



FAILURE IS GOOD MEDICINE

By Wilson McCaskill

Knowing that life can be, and often is, a roller coaster ride of triumphs and testing times, we all want our children to be resilient.

However, much as we may all want resilience, for too many of our children it is in short supply.

Often defined as the ability to, “bounce back” the development of resilience is firmly on the agenda of every school.

An endless list of people from all walks of life exhort the virtue of resilience and all the benefits of being able to “bounce back.”

Even with this concentrated focus on resilience it continues to be in short supply and will remain so until we add and accept “failure” as the key word in its definition.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from failure. Unpleasant as failure may be, it is the essential ingredient in the recipe for developing resilience. Quite simply, you can’t cope with failure or bounce back from it, if you don’t experience it in the first place.

Unfortunately we have been duped into believing that giving our children easy and endless successes will inflate their self-esteem to the point that failure will fail to dent it. Just as you can’t get fit without exercising, you can’t become resilient without encountering and overcoming failure.

For failure not to be debilitating, parents and teachers must set challenges that are just beyond the reach of the child. Challenges should require effort, persistence, the extension of current skills or the acquisition of new skills to be overcome.

Challenges that are impossible to overcome create helplessness and depression. Thankfully teachers are skilled at setting challenges that require students to try, try and try again.

Parents must support and encourage teachers to set these challenges and avoid the trap of thinking that it’s successes alone that teach our children how to survive.

Failure doesn’t have to be catastrophic and for resilient children it isn’t. Failure is good medicine and any child given the right dose, during their formative years, is more than ready to ride the roller coaster of life.

*“Failure is the condiment that gives
success its flavour.”*

Truman Capote