



# EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE & SELF-RELIANCE

How To Grow Healthy Families And Emotionally Self-Reliant Children  
Who Face Their Lives With Confidence And Grit

# EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE & SELF-RELIANCE

## Making Yourself, Your Family, And Your Relationships Healthy And Successful

### INTRODUCTION

Emotional self-reliance is the desirable outcome of growth and development that enables a person to achieve, succeed with people, find satisfaction with life, and generally enjoy good health and much happiness. It means being able to manage your emotions to limit the negative and more fully enjoy the positive. Healthy emotional development includes feeling free to experience healthy emotions without excessive distress and knowing that you have a choice over what you feel or how intensely you feel it. It is usually a result of a combined and healthy nature-nurture process. Under optimal conditions, it develops gradually over several ages and stages. Because there is a strong combination of learning and maturation involved, this form of development is often highly vulnerable to risk conditions, which might exist both in terms of what a person inherits and what a person finds and experiences (or fails to find or experience) in his or her environment.

Virtually every individual's environment includes people and other experiences with the natural world. Therefore, emotional self-reliance develops in the context of human relationships and other individual, non-relational experiences. For this reason, a two-part definition of emotional self-reliance is necessary. One part is a description of individual traits and qualities as displayed in his or her mental and emotional response to conditions in the environment (e.g., response to adversity, honest, reaction to stress, emotionally intelligent, etc.). The second is the emotional qualities displayed in relation to other people (e.g., confident, anxious, empathetic, etc.). Both are necessary to define either the existence of mature emotional self-reliance or indications it is not fully developed.



### Useful Facts About Emotions And How They Develop And Grow

In many cases, the role emotions play in our lives is confusing. Sometimes they add color to the paintings of our lives. Sometimes they are troublesome. Quite often emotions influence us when we don't want them and fail us when we do. Because they seem a bit confusing, most of us create strategies to deal with them. These strategies include an interesting variety. For example, many try to manage anxiety by creating specific and rigid routines and following them each day. Others get frantic when anxious and try to keep busy and work until the feelings go away. For those who feel lost and despondent when depressed, they call and talk to people or do something fun. Others think about dying just to rid themselves of the problem. Young lovers start out being thrilled when the first feelings of love blossom, but they might start feeling

afraid and begin to worry that the original feelings will be lost. When they don't feel as they would like, they develop recipes to keep the feelings or regain them.

We are concerned about our children, and we wish to provide more help, guidance, education, and support for them. We understand that many of the problems that affect them have to do with emotions. Either there is too much of the wrong kind or not enough of the right kind. Therefore, we are concerned about how emotions develop and grow because we have come to understand that emotional development will be essential for the successful lives we hope our children will lead. In fact, research suggests that anxiety that's too intense is manifest in the lives of too many of our children. Depression, which is the sad absence of any positive emotions, affects a growing number of them, weakens them, and often prevents them from living the healthy lives all children deserve. Emotions are involved in addictions, where the nature of the addiction is often an effort to reduce stress by taking a chemical substance that reduces the feelings of it. Or the new plague of pornography addiction is a biological response seeking an emotional goal of some kind. In all of these, emotions are also necessary for the healing and resolution of these problems. Usually it is to regulate negative emotions and create many more positive emotions.

So, let's begin with some basic facts about emotions so that you can understand them and how to promote your children's health and happiness. Begin with the idea that the term "development" means that something changes overtime, and these changes can progress toward a positive end, or they can be delayed. The idea of development also means that parents can have a very effective role in shaping or influencing how children turn out. How emotions grow and develop includes: (1) learning more about them and how we are influenced by them, (2) how to be responsible for them and use them wisely, (3) how to express those that are positive with more variety and utility, (4) how to understand those that are negative and regulate the experience of them and how they are expressed, (5) how to create a larger mental capacity for those that are positive so the experience of them is more intense, longer lasting, and can be applied effectively in our own lives and in our relationships with others. These descriptions of development produce two general outcomes—emotional resilience and emotional self-reliance. Starting out with the following information about emotions will be useful to your parenting.

## **1. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE INHERITED**

Some positive and negative emotions appear to be inherited: joy, sadness, fear/anxiety, anger, anticipation, surprise, disgust, and trust.

## **2. EMOTIONS HAVE PARTNERS**

Emotions are organized into pairs (sometimes combinations and sometimes paired opposites), which means that the expression of one usually means the other is readily available.

**Examples:**

joy & sadness

fear & anger

anticipation & surprise

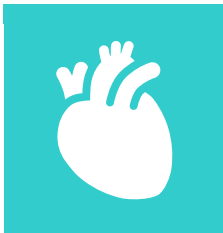
disgust & trust

love & anxiety

This means that children will have both positive and negative emotions, and it will be useful for you to learn how to recognize, understand, communicate about, and guide both. Plus, knowing that emotions typically come in pairs will help you understand how children’s emotions sometimes change quickly. Knowing this will help you better explain what is happening to them and how to guide them.

**3. EMOTIONS HAVE THREE BASIC ELEMENTS**

Emotions have more than three elements, but knowing three will be a good start. Where emotions are concerned, children learn “what” they experience rather than, or in addition to, what they learn “from” their experiences. If a child feels a lot of anger, for example, he will retain anger because he is learning anger as an emotional response. If a child feels a great deal of love, he will also learn that. These three basic elements about emotions will help explain how they develop.



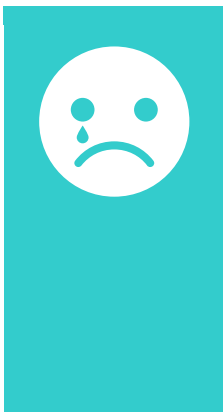
**EMOTIONAL STATE**

This is the body’s reaction and response (pulse rate, breathing, etc.) to emotions. People can create cycles of body response and emotional experiences to perpetuate depression, anxiety, and other positive emotions. Changing physical response changes feeling. Retaining good health habits coincide with a healthy emotional life.



**EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE**

This is one’s interpretations of his or her positive and negative feelings. (Examples: “I feel happy,” “I am so sad,” “I love you.”) How individuals understand their own emotions is related to their identities and self-concepts. If they feel positive feelings most of the time, they will likely think they are a happy, confident person. Positive self-esteem and confidence are related to feeling more positive than negative emotions.



**EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS**

Displays are the way emotions are expressed or displayed in a person’s facial expressions, gestures, and movements. Some displays are universal, and everyone displays them the same way (smiling when happy), some are cultural (expressing negative emotions in public vs only in private), and some depend on the individual or family. Displays are the parts of emotions that are to be encouraged and regulated in order to develop self-reliance. For example, the more displays people have of positive emotions, the happier they are and generally find more success, individual fulfillment, and satisfaction in their relationships with others. The better people can understand and regulate negative emotions, the more likely they are to avoid problems and live successfully.

#### 4. THE PURPOSE OF EMOTIONS

Emotions focus our attention, motivate us, and provide meaning about ourselves, the natural environment, other people, and our relationships. Understanding how to use your own emotions and how to help children use theirs will enable you to motivate, to help them focus, and to understand their experiences with people and with the world around them. The more self-knowledge children have, the more likely they are to make good decisions.

#### 5. HOW EMOTIONS ARE CAUSED

Emotional states, experience, and displays are usually caused by our interpretations or thoughts, choices, and actions even though it may seem like they are caused by events or people external to us. Self-reliant people tend to recognize they are responsible for what they feel and how their feelings are expressed. This does not mean they judge themselves as being wrong or guilty for their emotions, but instead they avoid blaming others, accept their feelings, and learn to channel them toward a healthy place.

#### 6. WHAT EMOTIONS BECOME

Emotions and their expression become our personality traits and character qualities. By learning how to promote emotional self-reliance, you are actually influencing the personality and character of your children. This can be accomplished by helping children understand and communicate about their emotions, by learning a sense of responsibility for how they display them, by creating positive emotions, and by learning how to regulate the way negative emotions are expressed. This is made possible by the fact that large numbers of emotions and their expressions are learned.

**It's important to note that many highly valued emotions will be present in someone's life only if they are learned (e.g., loving and being loved, happiness, hope, optimism, confidence, peace, security, empathy, compassion, gratitude, tolerance and acceptance of others, etc.).**



### What Emotional Self-Reliance Looks Like

Every culture will have its own definition of what emotional self-reliance looks like. As parents, you might have your own definition. If we had research about the qualities that lead to human success and we add our own observations of what effective people are like, we can get a pretty good idea about what emotional self-reliance looks like. The following qualities are mature forms of behavior that characterize the positive forms of development. There are likely others not included here, but these will serve as examples to help you clarify what the objectives or purposes for your work as parents might be.



## **KNOWING HOW TO LIVE SUCCESSFULLY**

Most of us are faced with life decisions that are usually part of a basic map or method of how to live successfully. These decisions also include how to create and follow success strategies, which guide how to prepare for competence at work, how to succeed financially, how to create social success, how to form positive relationships with others, how to weather adverse conditions, how to solve family problems, how to decide about and live consistent with moral values, how to be a good neighbor, and how to be a positive and contributing member of society.



## **EXPERIENCING MORE POSITIVE THAN NEGATIVE EMOTIONS**

There are positive emotions, such as love, cheerfulness, peace, and happiness. There are negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, revenge, resentment, etc. Emotional self-reliance exists when people feel or experience more positive emotions than negative and learn how to produce positive emotions for themselves and gradually improve their abilities to clearly and accurately express them toward other people.



## **DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF-CONTROL ABOUT EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS**

When responding to some environmental pressure or reacting to another person's actions, emotional self-reliance exists when there is at least one degree of autonomy—a sense of free choice—before an individual reacts or responds to someone else's behavior or the perception of it. For example, when confronted with disappointment, stress, or frustration, people with emotional self-reliance will recognize that they can choose how to think, feel, and respond positively to the situation instead of feeling reactive and totally controlled by the situation or another person.



## **GENERATING POSITIVE FEELINGS AND REGULATING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS DURING DISTRESS**

Emotional self-reliance is demonstrated by the ability to rise above and persist during periods of emotional distress by regulating negative emotions and creating optimism, identifying learning options, and creating a hopeful, long-term view of any circumstance (instead of feeling helplessly trapped in a current situation).



## **DISPLAYING SOCIAL CONFIDENCE AND ADAPTABILITY**

Emotional self-reliance is demonstrated as social confidence, which means being comfortable with several different types of social situations. It is also demonstrated by interpersonal competence, which promotes success in relationships with other people. It also is evidenced by the ability to learn and successfully adapt emotional displays and language for several different social circumstances.



### **BEING RESILIENT**

Emotional self-reliance is demonstrated by resilience (bouncing back) in the face of failure, loss, or tragedy.



### **STARTING, PERSISTING IN, AND COMPLETING WORK**

Emotional self-reliance exists when individuals demonstrate the ability to start work, persist in working, and complete the tasks that are part of work.



### **DISPLAYING FORGIVENESS, TOLERANCE, INTEGRITY, COMPASSION, AND EMPATHY**

The outcomes of successful development are expressed in several high-order social forms of behavior. This includes moral behavior, such as honesty and integrity. Successful development is also demonstrated when people can display forgiveness, sacrifice, service, love, tolerance without prejudice, acceptance of others, empathy, and compassion.



### **HAVING MANY FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES AND BELONGING**

Emotionally mature individuals usually create and maintain several different types of acquaintances and friendships. Although they may at times prefer to be alone, they usually enjoy and find value in meeting people, conversing with people, and learning from people. This sense of belonging provides some security and safety and also tends to lead to the ability to form and maintain emotionally intimate relationships.



### **FEELING AND EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FREQUENTLY**

Self-reliant people appreciate the contributions of others and the kindnesses and blessings they have received. When they have these feelings and express them, it produces brain neurotransmitters (dopamine) that lifts spirits and creates more happiness and satisfaction.



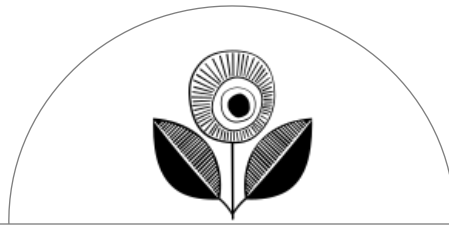
### **MAKING AND KEEPING PROMISES**

Self-reliant people have a strong sense of honor when it comes to making promises and keeping them. They are typically less impulsive about decisions, even though they can be spontaneous, but after making a promise will organize their lives in order to keep or honor them.



### **DELAYING GRATIFICATION**

Emotionally self-reliant individuals do not give up what they want most for what they want at the moment. They can delay gratification to achieve goals. They can limit impulsiveness in order to achieve something that would be better for them and for other people than if they would have impulsively chosen.



## FAMILIES CAN CREATE AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY EMOTIONAL AND COMMUNICATIONAL CONNECTIONS

1

### LEARN MORE ABOUT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (BEING AWARE OF AND ADDING EMOTIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO YOUR RELATIONSHIPS).

- Learn about emotions and the role of emotions in family life. When family members sense and understand their own emotions and others' feelings, they tend to be better at communication, which results in more successful relationships.
- Accurately gauge your children's displays of emotions, and use them wisely when you communicate with them.
- Add emotional support when communicating expectations for children's performance.
- Comfort rather than ignore when children are distressed.
- When making decisions about children, search for and understand children's feelings as part of formulating any plan and decision making.
- Emphasize being able to adapt feelings and their displays, and make adapting part of what you teach your children. Individuals who are better at adapting successfully to several different types of social situations typically are more confident and successful in their relationships.

2

### BE AN EMOTION COACH TO HELP CHILDREN LEARN TO UNDERSTAND AND REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS.

Become aware of a child's emotions, recognize the emotion as a time to teach and be close, listen empathetically and validate, help the child find labels that match his or her emotions, and set limits while creating a strategy to solve the problem.

3

### TEACH YOUR FAMILY STORY, AND HELP YOUR CHILDREN BE RESILIENT.

Ensure that all family members know about and feel a part of your family story. This is a family learning experience that is most likely to ensure the emotional wellbeing of children. It is about significant events in your family history or modern day. It is about the people in your family and their contributions, and it is about the qualities the story suggests for the people who are currently living in the family.



#### **4 TEACH AND COMMUNICATE OFTEN ABOUT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS.**

Be examples of and teach about positive emotions. Help children know and understand negative emotions and learn to regulate them. Carry out conversations about feelings to explain when and how to display certain emotions and when not to display them. Refer to the emotional experience of family members (e.g., ask about feelings gently until everyone feels safe to talk about them) during communication from time to time in order to promote understanding. This will ensure that family members will consider each other's feelings instead of lacking sensitivity and awareness. It will also help children know when and how to display their feelings.

#### **5 TEACH THE EMOTIONAL STANDARDS OF FAMILY MEMBERSHIP.**

Identify a few emotional standards for your family, and ask everyone (do not demand it) to demonstrate that membership by honest communication, love, loyalty, cooperation, and kindness.

#### **6 EXPRESS ANGER SPARINGLY AND MILDLY.**

Control the expression of anger because it frightens and separates people. Learn to use calm conversation and effective communication instead.

#### **7 CREATE SHARED PROJECTS—AND MENTOR.**

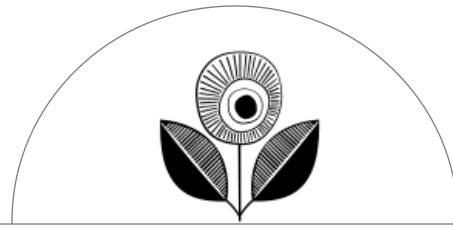
Working together on family projects can teach cooperation and create feelings of unity and belonging. Parents can create a warm mentoring relationship with the child.

#### **8 EAT FAMILY MEALS TOGETHER.**

Research clearly shows that when family members eat together often and regularly, children tend to do better in school, are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, less likely to suffer the effects of depression, and find their friendships and relationships more successful and satisfying.

#### **9 EXPRESS HEALTHY LOVE AS A NATURAL AND REGULAR PART OF FAMILY LIFE.**

Love expressed in many forms is a natural and healthy family connection. When it is withdrawn to punish, used to exploit or manipulate, used to accuse, demanded to impose guilt, or is wholly absent through abuse or rejection, the expectation of loving and being loved becomes an ache of loneliness and insecurity, a source of inferiority, and a lifetime lack of fulfillment.



## FAMILIES CAN CARRY OUT CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION PLANS

### 1. KNOW HOW EMOTIONAL SELF-RELIANCE DEVELOPS, AND TEACH ITS PRINCIPLES.

Parents can become acquainted with emotional self-reliance and be knowledgeable about what it is like when it is mature, how to promote it, what the symptoms are of its absence, and what may prevent it.

### 2. ORGANIZE A FAMILY PLAN TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL SELF-RELIANCE, AND PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN CHILDREN AND AVOID POTENTIAL PROBLEMS.

This can include a regular parent leadership or organization meeting to communicate plans for the family, set goals for each child, sustain the plan, and promote the goals. Involve children in the development of these plans and goals as they are ready, and ask them to set their own goals.

### 3. DIFFERENTIATE YOUR CHILDREN AS UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS, AND ORGANIZE A PLAN SUITED FOR EACH.

Identify children who have inherited a high level of brain reactivity, and identify those who did not. To be successful with each child, you may need to adapt what you do in your family communication, discipline, and work.

### 4. UNDERSTAND FAMILY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, AND PREPARE CHILDREN FOR FUTURE SUCCESS.

Organize your family with a developmental approach. Have a plan to promote growth (learning) adapted for each child, and then do your best to provide an emotional environment that includes (1) some stability and positive predictability for children and (2) mentoring time between parents and children.

### 5. CREATE A CLIMATE OF SAFETY, AND MAKE SURE CHILDREN FEEL LOVED.

Create a family environment where children feel safe by a calm approach and a predictable and just form of discipline, helping each child learn to be contributing and productive family members and ensuring that each family member feels loved because parents express it and show it.

### 6. APPLY POSITIVE DISCIPLINE, AND DIMINISH ANGER AND FRUSTRATION.

Promote a positive approach to managing children so that you feel enough influence and avoid overreacting to what children do or say. You can do this by doing the following:

- Prepare more than you punish.
- Encourage more than you criticize.
- Communicate more than you control.
- Individualize and involve.
- Resolve together more than you isolate.
- Love enough to limit.

## 7. ADAPT YOUR DISCIPLINE APPROACH AS CHILDREN DEVELOP.

As your children mature, adapt your family discipline approach from being rules- and consequences- centered, and add increased emphasis on your relationship with children. When children are judged to be sufficiently mature, trade a rule or two for a high-quality relationship. (1) Focus on building and maintaining trust by both you and the children saying what you will do and doing what you say, and (2) create high-quality communication by keeping each other informed and by displaying warmth, affection, and love to each other.

## 8. GRADUALLY CREATE INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKING.

Take your children through a developmental process of decision making. Make early decisions **for** them, and then move to where you make decisions **with** them. This can be followed by asking them to **make decisions themselves and present them** to you so you can help them examine the wisdom behind them. Lastly, encourage them to make **their own** decisions.

## 9. UNDERSTAND PERSONAL FABLES AND IMAGINARY AUDIENCES.

Personal fables are stories youth create about themselves that are often not based on reality but can be exaggerated either positively or negatively. Imaginary audiences are the “people” youth believe they are performing for, such as their friends, family, teachers, etc. Help your children have sufficiently broad and accepting fables and audiences so they don’t imagine the need to be too perfect or see themselves as inferior.

## 10. TEACH MORAL BEHAVIOR AND MORAL LEADERSHIP BY USING INDUCTIVE COMMUNICATION.

Teach that moral behavior helps someone, and what is not moral will hurt or harm someone. Instead of dealing with children’s bad behavior by ignoring it or thinking that imposing some consequence will be enough, make corrections that include using inductive communication. This form of communication refers a child to his or her feelings and to the feelings of others. When linked to the idea of what helps or harms people, all moral qualities, such as integrity and honesty, are based on this idea. Children can learn to organize their lives so they will stand up for what is right and resist the pressure to do something that will harm themselves or others and resist the pressure to not do something when action is needed.

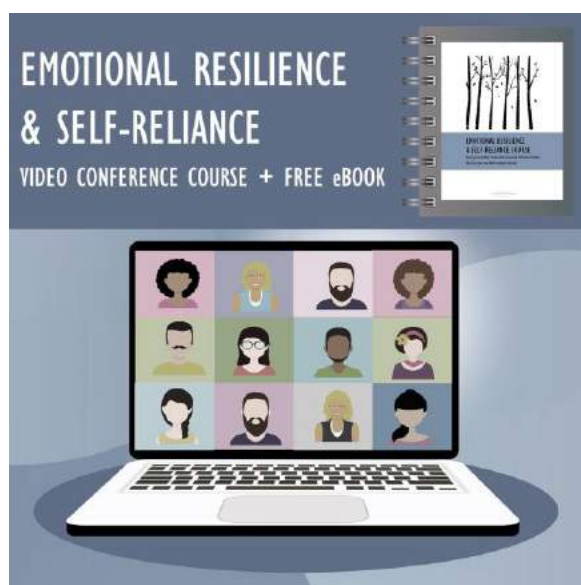
## 11. TEACH HEALTHY BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND OTHER SOCIAL SKILLS.

Help your children learn to include others, meet and greet people, give compliments, ask questions and listen, adapt their emotional behavior appropriately from one situation to another, and assert their opinions in social situations.

## 12. CREATE A TRADITION OF DOING HARD THINGS, AND COMBINE WITH EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

Build a tradition and create a theme or value that surrounds your children with the idea that as a family you face and do hard things. Also provide emotional support. This reduces fear of challenges and builds confidence about the ability to survive and succeed when facing things that look hard to do.

## To find out more, see our courses on [FirstAnswers.com](https://www.firstanswers.com)!



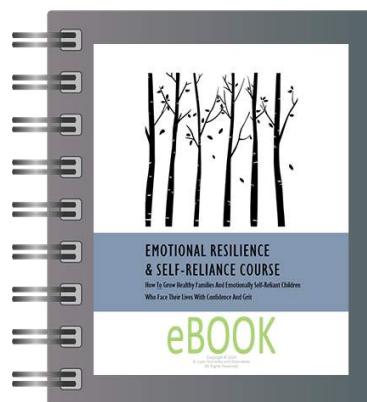
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You can even create your own group for the video conference course. Register with friends, family, your church group, or community group. Strengthen your relationships while you're learning!

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- limit depression and anxiety.
- regulate technology use.
- guide your children through difficult emotions.
- use positive discipline to reduce anger.
- build social confidence.
- teach your children to start, persist, and finish work.



### **INCLUDES COMPREHENSIVE 140-PAGE eBook**

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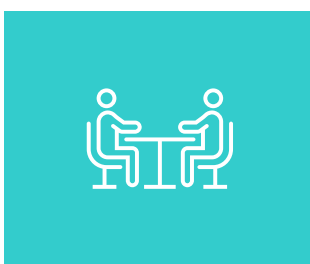
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how to use  
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how to teach your  
kids resilience and  
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action plans to  
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