



BUILDING RESILIENT FAMILIES TOOLKIT



“We might not be able to change or remove all the stresses that families are facing, but we can walk a journey with them. We can be that supportive community around them to see that they move from toxic stress to manageable stress. We can be part of sharing skills, bringing opportunities and connections to cope better and thrive in the face of adversity”

– Sikunye –

The term “resilience” is everywhere, and it seems to mean something different each time we hear it. Resilience has been used to describe people and systems that bounce back from negative experiences and disturbances. The definition for resilience is:

“An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change”

– Merriam-Webster Dictionary –

SO WHAT DOES A RESILIENCE IN PARENTING LOOK LIKE?

Families with very young and small babies are often running on empty. They can be sleep deprived and might be unable to meet their own basic needs because they are giving their entire attention to their baby. But parents of small babies do have many wishes and hopes for themselves and for their children – which sometimes they are not able to meet, and a sense of failure arises. Tension and conflict in households also rises with couples arguing 40% more after the birth of their first baby. With stress, anxiety, lack of support, unemployment, miscarriages, and many other things that lead to toxic stress, it is important for families to build resilience. Resilience has six domains that parents can focus on to build up resilience in themselves, and their families. See image below.

THE SIX AREAS TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN YOURSELF & FAMILY



Adapted from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/6-domains-resilience-jurie-rossouw>

WHAT CAN YOUR CHURCH DO TO SUPPORT FAMILIES?

- Build confidence in parents by creating an environment where parents can come for encouragement, support, and access to resources to help them become better parents
- As the local church, be a “family” to families – the church’s role in society means families should be the foundational focus of the church mandate, as churches can support, strengthen, and build families’ skills and coping mechanisms
- *“Cast all your cares and anxieties on me for I care for you” (1 Peter 5: 7)* is not just a scripture, it is a process – a process that the church can facilitate for people and families. Caring is a place of refreshing and nurturing and that is where the church needs to care for families
- See that the care you are providing for families is not in isolation. You have a part to play, and others do, too. Think of the practitioners, social workers, organisations in community development and others in your community and your congregation that you can refer parents to, when necessary
- Be the respite care so people can come and offload and rest. Create a space for connectedness; a place where people feel safe, valued, belonged and significant and secure – because that is the basic needs of a human being. This will look different

in different churches (it may be Sunday school, moms' groups, dads' groups). It is important that if people come from outside the church they find a safe space to rest

- Use your organisational and denominational structures: buildings, children's church, baby's rooms, Sunday school, teenage groups, young adult groups, parenting programmes, counselling, men and fathers, marital seminars, pre-marital seminars, pre-parenting coaching to create a generation that has a great opportunity to build stronger, resilient, and godly families.

KNOW WHERE TO GET SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

For emotional support:

- [The South African Depression and Anxiety Group \(SADAG\)](#) is a useful website and parents can call 0800 567 567 for free or SMS 31393 and they will call back
- [Useful contacts](#) is a resource with a range of agencies for support
- [The Perinatal Mental Health Project](#) has many resources and information
- You may also have a range of specialists in your congregation – reach out and see if anyone provides the services that families are needing (e.g. counsellors, psychiatrists, lawyers, breastfeeding specialists, midwives etc.)

For financial or practical support:

- [Social Relief of Distress Grant](#): This grant is a temporary provision of assistance for people who cannot meet their or their families' most basic needs during COVID-19
- [Child Support Grant](#): This grant is aimed at lower-income households to assist parents with the costs of the basic needs of their child. The grant is not meant to replace other income but is intended to bridge the gap in the cost of living.

Other useful resources:

- Read our blog on [building resilient families](#)
- [Affirm mom and dad](#) in their role as parents
- Remind parents of [who they are in Christ](#)
- Read [“What if mom or dad are struggling?”](#)
- [5 problem solving steps](#) for mom and dad
- [Keep calm and manage stress](#) tool for mom and dad
- Read [A guide for families to build resilience in troubling times](#) (external resource)
- Read [building resilience](#) and download the resources (external resource)
- Look at the [Perinatal Mental Health Project](#) for useful resources for moms and dads

FOR PARENTS

It is important to build resilience for yourself and your loved ones. Here are some ideas to build resilience:

1. ASK FOR HELP: when you ask for help you are more likely to bounce back after adversity. You don't have to be a hero. If you feel like you are not coping, you are not failing. God has placed people around you who can be that support that can strengthen, encourage and bless you even when you feel at your lowest. Speak to your pastor, counsellor, or a wise and mature fellow believer who can listen and know some next steps to take.

2. GET CONNECTED WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY. Don't let your busy schedule squeeze out time for family and friends – you will have to be intentional about scheduling some time to connect with your spouse, friends, and family on a regular basis.

- Have lunch together with friends or family
- Keep connecting to spiritual community
- Make a walking date
- Volunteer with a friend
- Join a book club or moms' group
- As a mom, it is easy to get lost in the day-to-day activities and routines (e.g. laundry, preparing meals, cleaning etc.). Always remember to stay connected. Pray.
- Know where to get support when you need it
 - Read our blog on [building resilient families](#)
 - Remind yourself of [who you are in Christ](#)
 - [5 problem solving steps](#)
 - [Keep calm and manage stress](#) tool
 - Read [A guide for families to build resilience in troubling times](#) (external resource)
 - Read [building resilience](#) and download the resources (external resource)
 - Look at the [Perinatal Mental Health Project](#) for useful resources for moms and dads

3. GET YOUR BODY MOVING: Getting your blood pumping and getting outside is a great way to feel refreshed. Pick what's right for your fitness level.

- Take a walk around the block, walk your dog
- Stretch or do breathing exercises
- Take your bike out for a spin
- Train for a 5K walk or fun run
- Spend time tending your garden
- Get back into a sport you love

4. FEED YOUR BODY: Good food fuels your body, so make sure you eat and drink healthy foods. Parents tend to put their children first, but it is important for moms and dads to nourish their bodies with proper food too.

- Drink water instead of canned drinks
- Plan what you are going to keep in your fridge each week so you can make quick, healthy, easy meals
- Review what you are eating and replace an unhealthy food with something that is healthier – reduce the amount of processed food and replace with fresh food items

5. MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY: Moms and dads often get into the "get-stuff-done-before-the-kids-wake-up" mentality. But a lack of sleep has adverse health consequences. Do what you can to protect and prioritise good sleep.

- Avoid food, alcohol, emotionally upsetting conversations, and stimulants (such as caffeine and nicotine) at bedtime
- Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine

6. GIVE YOUR BRAIN A BOOST

- Meditate on scripture
- Write in a journal
- Sketch something or pick up a coloring book
- Read a good book
- Do a crossword puzzle
- Take a painting or drawing class
- Learn to play an instrument
- Read resources that help you to build resilience