

# Building resilience

FOR PROFESSIONALS

Resilience refers to the way kids respond to traumatic events and stresses, and their ability to 'bounce back' from adversity.

As a professional working with kids in out-of-home care (OOHC), you can assist them to develop their own resilience. Strategies based upon connection, mastery and emotional regulation are essential to this process.

## Connection

To increase resilience, kids need a strong, trusting relationship with at least one adult who is able to meet their needs in a consistent and nurturing way. Ways to build connection include:

- spending one-on-one time with the kids you work with, and getting to know their interests, worries, hopes and dreams
- only making promises that you can keep
- developing trust by doing what you say you will do - follow up in a timely manner; and keep kids informed about how you are supporting them
- showing interest in, and respect for, cultural identity and connection. Talk to the kids you work with, and those from their cultural communities, to determine how best to provide support
- talking to carers about the importance of spending individual and family time with the kids in their care
- supporting carers to understand that kids who have experienced trauma may take time to build connection and trust with adults
- identifying a network of caring adults outside of the care environment for every kid you work with. This may include: family finding; engaging mentors; connecting with their cultural community; working with their schools; or helping them participate in sports, arts, community, cultural or religious activities. Focus on long-term connections that will remain in their lives
- supporting kids to develop friendships and participate in regular social activities such as visits with friends, sleepovers and parties
- ensuring kids have regular family visits with parents, siblings, and extended family. Support kids to make these visits positive and rewarding. Talk about who is most important to them, and ensure they have visits with these people
- being aware of any possible communication, social skill or cognitive difficulties. Arrange assessments by speech pathologists, occupational therapists or psychologists where required. Gaining appropriate supports will ensure that kids can make connections as easily as possible.



## **Mastery**

Increasing mastery in kids improves their confidence in coping with adverse circumstances, contributing and being successful. Ways to build mastery may include:

- ensuring that kids participate in social, sporting, artistic and cultural practices that bring them joy, while increasing their sense of self-worth and achievement. These activities should form part of their case plan
- helping kids to actively participate in their case planning. You might support them to attend case planning meetings, or involve them in age-appropriate ways
- encouraging carers to allow kids age-appropriate choice-making opportunities. Ensure that you include their choices and decisions in your work
- using life story work to help kids understand their journey and the reasons they are in care. Support carers to understand the importance of life story work
- ensuring carers understand their kids' care histories, including reasons for being placed in OOHC. This allows carers to respond accurately when kids ask questions
- supporting carers to develop household rules and routines in collaboration with kids in their care
- supporting kids and their carers to build skills in developing and maintaining friendships and healthy relationships
- working with carers to ensure kids participate in household tasks and chores, appropriate to their age and ability. Carers may also need support to help kids build skills in self-care, household tasks, problem solving, time management and social skills
- working with schools to ensure kids are able to actively participate and learn. Evaluate where increased supports may be required.

## **Emotional Regulation**

Increase emotional regulation by helping kids develop their ability to recognise and respond to their emotions. Being able to manage difficult emotions is something we all need to learn. All kids, including those in OOHC, learn this important skill from adults. Ways to encourage emotion regulation include:

- modelling the naming of emotions in home visits and at meetings with carers and kids
- providing carers with resources on how to build emotional regulation skills, such as emotion coaching handouts and training
- identifying signs of trauma, emotional challenges and behavioural difficulties, then linking kids into appropriate supports
- seeking cultural supports to understand emotional responses and behaviours from a culturally informed perspective
- working with carers to develop positive parenting and behaviour responses

- providing resources on co-regulation and Time-In as a way of responding to challenging behaviours
- supporting carers to download calming and relaxation apps, which they can practice regularly with kids in their care
- ensuring carers engage in self-care.