



## Parenting Kids Through Change- Practical Tips!

As educators, we know that change is inevitable and in fact, change is something we should all embrace. However, kids like routine. They thrive on knowing what happens when. But life doesn't stay the same – people move houses, friends shift away or stop being friends and almost every year they'll probably have to face a new teacher.

According to a growing body of research, kids learn how to cope with change and the ups and downs of life by developing resilience. For years it was considered one of the inherent traits we were all born with but psychologists today now know that it's one of the most important qualities parents can teach their kids (along with compassion).

Studies have shown that children as young as two years old copy the coping, stress-management and thinking styles of the adults around them. Children can sense if parents are anxious or worried and will tend to mimic that. Other studies have found that there is strong evidence that good early relationships with carers can help make children more resilient. The earlier this resilience-building is started the better.

Reinforcing this "it starts at home" message, Andrew Fuller, consultant psychologist for The Resilience Foundation and author of *Tricky Kids*, says resilient parents raise resilient kids. Fuller states that, "When your child needs you to help them make sense of the changes that might be happening, that is not the time to confront your own inner demons." Fuller further explains that, "It's a handy skill for parents to learn to hold their own anxieties in check."

Fuller describes resilience as "the happy knack of being able to bungee jump through the pitfalls of life".

Jill Savage, author of several parenting books and the executive director of *Hearts at Home*, has this advice for parents want to help their children manage change:

1. Be prepared to answer their myriad of questions – and create an environment in which they feel safe about asking you anything about the changes they're facing. Asking questions helps them process change and the answers they receive from the people they trust most – that is mum and dad – will help them transition.
2. Give them warning – like adults, no child will cope well with change being sprung on them. If you can, start talking through the changes early so they can get their head around it as well as formulate all those aforementioned questions.
3. Stick to routines as much as possible – try not to change everything at once. If you have routines in place like bedtime rituals, the books you read even the TV shows you all watch, try to keep those in place where possible.
4. Let them grieve - when any of us make any kind of change in life, we leave something behind. Let your littlies talk about what they miss and don't try to point out all of the wonderful things about new house, school, bedroom or whatever - let them appropriately mourn what they have lost.
5. Be prepared to weather the change – many kids don't adapt immediately and there may be tears and tantrums, followed by major parental guilt. Expect that it can take time for children to adjust.