what you as a loving parent, can do to help your child manage their stress, emotions and have a health self esteem.

**Speaker:** Mr Chong Ee Jay, Family Life Specialist

*Here are some notes taken during the webinar shared with permission from Ee Jay.*

### **Why Resilience?**

- Growing number of cases of stress-related, anxiety and depressive disorders
- Only 3% of youths talk to their parents about their struggles and difficulties
- If resilience is the end goal we want to reach, along the journey there is a need to provide a safe space, safety, and a safe zone where youths can relate and talk to their family
- Family and Home must be the first line of defence

Children today do Face Different Sources of Stress

- Academic
- Family finances
- Extra-curricular activities
- Relationship with parents
- Bullying

When stresses become overwhelming you may see some of the following symptoms

### **Physical**

- Aches & Pains (psychosomatic)
- Energy levels & sleep patterns
- Memory & concentration
- Immunity (falling sick)

### **Emotional**

- Loss of motivation
- Sense of failure & self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped & defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Increasingly cynical & negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction & accomplishment

## **Behavioural**

- Withdrawal from responsibilities
- Isolating oneself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer time to get things done
- Skipping work or coming in late & leaving early
- Using food, drugs, or other methods to cope
- Taking out one's frustration on others

## **What is Resilience?**

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. It is the ability of a substance or an object to spring back into shape; elasticity. Resilience is bouncing back from a failure, defeat from a bad experience etc. It is a competency, a value as well as a character trait.

Over time, ideally, your parenting approach should move away from that of an instructor to being a coach. Let children explore and when they experience failure, it is good to allow them time and space to bounce back. Here, parents' role is to process the learning and bring out the salient points for learning and loving forward. It is important to use every opportunity to focus on the process, the learning and not the outcome.

## **How to build Resilience?**

Establish – Security

- Family is the first line of defence
- Children must feel safe at home. (The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver or trusted adult.

How to establish security at the home front?

- Attention
  - Pay attention to our child's emotions
  - If they do not know how to express their emotions e.g. how fearful they are, you could use a scale of 1 to 10 to help them express their fears: 'How scared are you?' Recognise their feelings; do not downplay them.
  - It is important to connect with your children to prevent them from emotional and relational poverty.
- Appreciation
  - Show appreciation to your children and be genuine and specific so that they know that you are paying attention and noticing them. Some things you could say:-
    - I really appreciate seeing you ...
    - I love the way you ....
    - I noticed how you were ...
    - Say thank you.

- Affection
  - Show affection to your children
  - Use words to express affection
  - Write notes or letters to your children if you are not comfortable with verbalising your affection.
- Acceptance
  - Accept them the way they are
  - Love them for whom they are
  - Recognise that children are blessings in our lives not trophies.

In this journey of building resilience, what do you do when your children face a problem?  
You could use the SODAS framework to help them to work on the solutions.

#### Situation

- Analyse the situation
- Let them draw and explore
- Let them share
- Do not interrupt, but you could ask questions to clarify without being judgemental
- Just listen

#### Options

- List out all the options
- Explore the options together with your child

#### Disadvantages & Advantages

- Note down the disadvantages & advantages of each of the option.

#### Solution

- Based on identified disadvantages & advantages, identify the solution.
- Let your child select the solution.

Apart from SODAS, parents could equip them with a Happiness Toolkit

- Good Sleep of at least 9 to 11 hours.
- Good Cheer – Having cheerfulness. Go for run, having a good meal together.
- Good Company

Along this journey of building resilience, we should continue to cultivate good habits in our children. Teach and role model the following:

Gratefulness – being thankful.

- Learn to say thank you.
- Write Thank You cards
- Make gratefulness visible and felt

Kindness

- Seize opportunities to be kind
- Look out for others
- Be helpful towards others

Positive Outlook

- Situations may be challenging but teach them to see possibilities, beyond the issues that they are facing
- In our own lives, recognise the silver linings in any problem

Thank you