

WHAT IS DIGITAL RESILIENCE AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE?

Adapted from an article in 'Digital Parenting – Issue 5' by Vicki Shotbolt, CEO of Parent Zone and executive board member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety



The internet is here to stay – so, as parents, we need to teach our children how to navigate it safely.

It's not a great word: resilience. You'll probably never overhear a parent at the school gates saying how pleased they are with their child's resilience. You probably won't see many posts on social media about how resilient someone feels today. But that doesn't mean it isn't hugely important and something that all of us should want to develop. Because when we talk about a child's 'digital resilience', we are really talking about their ability to cope with setbacks and bounce back when they experience something difficult online.

A resilient child is able to navigate successfully the online world's potential risks. They have developed their own sense of right and wrong, and have the skills to make positive decisions about their life online. Thankfully, digital resilience is easier to acquire than you may think.

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Resilient children are less likely to experience harm

How can you ensure your child has the resilience to enjoy life online and avoid the pitfalls? A couple of years ago, Parent Zone worked with the Oxford Internet Institute to find out if digital resilience really mattered, and how children were able to acquire it.

Firstly they found that resilience is very important: resilient children are more likely to enjoy the benefits of the internet and less likely to experience harm. And secondly they found that digital resilience is built by 'good-enough parenting' and by children having digital skills and a positive attitude to technology. What is 'good-enough parenting'? Put simply, a 'good-enough' parent is consistent and responsive. They always aim to do their best for their children, while recognising that perfect parenting isn't realistic or achievable. In terms of digital resilience, a 'good-enough parent' equips their child with the skills needed to be able to take care of themselves. It's about adapting what you already do to keep them safe and flourishing offline to work in the online world.

The benefits of boundaries

Setting boundaries is important in the digital world. Children need them because they feel more secure if they know what they can and can't do. We've all had trouble putting down our devices, so it's easy to see why children need us to tell them when it's been too long or too much. Of course you will relax some rules as your child grows older, and there will be days when you bend them a little – but rules are critical in a digital world because managing technology use can be tough.

Conclusion

Finally, digital resilience is about letting children explore, knowing that you've taught them how to navigate the online world and that they can come to you if they have a problem. When they were young, you would have taught your child how to cross roads safely – you didn't wait until someone made the roads 100% safe, because that was never going to happen. Likewise, the internet will never be completely risk-free.



But the answer isn't to keep your child away from it. If you rely solely on filters and parental controls, there is a chance you may make your child less safe. The first time they go online outside of your walled environment, they could find they don't have the skills to navigate potential problems and to make positive decisions. So it's important to teach them how to be safe online, then have the confidence to let them go it alone.

Please note that this has been adapted from an article in a publication, so it has not been written by Oliver House but it includes useful information for parents.