



Bounce Back!

Information for families

Contents

Family Information: Introduction to *Bounce Back!*

Family Information: Core values and Social values

Family Information: People bouncing back

Family Information: Courage

Family Information: Looking on the bright side

Family Information: Emotions

Family Information: Relationships

Family Information: Humour

Family Information: Being safe

Family Information: Success

An introduction to Bounce Back!

The **Bounce Back!** wellbeing and resilience program teaches children the skills and attitudes to help them be in a positive mood most of the time, get along well with others and become more resilient. It uses literature as a starting point for discussions and follow-up activities. Ten coping statements are a core part of the program (see below).

The program can help your child to get better at:

- using helpful thinking when faced with a problem or a difficult situation
- thinking more optimistically, i.e. expecting bad times to get better
- understanding that everyone has setbacks and difficulties, not just them
- talking to people they trust so they get a reality check on their thinking
- being brave and facing their fears
- enhancing their own wellbeing
- feeling and expressing gratitude
- boosting their positive emotions
- managing uncomfortable emotions and turning a bad mood into a good mood
- getting along with others, making and keeping friends and dealing well with disagreements
- setting goals, being resourceful, developing a growth mindset and not easily giving up
- being kind, fair, honest, friendly, cooperative, responsible, and accepting of differences
- using humour in a helpful, not a harmful way
- identifying, applying and extending their ability and character strengths
- respecting other people and not bullying others.

You can help your child get the best out of their involvement with **Bounce Back!** if you reinforce the key messages they are learning.

◆ **Bounce Back! stands for:**

Bad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.

Other people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.

Nobody is perfect – not you and not others.

Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.

Everybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others and to bad luck or circumstances?

Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can change first).

Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.

Keep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.

Family information: Core values and Social values

Our values are statements about how we think we should behave and what we believe is important. Our values are our moral map, which guide our behaviour and actions. The following values are taught in the **Bounce Back!** program. Acting on these values can connect your child to others, increase your child's sense of belonging and help them to be a decent, worthwhile person and to be more resilient.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about values

Your values are easy to talk about but harder to act on.

The real test is whether you still follow your personal values when it is inconvenient for you or when there could be possible unpleasant or uncomfortable outcomes for you. Nobody is perfect, but it's important to try to live by your values even though you may not always succeed as well as you would like. Keep trying to improve.

Be honest.

Being honest means telling the truth and not stealing; it means giving things back when they belong to someone else and 'owning up' when you have done the wrong thing.

Be fair.

Being fair means following the rules and not cheating; it means returning favours and kindnesses, and helping others to get justice and a fair deal.

Be responsible.

Being responsible means not letting people down. It means doing the things that you have to do without being reminded. It also means choosing sensible behaviour instead of foolish or unsafe behaviour.

Be kind and supportive.

Being kind means caring about other people and their wellbeing by doing kind things for others and being supportive and showing thoughtfulness to others.

Accept differences in other people.

Everyone is different in some way and that's okay. If you accept that other people are different (e.g. where they come from, what they look like, what they like to eat or do, and in their opinions), then you get to know more people (and not just those who are similar to you), you include people who are different from you in activities and conversation, and you don't tease or exclude them.

Cooperate with others.

Cooperating means working together with someone to achieve something that you both want. It requires sharing ideas and resources, listening, encouraging each other, making sure that both of you have a say, doing your share of the work, and making decisions together that are fair to both of you.

Be friendly and include others.

Being friendly means being kind and welcoming to others and trying to include people (even if they are not your close friends or they are people who are sometimes hard to like). This means looking in their eyes and smiling, saying hello, being kind and inviting them to join in games and conversations. Being friendly towards strangers is not a good idea until you are very sure they are safe people.

Be respectful.

Being respectful means treating others as you would like them to treat you. It means thinking about other people's feelings and rights, being polite and using good manners, and not insulting or hurting others or their property. If you want people to respect your rights, then you have to respect their rights.

Show self-respect.

Self-respect means looking after yourself and standing up for yourself because you think you matter and should be treated well by others.

◆ **What can you do to help your child develop and live by good values?**

- Give your child positive feedback when they act honestly (e.g. when they tell the truth, own up to what they have done, avoid the temptation to keep something that belongs to someone else, and when they try to identify who owns something they have found that doesn't belong to them).
- Play age-appropriate games with your children. This provides an opportunity for you to reinforce fair play by following the rules of a game and not cheating. Playing games with your children also provides an opportunity for them to practise social skills such as being a good winner and loser.
- Help them to develop kindness and a sense of fairness towards others who are less fortunate than themselves. Model for them some ways to support others who are in need.
- Encourage your child to appreciate and return the kindnesses and favours they receive from others.
- Present different people's points of view when talking problems through with your child. This helps them gain a sense of what's fair for everyone involved.
- Give your child regular chores and give them positive feedback when they do these without being reminded. Stress that people will trust and respect them more when they behave responsibly.
- Model cooperative behaviours for your child by working with them on a project (e.g. building a model) or task (e.g. tidying up the garage). Comment on how and why things went well (e.g. you both did a good share of the work, each did the part they were good at and each respected what the other person did).
- Provide opportunities for your child to socialise with their extended family, neighbours and friends, and participate in community groups such as clubs and sporting teams.
- Emphasise the importance of being friendly and including others as well as accepting differences in people. Discuss with your child how they might do this in each situation. Show them by example, too.
- Never give up! Sometimes there is a 'sleepers effect' and values that your child didn't seem to 'take up' at an earlier age show up in their behaviour when they are older.

Family information: People bouncing back

If you are resilient you will be able to cope reasonably well with difficult situations and things that go wrong and then 'bounce back'. Throughout life, children will need skills and attitudes to help them to bounce back. They will encounter everyday challenges such as making mistakes, falling out with a friend, moving house or school

and losing in a sports competition. Many will also face challenges such as adapting to family break ups, a step-family, the illness or death of a family member, or being bullied. People bouncing back is the **Curriculum Unit** that teaches children the 10 **Bounce Back!** statements.

◆ Bounce Back! stands for:

- B**ad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.
- O**ther people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.
- U**nhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.
- N**obody is perfect – not you and not others.
- C**oncentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.
- E**verybody experiences sadness, failure, hurt, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.
- B**lame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others and to bad luck or circumstances?
- A**ccept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can change first).
- C**atastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.
- K**eep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.

For younger children, the simpler coping statements in BOUNCE are taught, but 'bouncing back' from a setback, a mistake and bad times is still referred to.

- B**ad feelings always go away again.
- O**ther people can help you feel better if you talk to them.
- U**nhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset Think again.
- N**obody is perfect – not you and not others.
- C**oncentrate on the things that are still good when things go wrong.
- E**verybody has unhappy times sometimes, not just you.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about 'bouncing back'

- Life is mainly good but now and then everyone has a difficult or unhappy time. Things always get better even though sometimes they may take a bit longer to improve than you would like. It is important to stay hopeful and expect things to get better.
- You will feel better and have more ideas about what to do if you talk to someone you trust about what's worrying or upsetting you.
- Unhelpful thinking isn't necessarily true and makes you feel worse. Helpful thinking makes you feel better because it is more accurate and helps you work out what to do.

Unhelpful thinking	Helpful thinking
I made a mistake, I'm really dumb.	I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes sometimes.
Jake doesn't like me. I must be a jerk.	Jake doesn't like me but other kids like me.

- No one is perfect. We all make mistakes and find out there are some things we can't do well.
- If you can find something positive or funny in a difficult situation, no matter how small, it can help you to cope better.
- We all need to take fair responsibility for the things we did or didn't do that contribute to a difficult or unhappy situation. However, we should not over-blame ourselves because circumstances, bad luck or what others did may have contributed to the difficult situation, too.
- If a situation can't be changed (e.g. having to move house or school or losing a pet) then you just have to accept it and live with it.
- Don't make yourself miserable by exaggerating how bad something is or by assuming the worst possible picture is the one that will happen.
- When something goes wrong it usually only affects one part of your life. Concentrate on the things in your life that are still going well.

◆ What can you do to help develop resilience in your child?

- Use the appropriate **Bounce Back!** statement with your child whenever you see the opportunity.
- Consider displaying the statements somewhere prominent so they serve as a useful prompt for your child (and the rest of the family!).
- Don't over-protect your child from the normal challenges that all children have at different ages (e.g. walking to school, looking after their own things, packing their own lunch). Start by giving your child small age-appropriate challenges that require small responsibilities. Using small steps moves them towards becoming more independent and competent. Don't do things for them without first checking whether they are capable of doing it for themselves.
- Encourage your child to talk about what's troubling them and help them to find a solution. Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling and what they are thinking about the problem, then help them to think about different solutions.
- Gently challenge self-defeating talk (e.g. I can't do this, I'm hopeless/dumb/useless) and helpless behaviour (giving up easily, expecting others to do things for them). Encourage them to use helpful thinking instead (e.g. I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes).
- Don't fight all your child's battles for them. Children need to experience some challenges so they can learn how to bounce back.
- Model effective solving of problems that are age appropriate for your child by thinking 'out loud'. Review different solutions to a problem and the possible good or bad consequences of the different solutions.
- Avoid offering 'quick fixes' or 'feel good' options when things get tough. Rather than distracting them with a movie or treats, let them sit with the bad feelings, knowing that you care that they are hurting, but that it is something they have to deal with, not escape from.

- Help your child to take responsibility for what happens. When something doesn't work out for them, draw up a pie chart with them and ask them to reflect on:

- How much was due to me?
- How much was due to others?
- How much was bad luck or circumstances (i.e. being in the wrong place at the wrong time)?

Also encourage them to consider the situation from the other person's viewpoint.

- When something bad happens to your child, help them to keep things in perspective by asking them:

- Does this really matter? Are you getting upset over very little?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is this to you?
- What's the worst thing that can happen? Do you think you can handle that?

These questions help your child to stop catastrophising (i.e. assuming that the worst will happen) and stop getting too upset over things that will get better or improve in time.

- Encourage them to think about the parts of their life that are still exactly the same and still good (e.g. they lost a friend but they still have other friends, their school work is going well, nothing has changed at home).

Family information: Courage

Fear is a normal response to situations that might harm us. Fear motivates us to determine whether or not the situation really is dangerous and then, if it is, to take action to protect ourselves. Everyone feels scared at times. Courage means facing your fear and not being overwhelmed by it. We need courage if we experience misfortune. We also need courage to face some of the 'everyday' challenges in our lives such as learning a new skill or sorting out friendship issues.

◆ Key points to communicate to your child about being brave

Everyone feels scared sometimes.

Some people pretend they never feel scared but everyone does. Different things scare different people. One person might feel nervous about learning to dive but not about acting on stage. For someone else it might be the opposite.

We all need to use 'everyday courage' in our lives.

Everyday courage is shown when you try to do something that is ordinary but it still makes you feel a bit nervous such as giving a talk to the class, trying out for a part in a play, sleeping over at a friend's house or going to camp.

Weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of trying to be a hero.

A hero is someone who puts himself/herself at risk to protect the safety and wellbeing of another. It is rare for someone your age to be in a situation where heroism is required. If you are, think carefully before you act as you might not have enough skill to help the other person and you could get badly hurt or make things worse. Consider calling 000 or ask an adult to help.

You can be a hero in smaller ways (e.g. by standing up for someone who is being mistreated at school).

There's a big difference between courage and being foolhardy.

Being foolhardy means being stupid and doing a risky and scary thing (e.g. jumping from a tree branch into a river) just to show off or because people are daring you to do it. If you do something really dangerous, the best you will get are bragging rights and the worst you might get is serious injury or death.

◆ What can you do to help your child to be brave?

- Talk about times when you have felt scared and what you did to overcome your fears and be brave. Give examples of times when you tackled your fears and 'had a go' at something that was difficult. Stress how pleased you felt afterwards.
- Discuss the gains that being brave can bring (e.g. self-respect, confidence, skills).
- Look for examples of courage, heroism and foolhardiness in the media and discuss these with your child to help them to understand the differences between courage, heroism and foolhardiness.
- Encourage your child to have the courage to do what they believe is 'the right thing' even if others don't agree with them.
- Remind your child about the things that took courage for them to do when they were younger but which now seem easy. Explain that things that take courage for them to do now will seem easier and less scary as they grow older.
- Stress that throughout life there will always be new challenges that require courage.

Facing our fears and showing courage is one of the ways we become stronger.

Family information: Looking on the bright side

Thinking optimistically means that you expect things to mostly turn out well. You focus on the positives rather than the negatives in a situation. It also means that you understand that setbacks and difficult times happen to everyone but that things get better. Teaching your child to be optimistic will help them to 'bounce back' when they face difficulties, frustrations and problems. It means that when they are faced with a problem, they will be more likely to look for solutions rather than stop trying and give up.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about being optimistic

Look on the bright side.

This means being positive and expecting that things will work out well or get better. When you look on the bright side you believe that good things CAN happen to you and you don't give up easily.

Be a positive tracker.

A positive tracker looks for the good things in themselves, in others, and in what happens in their life. They are more fun to be with and others like them more and want to be their friend.

Look for the good parts in the bad things that happen.

Sometimes things happen that you don't like. But you can usually find something good in the situation if you try. Sometimes the good things are that it could have been worse, the lesson you learnt from it or a small good thing happened even if the rest was bad.

Bad times don't last. Things get better.

When a bad thing happens in your life, it isn't forever. Bad times and bad feelings always go away again although sometimes it might take time for this to happen. Things will get better faster if you talk to someone you trust about what's worrying you.

It's important to stay hopeful when you have unhappy times.

You will get over unhappy times in your life more easily if you stay hopeful that good things will happen again and the difficult parts will get better. If you stay hopeful then you don't give up.

Be thankful and grateful.

Being thankful for the nice things people do for you and the good things that happen in your life can help you feel happier. Letting people know that you are grateful for how they have supported and cared about you makes them feel happy, too.

Good memories of things can help you to bounce back.

When you are feeling sad because you have lost someone or something you love, it helps to remember the good times you shared with them to help you feel a bit better.

When one unhappy thing happens in your life it doesn't spoil everything else.

When one thing in your life goes wrong or you feel unhappy or worried, try to remember all the things that are still good in your life. It's just one thing that is going wrong for a while, not everything.

◆ What can you do to help your child to look on the bright side?

Three good things in your day

At the dinner table, ask your child, 'What were three good things that happened for you today?' With younger children you can do this just before they go to sleep. If they can't think of anything ask them some prompting questions (e.g. Did anything funny happen? Did you enjoy being with anyone? What did you do well?).

The positive tracking game

Challenge everyone in the family to identify the three best things about your family, your home, your holiday, your suburb, about being their age, about this time of the year etc.

Showing gratitude

Encourage your child to say thank you to someone who has done something kind for them (e.g. by sending a note or card, text, email or by calling them on the phone).

Good memories

Help your child to make a photo album, slide show or little book of their favourite photos and to look at the photos to help them remember the good times when they need 'brightening up'.

Modelling

Let your child see and hear you using positive tracking, showing gratitude, saying 'things will get better soon' and expecting that good outcomes are possible.

Family information: Emotions

We all experience a range of emotions every day. Our feelings are necessary for us to survive and co-exist harmoniously with others. Without pleasant feelings (e.g. feeling pleased, proud, excited, curious, loving) we would not learn what makes us happy and what we want to strive for. Experiencing a lot of pleasant feelings can help children become more resilient and bounce back more quickly from a difficulty or setback.

Unpleasant feelings are also important, too. Without unpleasant feelings as warnings (e.g. fear, worry and anger) we would be less able to protect ourselves from possible danger or to stand up for ourselves. Some unpleasant feelings (e.g. embarrassment, disappointment and sadness) also motivate us to think deeply about some of the difficult and challenging situations we sometimes have to cope with (e.g. failing, loss and rejection). This type of reflection helps us to learn from our experiences and become better able to make good decisions and solve problems.

Our unpleasant emotions can sometimes ‘hijack’ us and we react to them by behaving in ways that alienate others or work against us. Learning how to express their emotions in a positive and assertive way helps children to feel more in control when things are difficult for them.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about their feelings

Talking to someone else can help.

When you are feeling sad or disappointed it can help if you talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling. They can help you check whether you are seeing things clearly and help you to solve problems.

Don't let yourself be ‘hijacked’ by your feelings.

‘Hijacked’ means that your feelings have taken over and you are no longer in charge. If your feelings are taking over, go to a quiet place or do something that will help you calm down (e.g. throw a basketball through a hoop, play music or play with a pet). If you calm down, you have a better chance to understand your feelings. Your anger should never be expressed in a way that hurts others, damages property or hurts yourself.

Correctly naming your feeling can help you to manage it better.

Being able to name your feeling will help you to feel more in control. For example, if you know that you are feeling angry, then you also realise that you need to calm down and speak up for yourself in a calm but strong way. If you can correctly name what you are feeling as ‘disappointment’ rather than ‘anger’, then you might realise that it is not helpful to feel so upset and it’s easier to calm down.

It helps to ask: ‘Did they really mean it?’

Sometimes we get upset and angry over something that a person has done, but it was just an accident or they were a bit thoughtless and they did not mean to hurt us or hurt our feelings. Before responding in an angry way, think about whether their actions were deliberate and intended to harm you or just an accident or mistake.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel worse.

Unpleasant feelings can get worse because of the unhelpful things you say to yourself about them. No person and no event makes you feel a certain way. Sometimes it is understandable that you feel angry or sad because of what’s happened but that event or person hasn’t made you have that feeling. One of the best ways to be in control of your feelings is to use helpful thinking and ‘self-talk’.

Sometimes we have mixed emotions about the same thing.

Talking with your child about their mixed feelings will help them make sense of their different feelings (e.g. they can feel pleased about being given a part in the school play but also nervous).

You can change a bad mood into a good mood.

It’s normal to sometimes feel sad, lonely, disappointed, angry or worried. You can help yourself feel a little better if you do something physical (e.g. walking, or sport), something that creates positive feelings (e.g. playing with your pet, making or drawing something or looking at photographs taken on a holiday) or do something kind or helpful for someone else.

In order to understand others, you need to learn to work out how they are feeling.

This is called empathy. Empathy is trying to understand other people’s feelings, and letting them know that you do understand and care – this is important for making and staying friends and for supporting other people.

◆ What can you do to help your child become more able to understand and manage feelings?

Teach your child how to manage their strong feelings.

Use the following five steps to help your child when their emotions are 'hot' such as when they are sad or afraid or angry. These five steps provide an opportunity to be close to your child and teach them how to manage strong feelings.

1. Take notice when your child is feeling sad or angry or upset.
2. Listen to your child and show them you understand how they are feeling.
3. Name the emotion in words your child can understand.
4. Help your child look for solutions to the problem within acceptable limits.
5. Finish with a hopeful or optimistic statement, saying that you believe they can do something to deal with the situation, or find a way to feel better about it.

An example of the five steps in action.

Your child comes home from school looking upset:

You: How was school today? (Notice that your child is upset.)

Child: Awful, Ella was sick and she won't be back till Friday and I had no one to play with. Everybody else had someone to hang around with at lunchtime except me.

You: You must have felt lonely then, and probably a bit sad. (Listen and name the emotion your child is feeling.)

Child: I don't want to go back to school till Ella comes back.

You: Well I can understand why you feel that way because it isn't nice to feel all by yourself and left out. (Show empathy.) But you can't stay home from school just because Ella is away. Can you think of any ways to make you feel less lonely tomorrow? (Help with problem solving but within stated limits.)

Child: I suppose I could go to the library at lunchtime.

You: Yes, that could be good. What about Tran – you two have always got on well. He'd probably be happy to catch up with you. Things always seem better in the morning, too. (Take an optimistic approach.)

Help your child learn to change a bad mood into a good mood.

When they are feeling down help your child choose something to do that would make them feel happier such as drawing, reading, watching a funny movie, playing a game, doing something nice for someone else, asking a friend over or playing a physical game outside.

Help your child to correctly name their feelings.

Sometimes children make a mistake about how strong the feeling is; for example, they say they are really angry when they are just annoyed. Help them to use more low-key language like 'cross' instead of 'furious', and 'down' instead of 'depressed'. Children also make mistakes about what they are feeling. For example, they may say they are angry when they are really scared because the sensations in their body are similar. Say 'perhaps you're also feeling ...' as a prompt.

Help your child to understand and experience positive feelings.

Identify times when you can help your child to notice and 'savour' pleasant feelings (e.g. feeling proud, excited, satisfied, relieved, joyful, and hopeful) that arise from a positive experience. Name the feeling that would be associated with the experience and ask them questions to help them to re-live the positive feelings they are experiencing. For example:

Child: I helped Uncle Bill to feed the animals when I was staying on the farm.

You: What fun! You must have felt very excited about doing something like that and proud that he trusted you to help him.

Help your child to learn to recognise other people's feelings.

Whenever you see an opportunity, talk to your child about how others might be feeling (e.g. during a family or school situation, in a story or movie, on the news).

Model handling your own difficult feelings well.

When you are feeling worried, sad, disappointed or unhappy let your child see and hear you managing your feelings in a constructive way that includes using helpful thinking.

Family information: Relationships

All children want close relationships with friends and classmates at school. These relationships are important to feeling happy and helping them to cope better with life's occasional hard times. Children who have good social skills are more likely to be healthy and happy and to achieve more at school and be more successful in their future careers. They are less likely to get into trouble, or be attracted to anti-social peer groups or become depressed. There is a 'luck' factor with regards to the people they will meet as potential friends, but it will be their social skills that make the difference in developing and maintaining friendships.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about relationships

No one has close friends all the time and most people feel lonely sometimes.

Most people have times in their life when they feel lonely and their social life isn't as good as they would like it to be. It isn't the end of the world if sometimes you don't have a close friend.

Not everyone will like you but lots of people will.

Nobody is liked by everybody. Being socially 'rebuffed' is a common experience that most children have at times. There are lots of other people to get to know. If you try to get to know people, tell them a bit about yourself, and treat everyone with respect and friendliness you will make some friends.

Friendships can change and not be as strong as they once were.

People change as they grow and friendships don't always last or stay strong. Sometimes people who were your friends move on to other friendships and don't spend as much time with you anymore. Sometimes you are the one who moves on and lets the friendship go. This is normal and it happens to everyone. It doesn't mean anything negative about you.

Social skills are ways of behaving that help people get along with others and make friends.

People are more likely to want to spend time with you and be friends with you if you use the following social skills: play fairly, act like a good winner and loser, share and take turns, be kind and thoughtful and negotiate (i.e. compromise so that everyone gets at least some of what they want).

To HAVE a good friend, you have to BE a good friend.

You are more likely to find someone who wants to be your special friend if you act like a good friend towards them. A good friend is loyal, kind, thoughtful and fair. They stand up for their friend, spend time with them, tell them about their feelings, listen to their problems and keep their secrets where appropriate. A good friend looks for the good things their friend does.

It's okay to have an argument as long as you don't hurt the other person.

Disagreement happens sometimes in friendships or between classmates. Speak up when you think that things are not fair or when you don't agree about something, but do so in a way that doesn't hurt the other person or their feelings, and remember to try and see things from their point of view as well. It is important to find a way to disagree that lets you both find a solution to the problem and still be friends. It is easier to do this if you try to manage your angry feelings.

◆ What can you do to help your child develop good social skills to get along well with others, and make and keep friends?

- Make your child's friends and classmates welcome in your home and get to know them. Discuss beforehand what your child can do to make sure their visitor has a good time (e.g. do things that the visitor will enjoy too and not just what your child will enjoy).
- Model good social skills when you are with your own friends and talk to your child about what you do to be a good friend (e.g. be a good listener, have conversations about things you have in common, and support them when they are feeling sad or worried).
- Suggest to your child that all of the children they meet regularly at school, sporting activities and clubs are potential friends. Encourage them to develop a diverse social network so that they can interact with and learn about many people, not just people who are similar to them. Discourage the belief that only certain 'cool' or very popular classmates are worth being friends with.

- Empathy means understanding the feelings of someone else and letting them know you understand how they are feeling. Help your child to develop empathy by talking about how others might be feeling by stressing the importance of trying to understand rather than judge.
- Teach your child how to negotiate by negotiating with them whenever possible. For example, they may not want to shower at the time that suits your timetable. You could offer them a 15-minute extension if they do it without any further argument when that time arrives.
- Teach and model the social skill of ‘respectful disagreeing’, which involves finding a point of agreement before stating disagreement (e.g. ‘The scary movie you want to see did get a good review but I think most of us would rather see a funny movie.’)
- If your children are arguing with each other, sit them down and ask them to listen to each other’s feelings and points of view, then insist on their negotiating a solution. Try not to act as referee, and stress that put-downs are unacceptable.

Family information: Humour

Enjoying a laugh with others is a unique human bond that helps us connect with others. Finding something funny about a difficult situation can also help us to feel more hopeful. Humour helps us gain a sense of perspective on our problems, because it can throw a little light on an otherwise dark situation. It reminds us that life goes on. It allows us to release the tension created by strong and uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, disappointment, anxiety and anger. Having a laugh also helps us to stay healthy because of the positive changes that laughter creates in our bodies. The use of laughter in children's hospital wards is an example of how humour can help people cope and deal with hard times.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about humour

Humour helps us to stay healthy.

Laughter helps our body to fight disease and illness. Humour is like exercise for our mind and our feelings.

Humour can help you to feel better.

Having a laugh and finding the funny side of a situation can help you feel a little bit better when you are feeling unhappy, sad or worried, or when things are difficult.

You can use laughter and humour to help someone else feel a bit better.

You can cheer someone up when they have a problem, or they are feeling sad or worried, by being funny in a kind and gentle way. Stop doing it if they don't like it.

Humour shouldn't be used to pretend that you don't feel sad or worried.

Even though laughter can help you feel better when you have a problem, you still need to try to solve the problem, or deal with the unhappy feeling. Laughter doesn't make problems go away. It just helps you to cope with them a little better.

Humour shouldn't be used to hurt someone's feelings.

It's unkind to laugh at someone else's problems or bad luck, or make fun of the way another person looks, thinks, speaks or acts.

◆ What can you do to help your child learn about humour?

- Share funny songs or movies and TV shows with your child. This is a great way to connect and enjoy each other's company.
- Read funny stories or poems to your child and enjoy the humour together.
- Share riddles and jokes that don't rely on put-downs or insulting humour.
- Help your child learn how to tell a riddle or joke well.
- Encourage your child to make a funny card, drawing or banner to cheer up a family member or a friend who is sick or having a difficult time.
- Create opportunities for your child to have fun and enjoy some laughs with their friends (e.g. when your child has friends around to play you could show a funny movie, encourage a joke-telling session, play silly or fun games, provide funny dress-ups or encourage them to put on a funny skit).
- Point out to your child when they are using humour in an inappropriate way (e.g. to put down someone such as their younger brother or sister, or to trivialise something important, or to deny a problem or a feeling they are having). Discuss this with them.

Family information: Being safe

Most children occasionally get teased or annoyed by other children at school. Responding to this is one of the common challenges that children have to face in life. Being bullied is more serious. Bullying is when one child (or a group) repeatedly and deliberately uses negative words and/or hostile actions against one specific child that causes distress. Bullying can be:

- physical (e.g. hitting, pushing or damaging personal property)
- verbal (e.g. insults or nasty name-calling)
- social (e.g. trying to socially isolate someone by spreading lies or rumours about them or stopping them from joining in)
- cyberbullying: this means using technology (e.g. email, mobile phones or social networking sites) to bully someone or to frighten and intimidate them.

It isn't called bullying if any of these things happen only once, if children have a mutual argument or fight, or if a child chooses not to spend time with another child.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about bullying

It's never okay to bully someone or take part in bullying even in small ways.

It's not okay to say 'someone else started it' or 'someone else made me do it' or 'everyone else was doing it too'. You must take responsibility for your own actions.

It's never the fault of the person who is being bullied.

If someone is different or annoying they do not deserve to be bullied. No one does. We all have the right to be ourselves and be safe from being mistreated.

It's important to 'think for yourself'.

If other people try to convince you to take part in bullying, don't do what they tell you to do. Think for yourself and do what is right. Don't just go along with what other children are doing.

Asking for support and acting responsibly are not the same as dobbing.

Dobbing means trying to get someone into trouble. It's not dobbing when you ask for help when you're in trouble or when you are trying to help someone else who is being bullied.

◆ What can you do to help your child if they are bullied and to encourage them not to bully others?

- Let your child know that you strongly disapprove of bullying. Taking part in bullying can be the start of a pattern of antisocial behaviour for many children.
- Encourage your child to support someone who is being bullied (e.g. they could: defuse the situation by suggesting something else to do, let a teacher know about it, or later offer them comfort and support or calmly tell the child who is bullying that it's a mean thing to do).
- Speak up and let the school know if another child is being bullied. You can ask the school for confidentiality.
- Respond calmly if you think your child is being bullied. Talk to them about what is happening. Listen to the whole story before responding or asking questions. Ask how they would like you to help. One of their fears will be that you might overreact and make things worse. Discuss with them what they could do, for example:
 - avoid high-risk areas and not respond to nasty text messages etc.
 - say 'leave me alone' in a calm, strong voice and leave the situation (rather than yelling or responding in an upset or emotional way)
 - talk to their friends about what's happening and ask for their help
 - speak to a teacher and ask for support to solve the problem.
- If the situation doesn't improve, make an appointment to speak to the teacher and work together with the school to improve the situation.

Family information: Success

◆ Helping your child to experience success

Teaching your child how to set goals and achieve them by making a plan, working hard, solving problems and not giving up helps them to build life skills that are important for their future. These life skills build their self-confidence and motivation and enhance their ability to persist when they find things difficult. An important starting point is to help your child identify their particular character strengths and ability strengths. Character strengths are personal attributes like being brave or kind, or being a hard worker or a good organiser. Ability strengths are things that they do well such as writing stories, doing complicated sums, drawing cartoons, playing sport, playing a musical instrument or understanding and working with animals.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about being successful

Stick with it and don't give up.

When something proves hard to do, stick to your plan and don't give up. If an obstacle gets in the way, see it as a problem that needs to be solved. Sometimes you may have to try a new way to solve the problem.

Mistakes help you to learn.

Everybody makes mistakes when they are trying to achieve their goals. Try to learn from mistakes even if you don't feel happy when you make them. You may not be able to do something YET but with practice and hard work you can learn.

No one is good at everything. Everyone has different strengths.

Everyone has their own strengths. Keep looking for evidence about your character strengths (the kind of person you are) and your ability strengths (what you can do well).

Make a plan.

To achieve a goal you need to make a plan before you start. A plan helps you decide the best steps to take to achieve your goal.

Remember to try hard and work hard.

Trying hard and working hard make it more likely that you will succeed at what you are trying to do. Your brain develops when you work hard to learn new things and this helps you to become 'smarter'.

Have a go and believe in yourself.

Even if something is hard to do and you wonder if you will be able to do it, believe in yourself, take the risk and 'have a go'. You can't be successful if you don't try. You won't always succeed but at least you can say you have given it your best shot.

Try to be well organised.

It's important to be well organised if you want to achieve your goals. Find ways to remember the things you have to do, to find the things you need, and to be on time.

◆ What can you do to help your child learn the skills that underpin success?

- Encourage your child to set a goal and to plan what they need to do to achieve the goal. For young children goals need to be simple, specific and very short term (e.g. reading to you for ten minutes each night for two weeks, making their bed every day for a week, improving their knowledge of specific number facts). Help them to think about what they did to achieve their goal. (Ask them: What steps did you take? What was hard for you to do? How do you feel now that you have managed to do it?)
- Provide lots of opportunities for your child to take on tasks and challenges that they can do (mostly) by themselves (e.g. make a cubby, bake a cake, put on a puppet play, make birthday cards or organise a game). Only give them help when they ask.
- Encourage your child to make, do or organise something a bit complicated and challenging that may be frustrating but will be rewarding when completed (e.g. making a pop-up card, organising an outing or completing a challenging word or number puzzle). Congratulate them on their persistence.
- Do a challenging jigsaw puzzle with your child to show them how to stick with it until it is finished.
- Avoid doing things for your child that they are capable of doing for themselves (e.g. making their bed, packing/unpacking their schoolbag, preparing their breakfast).

- Share your own story about how you achieved a goal that was important to you, stressing how you made a plan, worked hard and persisted despite obstacles or mistakes.
- Help your child to look for and collect evidence that tells them what their strengths are. Evidence could include feedback from other people or ongoing improvement in their 'personal bests' (e.g. in a sport or in music exams) rather than a comparison with others of the same age.
- Give your child more feedback on their effort and the processes they used than on ability (e.g. 'Well done, you really worked hard on that project and didn't give up when some bits proved to be frustrating. You also planned well and were very organised.'). When you focus on effort and the processes used, your child will learn that successfully achieving a goal happens mainly through hard work, persistence, good planning and believing in yourself and is not just based on ability.
- Help your child understand the power of 'not yet': they may not be able to solve a difficult maths problem yet or play a challenging musical piece yet. Adding the word YET – 'I can't ... yet' – focuses on growth and learning, and helps them to understand with time and lots of practice and effort, they can accomplish these tasks.
- Encourage your child to be organised, and provide materials that help them to do this (e.g. colourful or see-through folders, labelling devices, and containers). Show them how to organise their things, pack up their games and toys before bedtime, identify and collect what they will need for school each day, keep their schoolbag in order, remember to pack their lunch in their schoolbag and (for an older child) help them to regularly block out time for homework.
- Play 'Beat the timer'. Use a timer and encourage them to complete an activity such as cleaning up their toys, getting dressed or setting the table before the timer goes off.