

7 PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE

Children exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) process, react, and respond to the violence in different ways. Despite facing difficulties, many children display well-being and positive adjustment. Emerging research continues to examine what protective factors promote children's resilience and how they can support prevention and intervention efforts for children and their families.

This infographic shares information on promising protective factors within children, families, and their communities.

1. PRESENCE OF A LOVING AND SUPPORTIVE ADULT

Research suggests that the single most common factor in how children overcome adversity is the presence of at least one loving, consistent, and supportive adult.¹

It is often a parent, but it can also be a grandmother, godparent, coach, teacher, or neighbor.

Children benefit when we recognize and preserve the important connections that provide them with nurturing and security.

2. POSITIVE SELF-PERCEPTIONS

Self-perceptions refer to how children think about themselves, their skills and capabilities, and their sense of control.²

For instance, children who believe they are capable of doing certain tasks may be more optimistic, less anxious, and persevere more to accomplish a task.

Positive self-perceptions can be nurtured by recognizing children's efforts, helping to set short-term goals, and helping them learn from setbacks.

3. SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

These skills enable children to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours when they feel overwhelmed, anxious, or angry.³

"Scaffolding" is an approach used to support children with self-regulation by helping them navigate difficult situations one step at a time until they are able to handle the challenges on their own.⁴

4. CONNECTION TO FAITH AND CULTURE

Children who are involved in cultural or faith groups may be better positioned to navigate adversity.⁵

Children benefit from the support of a network of people who share similar values and beliefs. In addition, positive messages conveyed by spiritual, cultural, or religious traditions may help children overcome difficulties.⁶

5. PARENTING COMPETENCIES

Parenting competencies include being responsive to a child's needs, expressing emotional warmth, providing support to the child, and building strong parent-child bonds.⁷

Research shows that parenting competencies are positively linked to better outcomes for children exposed to adversity and trauma.⁸

Children benefit when we work with parents to strengthen their parenting skills.

6. MOTHER'S WELL-BEING

Children whose mothers experience positive mental health display increased resilience and better outcomes than other young people who are exposed to adversity.⁹

Promoting health and well-being in mothers is an important way to support children.

7. POSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Schools can support children's beliefs in their own abilities to achieve and can provide them with the intellectual and emotional tools to do so.¹⁰

Children's mental health and well-being can be further strengthened when schools incorporate social-emotional learning and/or trauma-informed approaches in their classrooms, supports, and services.

How a given child responds to these protective factors depends on many interacting influences at the child, family, and community levels, including their experiences of relational and structural violence. Promoting these protectors can help to build children's resilience and support their well-being and health.

Explore these related resources:

[From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts](#)

[The Science of Resilience](#)

[Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience](#)

¹ Center on the Developing Child. (2015). *Resilience*. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>; Osofsky, J. D. (1999). The impact of violence on children. *The Future of Children: Domestic Violence and Children*, 9 (3), 38.

² Yule, K., Houston, J. & Grych, J. (2019). Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta-analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 22, 406–431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>; Berk, L. E. (2004). *Development through the lifespan* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

³ Yule, K., Houston, J. & Grych, J. (2019). Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta-analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 22, 406–431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>

⁴Tzuriel, D., & Shomron, V. (2018). The effects of mother-child mediated learning strategies on psychological resilience and cognitive modifiability of boys with learning disability. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88 (2),236-260. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12219>

⁵ Yule, K., Houston, J. & Grych, J. (2019). Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta-analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 22, 406–431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷Graham-Bermann, S. A., Gruber, G., Howell, K. H., & Girz, L. (2009). Factors discriminating among profiles of resilience and psychopathology in children exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 33(9), 648–660. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.01.002>; Manning, L. G., Davies, P. T., & Cicchetti, D. (2014). Interparental violence and childhood adjustment: How and why maternal sensitivity is a protective factor. *Child Development*, 85(6), 2263–2278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12279>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹Fogarty A., Wood CE., Giallo R., Kaufman J., & Hansen M. (2019). Factors promoting emotional-behavioural resilience and adjustment in children exposed to intimate partner violence: A systematic review. *Aust J Psychol*. 71, 375–389. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12242>

¹⁰ Yule, K., Houston, J. & Grych, J. (2019). Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta-analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 22, 406–431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>