Bolstering Bouncing Back

By Whitney Thomey

Lead Consultant & Risk Ethnologist

Resource Type: Risk eNews

Topic: Youth Protection and Child Safety

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them." – Maya Angelou

Kids are amazing. I always knew this statement to be true, but I wasn't able to witness it until I became a mother. My daughter, who is almost four, continually surprises me. She is astute, empathetic, and she looks adversity in the eye and says, "Not today!" Her problem solving and resiliency skills are inspiring.

Time and time again, we have learned that resilience is vital. The ability to be flexible and adapt is more important than the ability to duck and weave. The word "resiliency" has surfaced a lot lately: in the news cycles, in NRMC consulting engagements and in questions from our Affiliate Members. Resiliency isn't just about bouncing back; it's about developing a mindset that allows us to rise above failures, turn them into opportunities, and grow. Many of our members and clients are nonprofits with youth-facing services, and their missions are poised to help build the resiliency of children. Participation in a youth-serving organization helps our kids become more confident when they approach risks throughout their lives.

Harvard's Center on the Developing Child has done studies on the development of resilience in children. Their team identified four factors that bolster children's capabilities in building adaptability in response to adversity. The factors they identified are:

1. facilitating supportive adult-child relationships;
2. building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control;
3. providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and
4. mobilizing sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions.

So how can you and your organization help kids build this capacity for resilience?

Every year, Camp Fire celebrates the children in our communities during Absolutely Incredible Kid Day® (AIKD) on the third Thursday of March. This year, the date falls on March 19, 2020. The organization urges adults to take this time to tell our young people exactly *why* they are incredible!

This initiative takes advantage of the first and second principles mentioned above. Absolutely Incredible Kid Day® is the *perfect opportunity* to tell your kids how impressed you are when they adapt, roll with the punches, and get back up when they fall. Let them know that asking for help is an admirable quality and that it is

representative of *strength*, not weakness. Verbal affirmation strengthens relationships and gives kids the feedback they need to be more confident in the decisions and actions they've made.

Ask yourself:

- What am I *personally* doing to model these behaviors for the children with whom I interact?
- How does *my organization* bolster adaptability for kids?
- When was the last time I praised one of my children or grandchildren, a child in my community, or a kid who volunteers in my organization for being resilient?

Make your pledge today with Camp Fire to tell a young person in your life how *incredible* they are!

Absolutely Incredible Kid Day® Resources

- Free, printable letterhead and a coloring page
- 5 Ways to Make a Big Impact for Absolutely Incredible Kid Day®
- Writing Tips, Ideas & Examples

Whitney Thomey is Project Manager at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Whitney welcomes your comments and questions about absolutely incredible kids or building resiliency at your organization to face risks head on, at 703.777.3504 or Whitney@nonprofitrisk.org.