How can teenagers help themselves build resilience?

Make connections
Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems
You can’t change the fact that highly stressful events happen. But you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Accept that change is a part of living
Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

Move toward your goals
Develop some realistic goals. Do something – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

Take decisive actions
Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery
People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experiences, tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, a greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, an increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

Nurture a positive view of yourself
Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

Keep things in perspective
Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

Maintain a hopeful outlook
An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualising what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

Take care of yourself
Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.
For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

The key is to identify ways that are likely to work well for you as part of your own personal strategy for fostering resilience.

‘The Road to Resilience’
from the American Psychological Association
How can parents help teenagers develop resilience?

- Teach them that they have power over their lives. Teenagers need to hear over and over again that they have the ability to make decisions and to change the direction of their lives.

- Don’t overprotect them. Resilience is something we develop through experiences of falling and getting back up on our own. Sometimes teenagers will need parents right there from the beginning while at other times they will be able to cope alone. When in doubt, stand back and give your teenager a chance to go it alone before offering support.

- Teach them to be optimistic, having a positive outlook is a huge advantage for students. Show your teenager that having a ‘glass half full’ mentality is a learnable skill that simply takes practice. Optimism is the soul of resilience.

- Teach them to be determined and persistent. Students need determination to handle the challenges of senior study, relationship issues and other day-to-day hurdles. Instill in them a ‘don’t give up’ mentality.

- Tell your teenager that strength of character is built on how we deal with setbacks, not how we deal with successes. It’s easy to feel good about ourselves when we are successful. It’s when we fail and pick ourselves up again that we really show the stuff we are made of.

- Teach them to let go of the past. When teenagers see how parents handle tough issues, they’ll learn how to respond with optimism rather than with anger, resentment of resignation.

- Teach them that, while some situations cannot be changed, they can choose their reactions to these things. Young people need to hear that sometimes all we can do is accept a situation no matter how sad or disappointing, and move on with our life.

Good messages to give teenagers about setbacks/disappointment

- Sometimes you can’t see solutions alone. Getting advice is the smart thing to do!

- Don’t give up! There is almost always a solution to every problem, sometimes many.

- Everyone makes mistakes, has doubts and is occasionally afraid – even parents! This is a good way to reduce pressure to be perfect. Reassure your teenager they don’t have to prove themselves or change themselves for you. You love them as they are.

Fall seven times, stand up eight

Japanese proverb