

## WHAT DOES TRUE RESILIENCE FOR KIDS LOOK LIKE?

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In one episode of a popular kids cartoon, the main character learns a lesson about resilience. The character and his friends must carry a grand piano up hundreds of stairs. As the character relentlessly works to shoulder the heavy load, he gradually finds himself alone, abandoned by his fellow workers when the job becomes too difficult. While the helpers nap back at the truck, the character persists in his task and enjoys a reward for his successful effort.



Unfortunately, that particular episode reinforces a common myth that resilient people keep on keeping on—*ALONE*. But that individualistic mindset is not part of God's design for his creation. Instead, the Lord created us to live lives dependent on him and *interdependent* on one another. Our need—not our strength—can teach us the greatest lessons about resilience.

That gives me pause and fills me with gratitude.

My parents are some of the most resilient people I know. Like most adults their age, they have faced many challenges, yet they still greet each season of life with grit and joy. They model interdependence in their marriage, taking turns supporting one another. They continue to support their four daughters and their families, traveling to see us or welcoming us into their home as needs arise. In other words, they enjoy helping.

Recently, though, my three children had an opportunity to help them. Spring clean-up is no joke in New England; winter leaves behind quite a mess! This past spring, however, one of my parents was recovering from surgery and the other from an injury. Their situation prevented them from tackling the usual spring projects.

What a gift for my kids to help their grandparents for a day. They organized closets, picked up sticks, pulled weeds, and planted flowers. As spring turned to summer, the yard burst into bloom, and the twelve tiny zinnia plugs my kids planted along a garden border grew tall and put on a show. A small act of kindness and support literally grew in size and bounty with each passing week.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), how people adapt to adversity depends less on inner strength and more on how they engage with the world around them. The APA suggests that social resources are just as necessary as personal coping strategies. That's not surprising, given God's beautiful design for interdependence. Sure, successfully lifting a heavy load and making something happen on our own feels good. But learning to lean on one another and to trust God in all circumstances is the real definition of resilience.

It's taken me many years to learn that lesson. Our culture prizes individualism and personal achievement over interdependence. In my teens and twenties, I entirely bought into that false narrative. But idolizing accomplishments and perfectionism left me burned out and depressed. Through circumstances beyond my control, I realized the blessing of giving and receiving support. In small, ordinary ways, we can counter the false notion that resilience depends on our inner strength alone and instead show our kids God's beautiful design, welcoming our children's needs while also showing them how they can use their unique strengths to encourage those around them.

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article [When You Are Feeling So Alone](#).

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written by Sara Korber-DeWeerd

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