

# crucial conversations: **Raising Resilient Children**

## **Faith-Based Ways to Build Emotional Resiliency**

Children who grow up learning, observing, and living out their faith daily experience a sense of community belonging, which can develop into a powerful source of security and support as they grow. Adolescents who can name specific faith-based values, can identify people in their lives who hold them accountable to those values, and can identify people in their lives who live according to similar values are less likely to participate in risky behaviors and are more likely to engage in behaviors that will yield positive outcomes for themselves and those around them.

Below are some examples of ways Catholic families can help strengthen their Catholic family bond, creating a strong emotional and family foundation to build emotional resiliency upon.

### **Make Sunday Mass the Center of Your Week**

On Sunday we are reminded that the center of our family life is Christ. After Mass, enjoy Sunday brunch as a family and talk about the part of Mass that resonated most with each person. God told us to keep Sunday holy. The most important way we can do that is to go to Mass. Rest from work today, and focus on spending time as a family.

### **Give Thanks**

Celebrate your gifts — no matter how meager they may seem. Parents model their gratitude aloud for their children to hear, and do it on a regular basis to instill the habit in their children. As it says in the bible: *“in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* (1 Thess 5:18). Try giving your dinner prayer a boost by encouraging everyone to share something they are grateful for today.

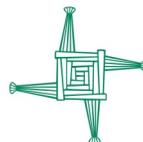
### **Simply Give**

Part of being grateful for what we have is giving back. Children who see their parents giving of their gifts will follow suit. We learn from our families what is important, and we imitate those behaviors when we have families of our own. We aren’t just doing good to make ourselves feel good or because society tells us to. We are sharing our talents, in love, because Christ told us to, and because he told us that when we serve one another, we are serving Him. *“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”* (Matt 25:41)

### **Fight Fair**

All families experience conflict. Steer clear of using the Lord’s name in vain in a heated debate. Tell the truth gently, even though it may hurt. We all know that God calls for us to honor our father and mother in the Commandments, but it goes deeper than that alone.

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SAINT BRIGID OF KILDARE

Adapted from Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 10  
*Things that Make for a Great Catholic Family*

# Faith-Based Ways to Build Emotional Resiliency

## Say You Are Sorry

We all make mistakes and we all fall into sin sometimes. When we do this, it is important to say we are sorry and ask for forgiveness, so the wound we created can heal. Parents need to say aloud when they are wrong and ask for forgiveness from their children. This will make it easier for kids to do the same. On the cross, Jesus asked God to “*forgive them (those who crucified him) for they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23:34)

## Forgive Each Other (A Lot)

Forgiveness requires an act of faith and trust. Parents — when you’re wrong, admit it and seek forgiveness, even if that means delivering a sincere apology to a toddler. Your kids will see that forgiveness is not automatic and must be sought in order to be received. Try experiencing the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a family. Likewise, parents need to forgive their children and point out that this is what our Father in heaven does for us as well, everyday, any time we ask. When you forgive your child, remember not to continue to bring up the offense. This is not what Jesus would do to us (as we see in the story of the prodigal son). Teach your children that Reconciliation is a special sacrament where we get to hear from the priest that God forgives us, and receive the grace to avoid whatever we did wrong.

## Listen for God’s Voice

It seems that God talks to us in a mere whisper in the middle of our busy lives. Take time to pause and notice the holy moments, perhaps at bedtime or in the car, when we share our true selves with one another and genuinely enjoy each other’s presence. Turn off electronics for a time. Read, pray, meditate, or daydream. Give God the chance to speak! Talk to your kids about listening for God’s voice in their lives: in prayer, at Mass, and by seeing and hearing Jesus in other people. Remember Samuel hearing God calling him by name? This might not happen to us directly, but we can teach our kids to listen for God’s voice in our lives and to recognize when we hear His call. Use these words with your kids: “Maybe God is calling you to that,” or “What do you think God is saying to you in this situation?”

## Help Your Kids to Look for Hope

Our kids are all going to go through heartache, sorrow, anxiety and feel pressure in their lives. It may be with their friends, their sports, their academics and their boyfriends or girlfriends. We can’t save them from this heartache and we shouldn’t try to. God gave us our feelings, all of them, and they all serve a purpose. Feeling sorrow or grief may someday lead to gratitude and joy. Feeling anxiety or pressure should be a sign for us to re-evaluate what we are doing and slow down. In these moments when our kids are struggling, we need to be there for them. Sit with them. Cry with them. We can’t solve their problems. We could save them from some pain, but then they won’t learn how to deal with pain and come out the other side of it. In these circumstances, we should help them to know that there is always hope and things will get better. Again, try your best to model hope for your child. “*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*” (Isaiah 41:10) *For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* (Jer 29:11) *“but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”* (Isaiah 40:31) *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil 4:6-7)

