Bounce Back Unit
Elasticity/
People Bouncing Back
Parent Information: People bouncing back

If you are resilient you are able to cope reasonably well with difficult situations and things that go wrong and then ‘bounce back’. Throughout life children will need skills and attitudes to help them to bounce back. They will encounter everyday challenges such as making mistakes, falling out with a friend, moving house or school and losing in a sports competition. Many will also face challenges such as adapting to family break ups, a step-family, the illness or death of a family member, or being bullied. People Bouncing Back is the curriculum unit that teaches children the ten BOUNCE BACK! statements.

**BOUNCE BACK!** stands for:

- **B**ad times don’t last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.
- **O**ther people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.
- **U**nhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.
- **N**obody is perfect—not you and not others.
- **C**oncentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.
- **E**verybody experiences sadness, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

**Blame fairly.** How much of what happened was due to you, to others and to bad luck or circumstances?
- **A**ccept what can’t be changed (but try to change what you can change first).
- **C**atastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don’t believe the worst possible picture.
- **K**eep things in perspective. It’s only part of your life.

**Key messages to communicate to your child about ‘bouncing back’**

- Life is mainly good but now and then everyone has a difficult or unhappy time. Things always get better even though sometimes they may take a bit longer to improve than you would like. It is important to stay hopeful and expect things to get better.
- You will feel better and have more ideas about what to do if you talk to someone you trust about what’s worrying or upsetting you.
- Unhelpful thinking isn’t necessarily true and makes you feel worse. Helpful thinking makes you feel better because it is more accurate and helps you work out what to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhelpful thinking</th>
<th>Helpful thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made a mistake, I’m really dumb.</td>
<td>I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes sometimes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jake doesn’t like me. I must be a jerk.</td>
<td>Jake doesn’t like me but other kids like me.</td>
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- No one is perfect. We all make mistakes and find out there are some things we can’t do well.
- If you can find something positive or funny in a difficult situation, no matter how small, it can help you to cope better.
We all need to take fair responsibility for the things we did or didn’t do that contribute to a difficult or unhappy situation. However, we should not over-blame ourselves because circumstances, bad luck or what others did may have contributed to the difficult situation too.

If a situation can’t be changed, you just have to accept it and live with it.

Don’t make yourself miserable by exaggerating how bad something is or by assuming that the worst possible picture is the one that will happen.

When something goes wrong, it usually only affects one part of your life. Concentrate on the things in your life that are still going well.

What can you do to help your child?

Use the appropriate BOUNCE BACK! statement whenever you see the opportunity.

Consider displaying the statements on the fridge or somewhere prominent so they serve as a useful prompt for your child (and the rest of the family).

Don’t over-protect your child from the normal challenges that all children have at different ages (e.g., walking to school, looking after their own things, packing their own lunch). Start by giving your child small age-appropriate challenges that require small responsibilities. Using small steps moves them towards becoming more independent and competent. Don’t do things for them without checking that they are capable of doing it for themselves.

Encourage your child to talk about what’s troubling them and help them to find solutions. Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling and what they are thinking about the problem. Then help them to think about different solutions.

Gently challenge self-defeating talk (e.g., I can’t do this, I’m hopeless, dumb, useless) and helpless behaviour (giving up easily, expecting others to do things for them). Suggest they use helpful thinking instead (e.g., I made a mistake but everyone makes mistakes).

Don’t fight all your child’s battles. Children need to experience some difficult times so they learn how to bounce back.

Model effective solving of problems that are age appropriate for your child by talking ‘out loud’. Review different solutions to a problem and the possible good or bad consequences of the different solutions.

Avoid offering ‘quick fixes’ or ‘feel good’ options when things get tough. Rather than distracting them with a movie or treats, let them sit with the bad feelings, knowing that you care that they are hurting, but that it is something they have to deal with, not escape from.

Help your child to take responsibility for what happens. When something doesn’t work out for them, draw up a pie chart with them of:

- How much was due to me?
- How much was due to others?
- How much was bad luck and circumstances (i.e., being in the wrong place at the wrong time)?

Also encourage them to consider the situation from the other person’s viewpoint.

When something bad happens for your child, help them to keep things in perspective by asking them:

- Does this really matter? Are you getting upset over very little?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is this to you?
- What’s the worst thing that can happen? Do you think you can handle that?

Encourage them to think about the parts of your life that are still exactly the same and still really good (e.g., they lost a friend but they still have other friends in their team, in the street to play with, their school work is going well, nothing has changed at home).

These questions help your child to stop catastrophising and stop getting too upset over things that will get better or improve in time.