

Monthly tips and resources for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

Becoming a Resilient Adult

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Congratulations! You're finishing school! Your next important step is to become a resilient adult. What's that?

If you're resilient, it means you're able to bounce back from difficult situations. Resilient adults face problems, handle them, and recover. All adults need to become successfully resilient, and like all skills,

it's something you can practice and learn. Some people learn to be very resilient, while others have a harder time learning this skill.



Three Important Resiliency Skills

Researchers have identified three basic resiliency skills that successful adults need¹:

1. **Problem-focused coping:** the ability to identify a problem, figure out a way to fix the problem that won't cause harm, and then follow through with solving the problem.
2. **Social support-seeking:** the ability to positively find support within your family, among friends, and in your community. Adults need to be able to ask for help in a way that does not harm themselves or other people.
3. **Meaning-focused coping:** the ability to cope with what happens to you in a way that helps you understand why something happened. Adults also need to learn to accept when something that they don't like cannot be changed.

Practice Makes Perfect

How can you learn and gain these skills? Here are some ways to practice.

- Begin solving more everyday problems in your life. For example, when you're driving in the community, figure out how to get to where you're going and direct the person driving (if it's not you).
- If you disagree with someone, ask for help from a friend, parent, teacher, or other adult. Plan out how the problem could be resolved, sit down with that person, and work out the problem.
- Make a list of people who support you already (e.g., parent, sibling, church leader, teacher, etc.) to see where you need more support. Begin working with the adults who already support you to find and get to know other adults who can fill in those support gaps.
- Practice appropriately communicating that you need help rather than yelling, hitting, or swearing. For example, work with one of your supporters to figure out a time during the day when you may be more likely to get frustrated (e.g., perhaps putting your shoes on is frustrating). Ask for help (e.g., use your phone to pull up the picture for help so you can show it to your sibling rather than throwing your shoe).
- Find a way to cope with a problem that is hard to understand. For example, the company making your favorite video game stops making it. Yikes! Try to find out why. Ask friends and look for news from your online chat group. If you were not able to find any information about why the company stopped making the game, rather than becoming upset, find out about other games you can play that are also interesting and fun.
- Figure out the meaning of a problem. For example, practice having your support worker tell you that your schedule must change (it especially helps if your schedule is really going to change). Find a way to ask why it's changing (e.g., type "Why?" into your texting program). Practice a way to accept the worker's answer (e.g., take deep breaths) when he explains to you, that something different is happening that day, which means a change to your schedule.
- Use your skills to solve a problem. For example, when you're at a large shopping center practice "getting lost." Have your parent or caregiver leave you and go somewhere else in the center. Then use your phone to text them so you can find each other.

These ideas, and many others, can help you become a more resilient adult. With practice you can be prepared to handle problems, changes, questions, excitement, disappointments, waiting, arguments, big feelings, and many other parts of life that will come throughout adulthood.

¹ Zimmer-Gembeck M. J., Skinner E. A. (2011). The development of coping across childhood and adolescence: An integrative review and critique of research. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35, 1–17. doi:10.1177/0165025410384923

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