



The Resilience Tree

21 Ways to Resilience

When Infants, Children and Youth are Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence

Each year, children in half a million Canadian households are exposed to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).¹ This exposure can set children down a difficult path, affecting development and possibly resulting in trauma and difficulties managing and expressing emotions appropriately.² But no two children respond in exactly the same way. This is where resilience comes in.

What is resilience? Having reviewed the research literature, we developed the following *working definition*:

Resilience is navigating through adversity, where the interplay of personal qualities, relationships, and community and cultural context, support healthy adaptation, over time.

We identified 21 factors associated with resilience and children's exposure to IPV. A child does not need all these factors to get through adversity! But many can be developed or strengthened.

Check out the Resilience Tree. Nurturing relationships and communities help children and youth navigate adversity and foster resilience. What can you do to help?



Safe, non-violent families and communities are the bedrock of healthy child development.

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Child's Qualities

Although some of these qualities are fairly stable, think about which ones can be taught or developed.

- 1 Easy temperament, agreeable
- 2 Socially competent
- 3 Self-confident, independent
- 4 Intelligent, academically successful
- 5 Emotionally regulated, self-controlled
- 6 Positive, optimistic
- 7 Motivated, goal focused
- 8 Good problem solver, resourceful
- 9 Skills, talents, humour
- 10 Can retreat and distract self—sports, reading
- 11 Accurately assigns abuse responsibility
- 12 Committed to breaking cycle of violence

Child's Relationships

Relationships, inside and outside the family, old and new, can be fostered and strengthened.

- 13 Close to one safe person (e.g. parent, sibling, teacher)
- 14 Protective mother with warmth, sensitivity, good mental health
- 15 In-home social network
- 16 Peer and social support

Child's Context and Culture

While this area has received less research attention, it is important to recognize that community resources offer pathways to resilience through relationships, opportunities, skill development, etc.

- 17 Safe haven, accessible community resources
- 18 Educated mother with stable employment
- 19 Exit options—post-secondary education
- 20 Connection to spirituality, faith
- 21 Bi-cultural exposure, influence

This Fact Sheet is intended for professionals working with children and families coping with IPV. It may help identify existing strengths and others that can be developed. Every child can be supported to navigate through the adversity associated with IPV.

Brought to you by Make Resilience Matter, a research project led by Ramona Alaggia, PhD., Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We develop and share knowledge about how to support children and families in the aftermath of IPV. We welcome your feedback and ideas. Contact: ramona.alaggia@utoronto.ca

¹ Sinha, 2010

² Fallon et al, 2015

