



Strength-based Parenting and the Impact on Children's Stress Levels

Is there a relationship between Strength-based parenting (SBP) and kids' stress levels and their approaches to coping?

Findings from a new study by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, show that parents may make a positive difference on their children's stress levels.

Strength-based coping is a particular style of coping where the individual makes the best use of their personal strengths, their skills, their emotions, and their family and social resources to deal with stress.

A registered psychologist and researcher conducted a community sample of Australian upper primary schoolaged children (aged 10-12) with participants recruited through a stress-management workshop run for children.

The study examined the role of parents in helping children to overcome and reduce their stress. The study focused on positive, everyday stress and adopted a positive psychology approach to the research inquiry. In particular, the study examined the role of SBP on stress levels in children.

Levels of stress were identified as toxic, tolerable and positive and given that stress results from an imbalance between demands and resources, SBP is likely to help children to deal with stress because it builds up the child's resources (their strengths), fostering a better balance between the demands placed on the child and the strengths the child has to meet those demands.

The current results suggest that parents may play a role in assisting their children to cope with everyday, minor stress by parenting in ways that

assist children to understand their own strengths and engage in strength-based coping.

KEY FINDINGS

- When parents adopt a strength-based approach, they seek to deliberately identify and cultivate positive states, positive processes and positive qualities in their children. In other words, parents are building up their children's resources.
- Although toxic stress has debilitating effects on the well-being of children, not all stress is damaging.
- Positive stress has the potential to help children learn, grow and adapt if it is successfully managed.
- Children are more likely to use their strengths to effectively cope with minor stress in their life if they have parents who adopt a strength-based approach to parenting.

THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Parent authoritatively – encouragement, warmth, boundaries, limits, consequences.
- ✓ Encourage independence in your kids. They're never too young to be responsible for small things.
- ✓ Role model resilience and other strengths, such as persistence, commitment, organisation, getting along.
- ✓ Allow kids to suffer consequences and learn from them.
- ✓ Teach kids stress management strategies and calming techniques – deep breathing, thinking of happy times, talking to a friend.
- ✓ Have fun with brainstorming and alternative ways to solve problems.
- ✓ Help build your child's confidence and self esteem.
- ✓ Accept your kids for who they are, make time for them and accommodate their interests.
- ✓ Believe in your kids and let them know you do.



TAKEAWAY

FROM PROFESSOR MICHAEL BERNARD
FOUNDER, YOU CAN DO IT! EDUCATION

Strength-based parenting is a style of parenting that is warm, supportive, and authoritative. SBP connects children with their own strengths so that they will naturally use these to cope effectively with a stressful situation, rather than engaging in avoidance or aggressive coping responses.

Source: The Relationship between Strength-Based Parenting with Children's Stress Levels and Strength-Based Coping Approaches. Lea Waters. Psychology, 2015, 6, 689-699 Published Online May 2015 in SciRes. <http://www.scirp.org/journal/psych> <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/psych.2015.66067>