



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



FAMILY
CHILDREN

We Can Get Stronger! Transcendence and Spirituality

Family beliefs can help us to make meaning out of hardship. Our personal beliefs include values, attitudes, and spirituality. Sharing our values and culture with our children can help them to cope with tough experiences and the big emotions that come with them. These beliefs play an important role in building resilience by offering meaning, support, and comfort in the face of hardships. Storytelling and connecting with nature are two good ways to share our values with our children and push us beyond our own boundaries.

Storytelling is a powerful way to share important values and beliefs with children at any age. However, when we engage in storytelling, we should share with our children why the stories are important to us and how they relate to our lives today.

Getting outside can be one way to increase our resilience. When children interact with nature they learn about its importance and beauty. Through exploring nature, children can learn more about how we are all connected to one another as well as being connected to nature.

Activities

- **Share stories from your family.** Every family has a history. Develop links to your family's culture by talking about your background. Consider telling stories about your childhood or passing down tales about family members who came before you. Sharing these kinds of stories provides a personal history for your child that will help them understand their place in the world. You may wish to consider keeping your family story at the Library of Congress by recording conversations with family members remotely through [Story Corps Connect](#).
- **Write stories together.** For older children, consider writing stories together that reflect your family beliefs, culture, or heritage. Encourage your child to take the lead in developing the moral of the story. If you need help in getting started you may wish to check out some tips from [ReadWriteThink](#).
- **Explore and collect objects from nature.** Consider taking a nature walk around your yard, the block, or in a local park as you talk about what you see. Suggest a focus for each walk or ask your child to choose a focus. Examples might include finding the most birds or looking for the smallest animals. Take along a magnifying glass for viewing very small things, if possible. You may wish to take photos of interesting things your child notices or encourage your child to collect small, interesting objects like leaves, flowers, acorns, etc. Your child may wish to keep their "treasures" in a bag or express their creativity by making a [nature collage](#).

To learn more about the science behind fostering resilience through nature play and storytelling, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Young children's contributions to sustainability: The influence of nature play on curiosity, executive function skills, creative thinking, and resilience.](#)
- [Storytelling: an approach that can help to develop resilience.](#)
- [Consider storytelling to help children cope during COVID-19](#)



FAMILIES

TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

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FAMILY

YOUTH

We Can Get Stronger! Transcendence and Spirituality

Non nobis solum is Latin for “not for ourselves alone.” It means that people should contribute to the greater good of humanity, apart from their own interests. Our families’ cultural, spiritual, and religious values are ways we emphasize how our lives have purpose, meaning, and an impact on others. Religion/spirituality is important to teens and helps protect us from poor health. Through connection to spirituality, teens can learn to rise above challenges they may be facing.

Religion and Spirituality

Religion has been shown to help teens control their behaviors. Doing spiritual things, such as mindfulness, can also help teens control their emotions. These practices also help teach youth how to take responsibility for their community and world in addition to taking responsibility for themselves and their family.

Activities and Resources

- **The Greater Good.** Thinking about the greater good allows you to consider the needs of others beyond your own. Talking with your teen about big questions helps them to think about how they can positively impact those around them. To begin, you may wish to ask, “What do you genuinely care about the most in this crisis?” or “What skills can you use to add to your family, community, and world?”
- **Meaning Making.** Strong faith and mindfulness practices such as prayer and meditation can help your teen to control their emotions, promote health and healing, reduce stress, and strengthen their brain and heart. It can also help them to fight illness. Encourage your teen to take time to try some mindfulness activities to help them make meaning of the world around them. Your teen may also wish to download an app to help them practice mindfulness.
 - Mindful breathing is a simple exercise your teen may wish to try. Encourage your teen to sit in a comfortable position and to pay attention to their breathing and body as the air goes in and out. Continue for a few minutes while focusing on breathing and relaxing the body. Share with your teen that if their mind starts to wander, they should gently guide their focus back to their breathing.
 - Meditation can help your teen to lower their anxiety and better control their emotions. While focusing on their breathing, encourage your teen to imagine clouds passing by. As they imagine the clouds, encourage them to think of the clouds as worries. As each cloud passes, so do their worries.

The following are some guided meditations your teen may wish to try:

- [Mindfulness Meditation to Help Relieve Anxiety and Stress](#)
- [Guided Meditations from UCLA Health](#)

To learn more about the science behind thinking of the greater good and practicing mindfulness, you may wish to read the below research:

- [World Happiness Report 2019](#)
- [Research Review: The effects of mindfulness-based interventions on cognition and mental health in children and adolescents – a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials.](#)



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



FAMILY

YOUNG ADULTS

We Can Get Stronger! Transcendence and Spirituality

Many news stories and personal accounts have mentioned that, although the pandemic is hard, it has also provided us with a chance to step back, slow down, and look at our priorities. Oftentimes our focus is either on the future and what comes next or on the past and the choices we've already made. The problem with this is that we cannot change the past or predict the future. The best we can do is to focus on the present and make the best decisions we can based on the information we have.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is something we can easily include into our daily lives. By being aware of what is happening right in front of us, mindfulness allows us to get in touch with our emotions, how our body feels, and the thoughts drifting through our minds. [Researchers](#) have shown that regular mindfulness practice leads to many positive effects. These may include sleeping better, less stress, better attention, and improved overall health.

Sometimes it can help to bring a little structure to our mindfulness. For example, we could train ourselves to be more mindful and aware every time we go through a door, feel the wind blow, put our shoes on, or turn on a light. Everyday activities can help us remember that life is precious.

Activities

Internal Actions

- You can do a lot for yourself when you actively watch for the “nuggets” of wonder and beauty that are around you. They can be things like the smell of something baking in the kitchen, a smile from a stranger, a colorful leaf on the sidewalk, the memory of a friend you have not thought about in a while, or hearing a song that makes you want to sing along and dance.

External Actions

- Practicing mindfulness can also be done as a family. You may wish to try a [mindfulness app](#) with a sibling, parent, or someone else. Talk to each other about how you feel after doing it.

Video Resources

- [All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes](#)
- [The Habits of Happiness](#)

To learn more about the science behind how mindfulness and meditation help foster resilience, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Meditating role of resilience in the impact of mindfulness on life satisfaction and affect as indices of subjective well-being.](#)



FAMILIES

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FAMILY

OLDER ADULTS

We Can Get Stronger! Transcendence and Spirituality

Exploring and sharing our beliefs and cultural heritage can foster spiritual connectedness. This connectedness can build resilience by offering us meaning and purpose beyond ourselves. Spiritual connectedness can be supported in many different ways. It can be found in nature, with animals, and through art, religion or meditation. Spirituality can also promote better physical and mental health, healing, and better acceptance of difficult situations.

Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness has many benefits. It can reduce depression and pain, keep our minds sharp, and decrease loneliness. Mindfulness also encourages us to be aware of our thoughts and feelings in the moment. Through mindfulness activities we can also shift focus, reflect, and find acceptance.

Mindfulness Activities

Mindfulness can be practiced in many different ways. You can practice mindfulness through stretching your body, deep breathing, meditation and using aromatherapy. While practicing a mindfulness activity, concentrate on relaxing and focusing on stress relief. Try a [10-minute gratitude meditation](#) to reflect on all the gifts in your life. You may also wish to read more about [building a spiritual life during COVID-19](#).

Finding Connection through Nature

Connectedness through nature is one way to promote psychological and spiritual resiliency. Watching and helping things grow can give us a sense of control. Some of the mental health benefits of connecting to nature include mood improvement, reduced stress and anxiety, and improved self-esteem.

Nature Activities

Gardening is a great form of physical activity and can be especially helpful for those with dementia. Whether you are new at it or an expert, gardening can connect you to nature. Caring for houseplants can be done as an alternative to gardening if you do not have outdoor space.

- [Start an indoor vegetable garden: growing vegetables indoors made easy](#)
- [How to grow a quarantine garden when you're tight on space](#)
- [Going Green: 5 Easy to Grow Plants for Seniors](#)
- [This is a Good Time to Start a Garden. Here's How - Video](#)

Planting a tree can be done to honor a loved one and provide comfort to those who have experienced loss. It can bring your family together, connect future generations, and provide benefits to the planet that outlive you. You may wish to plant a tree yourself or go through an organization, such as the [Arbor Day Foundation](#).

To learn more about the science behind the benefits of meditation and gardening for older adults, you may wish to read the below research:

- [The potential effects of meditation on age-related cognitive decline: a systemic review](#)
- [Gardening is beneficial for health: A meta-analysis](#)
- [Gardening as a mental health intervention: a review](#)



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We Can Get Stronger! Transcendence and Spirituality

Spirituality can provide a sense of meaning, purpose, and emotional connection to something beyond ourselves. Believing in a higher power or participating in emotional connections beyond ourselves can increase our sense of purpose and change how we see everyday events. All of us have focused on something beyond ourselves at some point in our lives. For some, these experiences may happen after spending time getting lost in a book or listening to music. For others, it may have been a moment of becoming lost in prayer or meditation. Drawing on spiritual resources for resilience helps to provide families with a sense of certainty in a

sometimes uncertain world.

Spirituality

Many of us look for meaning in our lives. Spirituality may be the foundation we need to help us feel safe and in control. Resilience is increased when we are better aware of our values and purpose and focus on connections with others. Spiritual connectedness can be found in nature and through the expressive arts. These powerful spiritual resources may help us to better connect with ourselves, each other, and the world.

Activities

- **Connecting with nature.** Take time to truly connect with nature. The rhythm of walking and/or running can encourage thoughts and provide an opportunity for you connect with the world beyond yourself. The whole family can benefit from time in nature. Even a short stroll can lower your heartrate, blood pressure, and can reduce stress and anxiety. When you are by yourself, take note of your surroundings and notice the details around you. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel in the space you are in? Connecting with nature can provide you with a space to connect spiritually and find comfort in the face of adversity.
- **Taking photos.** Taking photos can help you to find meaning in your life. Consider taking meaningful photos and then writing about why the photos are meaningful. By doing this, you allow yourself a chance to think deeply about what each photo means to you. Consider learning more about how taking photos and writing about them supports you as you look for meaning in your life by watching [this short video](#).

To learn more about the science behind the benefits of connecting with nature and taking photos, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Urban Nature Experiences Reduce Stress in the Context of Daily Life Based on Salivary BioMarkers](#)
- [Through the windows of the soul: A pilot study using photography to enhance the meaning of life](#)