



The Five Keys to Children's Success and Happiness

Parent Guide



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ABOUT YOU CAN DO IT! EDUCATION

You Can Do It! Education (YCDI) is a school-home collaborative approach to promoting the social-emotional well-being and achievement of all children.

YCDI has been developed by Professor Michael E. Bernard, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne. World-wide, YCDI programs are in 1,000s of early childhood centres (kindergarten, preparatory), primary and secondary schools in every state of Australia.

YCDI's mission is to strengthen the five social and emotional skills and values (the "5 Keys") which all children need to manage their own learning, behaviour and emotional well-being including: Confidence (work, social), Persistence, Organisation, Getting Along and Resilience. Unique among educational programs, YCDI emphasises the importance of teaching children different "Ways of Thinking" that help them to develop in each of these five areas.

YCDI's programs for parents and teachers prepare them to teach children of all ages the 5 Keys for success and happiness. Additionally, YCDI's programs describe for parents and teachers the things they can say and do to support the achievement and social-emotional well-being of children of all ages.

If you are interested to learn more about what schools can do to introduce YCDI to teachers, parents and students, visit: youcandoiteducation.com



What the Research Says Leads to Children's Success and Well-Being





The 5 Keys that Unlock Children's Potential



Confidence

Confidence requires that young people not be overly concerned with what others think if they make a mistake. Confidence is revealed when young people are not afraid to fail and are happy to meet someone new. Confidence involves young people having trust in themselves and believing that they will probably be successful in the end. Confident young people stand up straight, look people in the eye, and speak clearly and with a firm tone of voice.

Persistence

Persistence is revealed when young people try hard when doing schoolwork they find frustrating and do not feel like doing, and finish their work on time. Young people who keep trying to complete an assignment rather than becoming distracted, and those who elect to play after they've done their work, demonstrate motivation and can be described as being persistent.



Organisation

Organisation is revealed when young people keep track of their assignments, schedule their time effectively, and set goals for how well they want to do in specific areas of their schoolwork and in other endeavours. Organisation also means having all your supplies ready to do school work and having all your supplies ready a system for storing previously learned material.

Getting Along

Getting Along is revealed when young people work cooperatively with each other, resolve conflicts by discussion rather than fights, manage their anger, show tolerance, and follow class rules, including making responsible choices so that everyone's rights are protected. Getting Along also involves young people making positive contributions to helping others and to making the school, home, and community safer, healthier, and good places to live and learn.



Resilience

Resilience is shown when young people are able to stop themselves from getting **extremely** angry, down, or worried when faced with challenging events and difficult situations and people. Resilience means being able to control your behaviour when very upset without fighting or withdrawing for too long. It also means being able to calm down after having been upset and bouncing back to work and being with other people.





Basic Equation for Teaching Children the Keys for Success and Well-Being



Have conversations about the Keys

+



Describe examples of behaviours to practise

+



Discuss ways to think

+



Acknowledge your child when he/she uses a Key



Confidence, Persistence, Organisation, Getting Along, and Resilience



Teaching Confidence

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child about What it Means to be Confident

1. While your child is preparing to participate in an activity that is new or difficult, say: “Don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Don’t worry too much about what people are thinking about you when you have a go. Be positive. That will help you to be confident.”
2. When your child is returning to school after a holiday, say: “It is good to try to be very confident in your work and with friends. Remember, confidence means believing in yourself and not being afraid to try something new.”
3. When your child is getting ready to meet someone new or preparing to present something in class, say: “Don’t forget to stand up straight, look people in the eye and use a clear voice so people can clearly understand what you are saying. That will show you are being confident.”
4. Say: “Behaving confidently will help you to do well in school and make friends.”

Step 2. Describe Examples of Confident Behaviours to Practice

1. Select two or three examples of confident behavior that you want your child to practice to help him/her to become more confident:
2. To develop Work Confidence, say: “It is good to put your hand up when your teacher asks a question and you think you know the answer.” “It’s good to try hard work first without asking your teacher for help.” “It is also good to ask your teacher for help when you are having difficulty.” “It is good to try different things that are hard to do like playing a musical instrument or trying out for a team.”
3. To develop Social Confidence, say: “It is good to talk to someone new.” “It is good to share your ideas with your family, friends or in class.” “It is good to speak with a clear voice so people can easily understand what you are saying.” “It is good to greet adults with good eye contact and use their name.” “It is good to start a conversation.”

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think that will Help Your Child to Be Confident

1. When your child has received a low mark or has not been invited to a party, say: “Remember, you are not a ‘D’ person when you get a ‘D.’ And don’t put yourself down because someone wasn’t nice to you. You still have many good points.” (**Accepting Myself Thinking**)
2. When your child has to do something that is new or difficult, say: “When learning something new, while it’s nice to be successful right away, you don’t need to be. Making mistakes is a natural part of learning.” (**Taking Risks Thinking**)
3. If your child seems to be worrying a lot about friends, say: “While it’s nice to be liked by others, you don’t need everyone to like you all the time. While it’s not nice, it’s not the worst thing in the world if someone does not want to spend time with you or is mean to you.” (**Being Independent Thinking**)
4. To encourage your child to make his/her own decisions about how to do things and to stand up for what he/she believes rather than just being a follower, say: “Sometimes when you do things differently from others or express a different opinion, others will think you are silly or stupid or may say they don’t want to be your friend. At these times, remind yourself that it is important that you be yourself and make your own decisions. If people do not approve, it’s not the end of the world.” (**Being Independent Thinking**)
5. When your child is faced with something that is hard to do and is unsure, say: “It’s important to have a positive attitude and think, “I can do this. I’m more likely to be successful than to fail.” (**I Can Do It Thinking**)

Step 4. Things to Say to Acknowledge Your Child’s Confidence

When you catch your child behaving confidently, say: “That took confidence.” “That wasn’t easy to do but you did it” “You are not afraid to take risks.” “You had a confident voice when you spoke.” “You confidently stood up for what you believed.” “You were not afraid to make a mistake.” “Predicting success helps you to be successful.” “You have a confident approach to your work.” “You did not get too upset with yourself for not achieving a good result.” “You looked confident.”



Teaching Persistence

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child about What it Means to be Persistent

1. When you observe your child struggling with or giving up on a school project, say: “It’s tempting to give up when things are hard and you don’t feel like doing them anymore. When you give up on something, you are bound to fail. Persistence helps us as these times to keep going and not give up.”
2. When you hear your child saying, “This is boring. I hate this”, say: “We all have different things to do that are boring. I have learned that for me to be successful, it is important for me to keep going and to get it done rather than to put it off. This quality is called persistence.”
3. Illustrate with your child doing something where persistence pays off. For example, in practicing to ride a bike or when you spend a lot of time locating something you need from a shop, say: “You see, the more effort and persistence we put into things, the more successful we are.”

Step 2. Describe Examples of Persistent Behaviours to Practice

Select two or three examples of persistent behavior that you want your child to practice to help him/her to become more persistent:

Say: “It’s really good if this week for you to keep trying to (select from the following list of behaviours your child finds frustrating and boring but necessary to do): finishing schoolwork before playing or socializing, checking or proofreading work when finished to make sure it’s correct, not being distracted by others of computer when having work to do, spending more time studying a subject that requires practice, continuing to try even when homework is hard, boring or annoying

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think that will Help Your Child to Be Persistent

1. When you see that your child has persisted at something he/she found frustrating and was successful as a result, say: “You see, hard work and effort in doing something you do not feel like doing leads to greater success” (Giving Effort Thinking)
2. In discussing with your child his/her approach to subject he/she finds to be difficult and boring, say: “You know, it’s easy to think that things you do at school should always be fun and exciting and when they are not you shouldn’t have to do them. At times when you have frustrating work to do, rather than thinking ‘I can’t be bothered,’ a more helpful way of thinking that helps you get through the work quickly and get it over is “To be successful, I sometimes have to do things I don’t feel like doing. No gain to pain” (Working Tough Thinking)
3. When you notice that your child has a mountain of work to do and seems like giving up, say: “I know it seems to you that you’ll never get through it all. A helpful way to think at these times is: “If I stick at this and not give up, I’ll get it done.” (I Can Do It! Thinking)

Step 4. Things to Say to Acknowledge Your Child’s Persistence

When you catch your child being persistent, say: “You didn’t give up!” “You kept trying, great effort.” “Making that extra effort helps you learn.” “You sure didn’t give up easily.” “Your effort is very important. It helps you succeed.” “See. Persistence pays off.” “I can see you understand that to be successful, you sometimes have to do things you don’t feel like doing.” “The more you practice, the better you become.”



Teaching Organisation

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child about What it Means to be Organised

1. Find a time to discuss with your child about how important it is to be organised in his/her approach to school and how disorganisation is a big blocker to doing one's school. Say: "I think it is important to understand what it means to be organized and why organization can help you to be successful in schoolwork and other activities. You see, if you are always losing things, not knowing what homework to do, running late, and forgetting to take things to school and from school to home, you will be extremely stressed and find it hard to do your best."
2. At the beginning of a school term, remind your child how important it is to be organised. Say: "When I start something new, I have found that if I have all my equipment ready for me to work, I get off to a flying start. Doing this helps me to be organised. Let's see how organised your school materials are."
3. To prevent your child from getting behind in a school project or when he/she is running late and, thereby missing out on participating in an activity, say: "Let's see if we can spend a bit of time working out a weekly schedule of things you have to do, how long they will take to get done and when you will do them."
4. It can be helpful to discuss with your child the goals he/she has for what he/she wants to achieve in the coming school year, term and in different classes or subjects. Say: "One of the reasons to be organized is that it helps you to achieve your goals. And a great goal to have is deciding to do the best you can rather than just to get by. When you achieve the goal of doing your best, you are successful. Let's have a look at what your goals are for your different classes/subjects."

Step 2. Describe Examples of Organised Behaviours to Practice

Select two or three examples of confident behavior that you want your child to practice to help him/her to become more organised:

Say: "Here are some different things you can do to become a bit more organized (select two or three from the following list), why not practice doing them this week: having all school supplies and homework ready to take to school, having a neat enough desk, locker and schoolbag to locate things when needed, record your teacher's instructions for homework accurately, make a schedule ahead of time as to when he/she will do homework or study for exams, put things away in designated places in bedroom, use a watch/clock to keep track of time and where he/she should be and what has to be done, write a list of things to be done for the coming week and assign priorities to them (1, 2, 3), use list to check off tasks that have been accomplished."

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think that will Help Your Child to Be Organised

1. When you learn from your child that he/she has an assignment due in a few days or weeks, say: "One way of thinking you can have that will make it harder for you to be successful is "When is the very latest I can start." A more helpful way to think that helps get anyone to get organized to get a job done on time is to think about how long the project will take to get done and to plan enough time to get it done."
2. When your child is about to begin a new project or task, say: "You know, setting a goal for what you want to achieve can help you to be successful. Think about what you want to learn and the level at which you want to achieve (e.g., mark, getting on a team, scoring goals)."

Step 4. Things to Say to Acknowledge Your Child's Organisation

When you catch your child being organized, say: "You are organised." "Doesn't it feel good to be organised!?" "Being organised is helping you to be successful" "You planned well. You finished on time!" "You really planned well" "When you are prepared, you do a good job." "I bet it makes school easier when you have everything ready." "You are really keeping your schoolbag/backpack clean and neat." "I see you are planning ahead so that you do not need to rush your work at the last minute."



Teaching Getting Along

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child about What it Means to Get Along

1. When your child is about to go off to school at the beginning of the year or a new term or is attending a party or joining a group, say: “There are different things that you can do to make friends and be popular. When you are playing games, make sure everyone has a turn and you play by the rules. When you see someone who seems left out, go over and find out if he or she would like to join in or talk with you. It is important to contribute positively to help everyone feel happy, safe and respected. And when you have a disagreement with another, it is important to solve the conflict without fighting. In this way, we all can get along with each other.”
2. If you have a child who seems to be very competitive and mostly interested in him/herself, say: “I know that achieving at a high level and being the best is important to you. However, it is also important to be concerned about others at home and in your school and to make sure that what you say and do contributes to their success and well-being. Putting others interests at the same level of importance as your own makes our community a better place for everyone including you.”

Step 2. Describe Examples of Getting Along Behaviour to Practice

Select two or three examples of getting along behavior that you want your child to practice to help him/her to get along with peers, family, classmates and/or adults:

Say: “Here are some different things you can do to get along well with others (select two or three from the following list), why not practice doing a few this week: when you have a disagreement, see if you can solve the problem without fighting by talking it through, work cooperatively with others by listening, taking turns, and doing your fair share of work, following rules of school and home that help everyone to feel safe and happy, listening and not interrupting when someone else is speaking, offering to help others who need help, volunteering to make school or the community a better place to live and learn, treating others with respect, including others, being honest

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think that will Help Your Child to Get Along

1. When your child reports being angry because someone has behaved unfairly or when you child has made fun of someone from another cultural background or someone who is different, say: “While you may not like some of the behaviours or customs of that person, do not judge that person as a totally bad person who deserves to be punished or ridiculed. Be careful not to judge a book by its cover.” (Being Tolerant of Others Thinking)
2. At a family meeting when family matters are discussed, say: “One of the ways that help all of us to get along with each other is being aware of and following what can be called expectations or home rules. Keeping these in mind help us to get along. For example, I think it is good if everyone at home treats each other with respect and fairly. What do you think?” (Other expectations/rules might be: We all do our fair share of work around the house; We help people who have problems to feel better; We listen and respect other people’s opinions). (Playing by the Rules Thinking)
3. When you catch your child having lashed out with anger by fighting or saying something hurtful, say: “I know you think what happened was unfair. But lashing out has hurt someone. It is better when you have a problem with someone to think before you act about what you can say or do to improve the situation and not hurt someone.” (Thinking First Thinking)
4. It is important for you to find time to discuss with your children the kind of values you wish him/her to display that helps build his/her positive character. In a family meeting or in a one-to-one discussion say (select as many of the following values to discuss): “One of the things that is very important for me as a parent is for you to treat others with respect, act responsibly, be honest, be caring, be tolerant and inclusive of people who are different and to give everyone a fair go. When we act in these ways, this is a sign that we have good character.” (Social Responsibility Thinking)

Step 4. Things to Say to Acknowledge Your Child’s Getting Along Behaviour

When you catch your child demonstrating Getting Along behavior, you might say to them “You are a good listener” “You think before you act. Great attribute!” “Sharing helps you to be a good friend” “You are a helpful person” “Solving this problem without fighting shows you are really getting along” “You have a real talent for getting along” “You care about your community” “You are taking time to find out more about a person without judging them”



Teaching Resilience

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child About What it Means to Be Resilient

1. It will be important to select a suitable time to discuss with your child what it means to be resilient. Sometimes, it can be after or before an event where your child is upset such as not getting invited to a party, having to take a test, or having been unfairly chastised by a teacher (or parent or sibling). The conversation can also occur at more restful times when such as when your child is getting ready for bed, in the car on the way to school, or on a walk. It could also take place after both of you have seen a movie and are discussing the emotions of the characters and how the characters dealt with difficult situations. Say: “You know, one of the things that make us human is that we feel very strongly about negative things that happen to us and others when someone treats us badly or we have something really hard to do. We can get very angry, or worried or down about different things (we can also feel happy and curious). How we handle our feelings and behaviours at these times is very important. The thing inside us that helps us to cope with these sorts of situations and our emotions is called “Resilience.” Resilience means that when we are faced with a challenging or difficult situation or person, we are aware of how we feel, we try to stay as calm as we can be, when we do get very upset, we don’t let it get to us by fighting or staying away too long, we calm down within a reasonable amount of time and we bounce back to our work and our friends.”
2. After reading a book or watching a movie, discuss with your child the aspects of the character’s behavior that showed they were or were not resilient. For example, you can ask: “When the character was separated from his family, how did he feel and behave? Was there a time when he was not resilient and got very angry and depressed and acted in an un-helpful way? Later on, did the character display greater resilience by calming down and bouncing back?”
3. Indicate to your child that resilience is something that everyone can learn (adults included) as they grow up. Say: “From time to time, I’d like to discuss with you ways to think and things to do that can help you learn how to be resilient. Every young person growing up today needs lots of resilience to cope with life at school and home so that they can be as successful and happy as they can be.”
4. Have a discussion about the pros and cons of being resilient. Say: “Do you think being calm and being able to calm down and bounce back is a good thing? What are the consequences for someone who gets extremely furious, depressed or worried?” See if you can gain agreement with your child that extreme upset while normal and natural in the face of disagreeable events is not helpful and is counter-productive and that resilience is the ‘way to go.’

Step 2. Describe Examples of Resilience to Practice

Select two or three examples of resilient behavior that you want your child to practice.

Say: “Here are some examples of resilient behaviour that are good to practice to strengthen your resilience (select two or three from the following list): not getting extremely angry and fighting when someone is mean or acts unfairly; not worrying too much about taking a test; not avoiding meeting someone new; not get extremely down after receiving a bad mark or if someone is mean or excludes you; calming down quickly when upset; bouncing back to work or play after having been very upset.

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think as well as Coping Skills that will Help Your Child to Be Resilient

1. Introduce your child to the idea of an Emotional Thermometer and explain that feelings like physical temperatures can go from being very low/weak in intensity to very high/strong: “When something happens to you that you think is bad like someone doesn’t say hello or you get a bad mark, you can feel extremely upset, medium upset. A resilient person tries to manage his/her emotions so that he/she stays in the medium range of upset and when he/she gets to the top of the thermometer, he/she calms down quickly.



2. When you are talking with your child about something that happened at school or home where they were upset, say: “Honey (or son), there are some helpful ways you can think about what happened that can strengthen your resilience. One way is not to let your thinking get the better of you by blowing the badness of what happened out of proportion (making mountains out of molehills). Things that happen can be truly awful and terrible like war, terrorism or death of a loved one. Other events are not quite as bad as when you have a fire in your house, your best friend moves away or you have a car crash. Still other events are just bad or a bit bad like you are late for an appointment, you get a bad mark on a test, someone laughs at what you say in class or you forgot lunch. When you are thinking about something bad that happened, it’s good to think: “This is bad but it could be worse. It’s not a catastrophe, the worst thing in the world.” Thinking this way helps you to be calmer.”
3. Share with your child additional ways to think about what happened or what might happen that he/she can think to help him/her to stay calm, calm down and/or bounce back including: “I don’t like it but I can stand it” “If I make a mistake or someone is mean to me, I still have my good points.” “People who behave unfairly are not totally bad. They may just be making a mistake.” Have your child say which way of thinking he/she could use to be resilient.
4. You can also share with your child different things they can say and do to be resilient. You can discuss and illustrate using examples from your own life and the lives of others the following coping skills for being resilient in the face of events children perceive as negative: being aware of how upset you are and deciding to keep calm, relaxing (taking slow, deep breaths), finding someone you can trust to talk to, and finding something fun to do to take your mind off it.

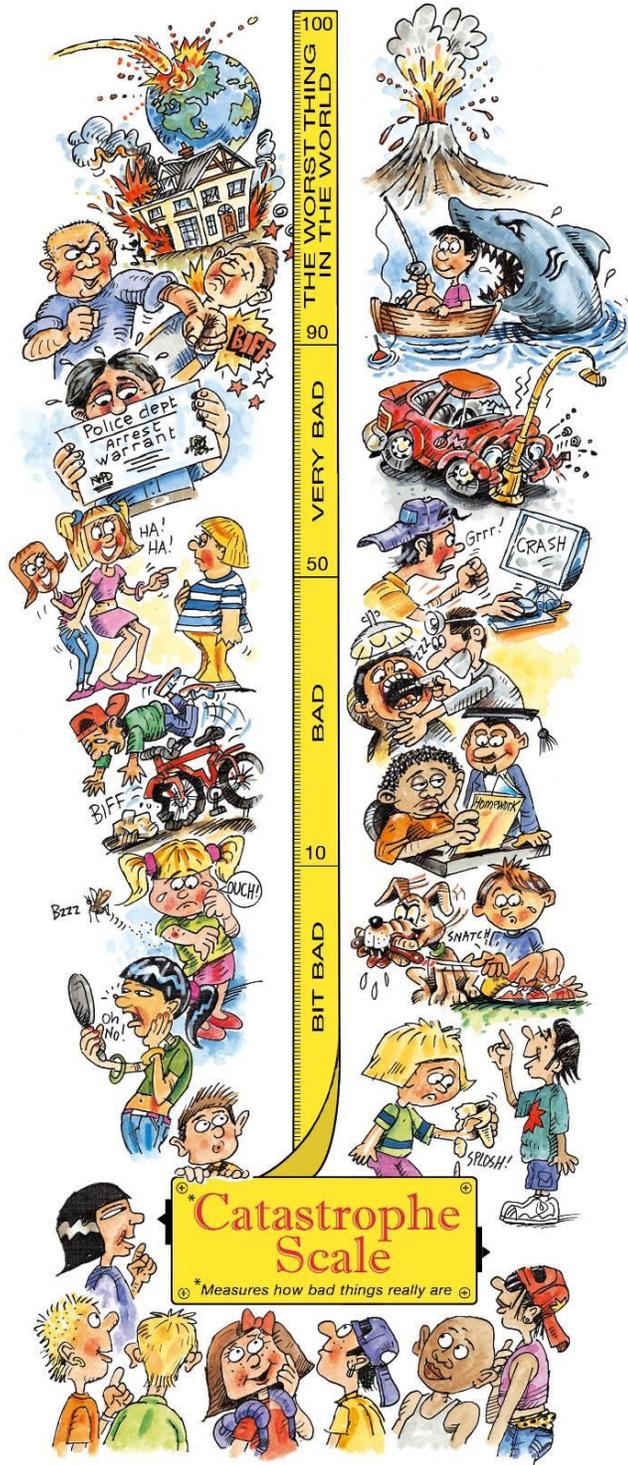
Step 4. Things to Say to Acknowledge Your Child’s Resilience

When you catch your child demonstrating resilience, you can acknowledge your child by saying the following: “You seemed pretty resilient when you didn’t get so upset about what happened.” “You didn’t let yourself get too angry.” “You’ve learned how not to get too nervous.” “You didn’t let that setback stop you from trying.” “Keeping your cool really helps.” “You did not upset yourself about what happened.” “You can get through the tough stuff.” “ Even though you didn’t do as well as you wanted, you are still positive in many ways” “You seemed not to have blown that negative event out of proportion.”



HOWBADZZAT!

How bad is it really?





Action Plan

Key I want to strengthen in my child _____

Step 1. Conversation I will have with my child about the Key (list important points):

Step 2. Examples of behaviours I will describe for my child to practice

Step 3. Ways of thinking I will discuss with my child

Step 4. Things I will say when I see my child using the key
