

Raising strong children

Children grow up strong when they feel loved and connected to family and culture. When they are happy, healthy and confident they are better able to deal with life's ups and downs.

All children face upsets and challenges in life, and each child reacts differently. Some are naturally more resilient and able to deal with things and bounce back—others need more help.

Please note: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this website may contain images, voices or names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings or printed material.

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When children do best

Children do best in life when they:

- are part of a strong family
- feel loved and safe
- have self-confidence and pride
- are optimistic and see the good in things
- have good friends, role models and mentors
- have a sense of humour
- have a strong sense of identity and connection to family and culture.

Help children aim high and see all the possibilities for their future!

Spending time with family, practicing culture and learning about their history can help children be strong and resilient.

Children are watching and learning from you. Let them see you coping well and being positive about life.

Things that help children be strong

- A strong spirit** — self-confidence, pride and connection to culture.
- A strong family** — who take care of themselves, deal with problems and stay positive
- Good friends** — they can talk to and trust.
- A safe, calm home** — with routines and not too many disruptions.
- Help to learn** — to try new things and find what they are good at. Encourage their school work, activities or sports.
- Positive thinking** — help them turn negative thoughts into positive ones.
- A sense of humour** — help children see the funny side of things, have fun and laugh together.
- Guidance and support** — from parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles and trusted others.
- Role models and mentors** — to look up to and guide them. This is really important at every age, especially for teenagers.



ACT
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AN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARENTLINK GUIDE

www.parentlink.act.gov.au

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If things go wrong

We can't always stop things going wrong for our children, but if it happens we can:

- help them work out what to do
- make sure they get any help they need
- let them have a go at dealing with things — but jump in when you need to
- stick to routines as much as you can — it helps children feel safe
- let teachers or carers know what's happening so they can support your child too.

This guide's content was produced by Parenting SA, Women's and Children's Health Network.

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Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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Looking for more information?

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Children, stress and trauma

Children can be deeply affected by:

- what they see on TV e.g. wars, violence
- negative media about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- family arguments or problems
- hearing about things like stolen generation
- illness, deaths in the family
- racism or bullying
- fires, floods, accidents
- neglect — not getting the basic things they need
- physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- hearing, seeing or being the victim of violence.

Sometimes things that seem small to adults can stress children, especially if they feel powerless or are too young to understand what is going on.

Signs of stress

Some signs children and teenagers might feel stressed are if they:

- are very sad, anxious or angry
- spend a lot of time alone
- don't want to do things they usually enjoy
- have problems with eating or sleeping
- worry that the bad thing might happen again
- use alcohol or drugs
- are in trouble with the law.

What you can do

When children experience difficult things, talk with them about it and how they feel. Let them know it is not their fault and you are there for them. Get help from counsellors, teachers or health professionals.

If a child or teenager is hurting themselves or talking about suicide get help straight away.

Staying strong yourself

When you look after yourself you are better able to help your children. Try to:

- deal with any problems you have, including from the past
- stay positive — focus on the strengths of your family and community
- talk to someone you trust if you feel down
- try not to drink too much or take drugs.

Being exposed to difficult situations does not toughen children up. It causes trauma that can be very damaging.



ParentLink — for other parenting guides, online parenting information www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Child and Family Centres — for parenting information and support
www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/childandfamilycentres

Raising Children's Network — covering topics for parenting newborns to teens <http://raisingchildren.net.au>

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation t 6296 8900 www.gugan-gulwan.com.au

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service t 6284 6222 www.winnunga.org.au

Relationships Australia Dhunlung Yarra Service is dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples t 6122 7100 www.racr.relationships.org.au