

Raising Kids Who Can Handle Things

**A resilience guide for parents:
helping children discover they're
more capable than they think**

By **Tenneille Quin**

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Hello there and welcome.

Before you dive in, I thought it might help to introduce myself properly. I'm a psychologist. I've spent years studying how people think, feel, cope, connect, unravel a little, and then find their way again. I've worked in clinical settings, sat with people in crisis, and walked alongside individuals and families through some of the hardest seasons of their lives. And somewhere along the way, I noticed something. Psychologists hold a vast amount of knowledge about the human mind, how it works, why it spirals, how it heals, but so much of that information stays in therapy rooms, journal articles, or university lectures. It doesn't always reach the people who could use it most. So this series is my attempt to change that.

Before psychology, I was a police officer and detective. That role taught me things no textbook ever could. I saw what happens when people don't have the tools to make sense of what's happening inside them. When conversations are avoided. When emotions get misread or bottled up. I saw how struggles left unexamined don't stay contained, they ripple outward into families, workplaces, and communities.

What's happening inside us has a way of showing up everywhere else. In how we live. How we lead. How we love. How we speak to ourselves. How we respond when things don't go to plan. And how we show up for the people who matter most.

Here's the hopeful part. When people understand what's happening inside them, when they have language for their experiences and practical tools to work with them, things can start to shift. We can change the outcome.

My hope is that these eBooks bring some of that understanding out into the real world. To you. That they show you your thoughts and feelings are more normal than you think. That they give you practical tools you can actually use. And that they remind you that change is possible and you can create the life you want.

I'm really glad you're here.

Tenneille Quin





Let's start **here**

Have you ever watched your child struggle with something and immediately wanted to make it stop? The friendship problem. The playground disagreement. The homework meltdown. The birthday party they suddenly don't want to go to. Almost before they've finished explaining what's wrong, your brain is already halfway to a solution.

Who can I call? What can I fix? How do I make this easier? How quickly can I make this disappear?

Watching your child struggle is uncomfortable. Sometimes surprisingly uncomfortable. In fact, many parents discover there's something harder than dealing with their child's emotions: dealing with their own emotions about their child's emotions. Underneath all of this sits a question most parents carry around, often without even realising it.

Am I helping them... or am I accidentally getting in the way?

Parenting comes with a strange contradiction. We spend years hoping our children will grow into capable, confident, resilient adults. Yet watching them struggle can feel almost unbearable. The difficulty is that resilience is usually built in exactly the moments we most want to prevent. Which is deeply inconvenient, because protecting our children is the job description.

Children become more resilient by doing something surprisingly ordinary. They come up against something difficult, discover they can survive it, and begin collecting evidence: *I've felt this before. I've handled this before. I can probably handle it again.* That's resilience. It's the child who feels nervous and does it anyway. Who feels disappointed and recovers. Who gets something wrong, learns from it, and tries again. And definitely not the child who never cries, gets frustrated, or falls apart because they were given the wrong coloured cup. (Even when it's somehow identical to the cup they originally asked for.)

The good news is that resilience isn't something children are born with or without. It's built through experience — which means parents have far more influence than they sometimes realise.

Children become more resilient by doing something surprisingly ordinary.



This book focuses on the ordinary challenges of growing up —

the disappointments, nerves, frustrations and setbacks that help children build resilience over time. Of course, many families will also experience times when anxiety becomes something more than everyday nerves. If your child's worries are consistently getting in the way of school, friendships or daily life, that's a different conversation altogether. Childhood anxiety deserves far more than a quick chapter at the end of a resilience guide. Don't worry — we're saving that conversation for another book, and I have a feeling it's one many of us will need.

Before we go any further, let's meet Kate.

Kate is a parent doing her best — which most days looks like finding lost school hats, remembering whose library day it is, and attempting meaningful conversation with children who seem personally committed to answering questions in as few words as possible.

Isla is six. She feels everything loudly — joy, frustration, excitement, disappointment, sometimes all before breakfast. Noah is ten. When something's bothering him, he usually insists he's fine, then wanders around the house looking noticeably less fine than he claims to be. Same household. Same parents. Completely different humans.

You'll get to know them throughout this book. Don't expect dramatic breakthroughs. Resilience usually arrives looking far more ordinary than that — a playground disagreement, a friendship wobble, a lost game of Uno, a child refusing to attend something they were desperately excited about two days earlier. Those moments don't usually feel important at the time. Looking back, they're often the moments that mattered most. That's where Kate's story begins.

The Wind and the Trees

A few years ago, researchers noticed something strange. Inside a giant, sealed ecosystem, trees were growing beautifully — tall, green, healthy-looking. And then some of them started falling over. The problem wasn't disease, or poor soil, or lack of water. There simply wasn't any wind.

Without wind pushing against them, the trees never developed the strength they needed to support themselves. Their roots stayed relatively shallow because they never needed to reach deeper for stability. No pressure, no resistance, no reason to grow stronger.

It's an uncomfortable comparison for parents. Most of us spend years trying to remove the wind — the disappointment, the frustration, the awkward conversation, the thing they don't want to do, the thing they failed at, the thing they might fail at next week. Or, if you're a parent with an active imagination, the thing they might possibly fail at in fifteen years after a spectacular chain of highly unlikely events.

Parents can be remarkably creative when imagining future catastrophes.

The instinct is easy to understand. We love our children. When they're hurting, we hurt. When they're anxious, we feel anxious. When they're struggling, every part of us wants to make life easier. Kate knew that feeling well.

One afternoon, Isla came home from school in tears because a friend had said she didn't want to play with her. Kate felt the pull immediately. *Maybe I should message the teacher. Maybe I should talk to the other parent. Maybe Mia didn't really mean it. Maybe I should fix this.*

Instead, she sat down beside Isla and did something much harder. Very little. She listened. She stayed. She let Isla be upset.

Eventually the tears slowed.

The conversation drifted onto something else. Dinner still needed making. The evening carried on. The friendship hadn't magically repaired itself. Nobody had learned a profound life lesson. There was still no inspirational soundtrack. But something important had happened. Isla had discovered that even big feelings move — they arrive, they stay for a while, and then they leave. She hadn't enjoyed feeling disappointed. She'd simply discovered she could survive it.

That's the part many parents never get to see. Resilience doesn't usually arrive looking dramatic. It looks like a child getting through an ordinary disappointment without anyone rescuing them from it. From the outside, it can feel remarkably similar to doing nothing. It can even feel like you're failing. Meanwhile, your child is quietly collecting evidence: *I did something hard. I got through it. Maybe I can do hard things.*

If you're wondering what to say in moments like this, it doesn't have to be complicated. Often something as simple as

- "I'm really glad you told me,"
- "That sounds hard," or
- "I'm here with you" is enough.

Children don't always need us to have the right answers. They need to know they don't have to carry the feeling by themselves.

Kate didn't realise it yet, but her job was beginning to look different. Less removing every gust of wind. More standing nearby while her children discovered they could stay standing too. That sounds wonderfully sensible when you're reading a parenting book. It's considerably harder when your child is crying in the supermarket and three complete strangers have started offering parenting advice using nothing but their facial expressions.

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Feelings First

Why naming emotions matters more than you think

A little while later, Kate found herself facing another parenting mystery. Isla came home from school, dropped her bag by the door, and disappeared to her room. When Kate looked in a few minutes later, she found her lying face-down across the bed. Not crying. Not talking. Just dramatically existing.

"What's wrong?" Kate asked. A shrug. "Nothing." Parents become surprisingly fluent in the many meanings of nothing. This version clearly meant: *something's wrong, but I haven't worked out how to explain it yet.* Kate waited. Eventually, Isla spoke. "I got the answer wrong in front of everyone."

Kate felt the familiar urge to make it better — *it probably wasn't as bad as you think, I'm sure nobody remembers, I bet everyone gets answers wrong.*

She stopped herself before any of them left her mouth. None of those responses were what Isla needed just yet. "What does it feel like?" she asked. Isla frowned. "I don't know." Kate thought for a moment. "You seem... embarrassed." A pause. "Or maybe disappointed?" Isla was quiet for a few seconds. "Embarrassed," she said.

That single word seemed to change something. Nothing outside the bedroom had changed — tomorrow still felt uncomfortable, the memory was still there. But Isla no longer looked quite so lost inside the feeling. Putting feelings into words doesn't make them disappear —

but once a feeling has a name,
it tends to take up a little less
space.



Kate found herself doing that more often after that. Not analysing, not fixing, just helping her children find words.

- "That looks frustrating."
- "I can see why you'd be disappointed."
- "Ouch... that must have been embarrassing."

The problem didn't disappear. The disappointment didn't vanish. But something about having a word for it seemed to make the feeling less in charge.

By the time Noah reached ten, conversations looked different — mostly because ten-year-old boys have perfected the art of answering every question with a single word. "How was school?" "Fine."
"Everything okay?" "Yep."

Sometimes he really was fine. Sometimes "fine" covered everything from a forgotten homework sheet to an argument with a friend. Kate realised asking bigger questions wasn't helping. So she stopped trying to get Noah to talk about his feelings and started talking about her own instead. "I'm a bit nervous about that meeting." "I felt embarrassed when I realised I'd been talking for two minutes with spinach stuck in my teeth." "I'm getting frustrated. I think I need a minute before I answer that." She wasn't giving Noah a lesson. She was showing him that adults had feelings too — and that those feelings weren't anything to hide.

Weeks passed. Then one afternoon Noah wandered into the kitchen after school. "I'm a bit nervous about tomorrow," he said. Kate almost missed it. No prompting. No guessing. No twenty questions. Just one sentence, small enough that someone else might not have noticed. Kate did.

Children don't suddenly become emotionally aware overnight. It's much less dramatic than that. They collect words, borrow language, hear us describe our own feelings — and somewhere along the way, those words become their own.

Feelings don't stop children from becoming resilient. Learning to recognise them, understand them, and move through them is where resilience begins.

Stop Rescuing

Why helping isn't always helpful

A few weeks later, Kate found herself standing in the school car park having a surprisingly intense internal debate. Noah had forgotten his homework. Again. The homework was sitting on the kitchen bench at home. The school was five minutes away. Kate now had two options — she could drive home, collect it, and deliver it to school, or she could do absolutely nothing and spend the rest of the day wondering whether this counted as good parenting or mild neglect.

Parents face moments like this all the time. Helping feels loving. Responsible. Kind. And sometimes it is. The difficulty is that helping and rescuing can look almost identical from the outside. Both come from good intentions. Both come from love. The difference is what children learn afterwards. Sometimes they discover: *this was hard, but I figured it out*. Other times the lesson is: *when something goes wrong, someone else will sort it out for me*.

Kate knew Noah would survive one forgotten homework assignment. He wasn't distressed. He wasn't overwhelmed. He'd simply forgotten something — which, to be fair, placed him in the same category as most adults. So she left it. The decision lasted about three seconds. Wondering if she'd made the right one lasted the rest of the day.

Feelings don't stop children from becoming resilient. Learning to recognise them, understand them, and move through them is where resilience begins.



It's remarkable how quickly a parent's imagination can fill in the gaps.

By lunchtime, Kate had mentally rehearsed at least half a dozen possible disasters — Noah getting detention, Noah feeling humiliated, Noah deciding school was pointless, Noah's entire future somehow being derailed by one forgotten maths worksheet. Parents can be wonderfully irrational when the people they love are involved.

When Noah climbed into the car that afternoon, he looked annoyed. "A bit of a rough day?" Kate asked. "I got in trouble." "I thought you might." There was a pause. "I'm putting my homework in my bag tonight." That was it. No speeches. No dramatic life lesson. Just one small decision from a ten-year-old who'd rather not repeat the experience.

Driving home, Kate realised something. The hardest part hadn't been Noah forgetting his homework. It had been resisting the urge to rescue him from the consequences. When our children are distressed, we feel it too. Their anxiety pulls on ours. Their disappointment lands somewhere inside us as well. Sometimes stepping in is exactly the right thing to do. Sometimes it isn't. One of the hardest questions in parenting is learning the difference.

After that, Kate started catching herself in other moments — at cafés when Isla looked to her to order lunch, during homework when Noah became frustrated after getting stuck, after football when one of them wanted to quit because they hadn't played well. Each moment brought the same quiet question. Do they really need my help? Or do they need a chance to discover they can do this themselves? Those aren't always the same thing.

None of this means standing back while children become overwhelmed. If Isla had been frightened, Kate would have stepped in. If Noah had genuinely needed help, she would have helped. Resilience isn't built by leaving children to cope alone — it's built when children face challenges that stretch them, while knowing someone they trust is still nearby. A friendship problem. Ordering at a café. Forgetting homework. Trying again after a disappointing result. None of those moments seem especially important on their own, yet they're exactly the sort of moments where children start collecting evidence about themselves. Not because somebody told them they were capable. Because they experienced being capable.

Stay, Don't Solve

Kate saw it again a few weeks later when Isla came home upset after another disagreement with a friend. Within thirty seconds, her brain had generated approximately seventeen possible solutions — talk to the teacher, message the other parent, arrange a playdate, explain the misunderstanding, facilitate a reconciliation summit, potentially involve the United Nations. She smiled to herself. Then asked a different question. *What if Isla can handle more of this than I think?*

She didn't ignore it. She listened. She stayed close. She let Isla work through the disappointment. A few days later, the friendship had blown over, as childhood friendships often do. Life carried on.

The following week, Kate watched Noah zip up his school bag before they left. Then he stopped, opened it again, checked his homework. Without saying a word, he zipped it closed, slung it over his shoulder, and headed for the door. Kate picked up her keys and followed him. She didn't mention it. She didn't need to.

Why some feelings need company more than solutions

Some parenting moments aren't really about solving anything. A forgotten homework assignment can be fixed. A friendship misunderstanding usually works itself out. But sometimes children aren't facing a problem. They're facing a feeling.

Kate discovered that one Tuesday afternoon in the supermarket. It began with a perfectly ordinary parental decision. "No." Unfortunately, the thing she'd said no to appeared to be the single most important object in the entire building. Within seconds, Isla was on the floor — crying, yelling, heartbroken. It was the sort of supermarket tantrum that causes complete strangers to become intensely interested in the nutritional information on nearby cereal boxes while somehow managing to keep the entire situation under surveillance.

Kate could feel the familiar rush inside her. *Make this stop.* Her brain was wonderfully efficient. Offer an alternative. Promise something later. Pick her up. Leave the trolley. Buy the thing. Do literally anything that gets everyone out of aisle seven before somebody starts making sympathetic faces. Then she noticed something. Nothing was actually wrong — not in the sense that anything needed fixing. Isla wasn't unsafe. She wasn't being cruel. She was disappointed. Very, very disappointed.

Kate took a slow breath. Then another. It wasn't really for Isla. It was for herself. One of the surprising things about parenting is that our children's emotions don't stay neatly inside them — they spill into us. Their anxiety makes us anxious. Their embarrassment makes us uncomfortable. Their distress wakes something up in our own nervous system. Psychologists call this co-regulation. The name sounds technical, but the idea is wonderfully ordinary. Children gradually learn to calm themselves by borrowing the calm of someone else — which means, in moments like this, the first person who needs calming isn't always the child.

Kate crouched beside Isla. "You're really upset." Isla cried harder. Kate didn't tell her she was overreacting. She didn't point out that there were plenty of other toys. She didn't try to convince her everything was okay. Because from Isla's point of view, it wasn't okay. Not yet. Children don't measure emotions the way adults do — they respond to what the moment feels like to them. The toy barely mattered. The disappointment mattered enormously.

So Kate stayed. She rested a hand on her back and rubbed slow circles between her shoulders. Every so often she quietly reminded her, "You're really upset." There was nothing to solve just yet. Isla needed someone willing to stay with her while the feeling ran its course. Kate didn't rush it. She didn't argue with it or try to talk Isla out of it. She simply stayed close. It felt much longer than it probably was. Eventually Isla's breathing changed. The sobbing became sniffles, then silence. A few minutes later, Isla was explaining, with complete confidence, why bananas were the most boring fruit ever invented. Children are wonderfully unpredictable. The feeling hadn't been permanent after all. That's one of the hardest things for parents to trust. Big emotions feel endless while we're standing in the middle of them, especially when it feels as though half the supermarket is judging your every parenting move. They rarely are. Each time a child comes out the other side of disappointment, frustration or sadness, they're learning something they could not have learned if someone had removed the feeling too quickly. They're discovering that even the biggest feelings eventually loosen their grip—and that they can make it through to the other side.

Kate noticed the same pattern with Noah, although it looked completely different. Ten-year-olds rarely lie on supermarket floors — they tend to retreat instead. One afternoon Noah came home from school, dropped his bag beside the couch, and sat staring at the wall. Kate recognised the temptation immediately — ask questions, find out what happened, come up with a plan. Instead she sat nearby. After a while Noah spoke. "Today was terrible." "Yeah?" A nod. Another silence. Then another sentence. By the time dinner was ready, she'd heard the whole story. Kate hadn't solved anything. She'd simply given Noah enough space to tell it in his own time.

It's easy to underestimate how powerful that can be. Adults aren't very different — most of us don't want someone to solve our worst day before we've even finished describing it. We want someone who listens first. Children usually want the same thing. There will often be time for solutions later. But feelings tend to soften once they've been heard.



The Discomfort Muscle

Most of us assume confidence comes first — you feel confident, then you do the hard thing. Unfortunately, confidence doesn't seem to have received that memo. More often, it arrives afterwards. You do the hard thing, you survive it, and your brain quietly updates its opinion of what you're capable of. Children are no different. The tricky part is that parents often mistake nervousness for unreadiness. As parents, it's easy to read nerves as a sign we've asked too much. Sometimes that's true. More often, though, nerves are simply what growth feels like from the inside. The goal isn't to remove that feeling — it's to help children discover they can carry it and do the thing anyway.

Kate realised she'd accidentally become Isla's spokesperson. Somewhere along the way, ordering at cafés had quietly become a two-person operation — Isla whispered her order into Kate's ear, Kate translated it into adult volume, and everyone carried on as though this arrangement had always existed. One Saturday, Kate decided to change the script. The cashier smiled. "And what can I get for you today?" Isla immediately looked at Kate.

Kate noticed the same pattern with Noah.

He'd been talking about joining the local football team for months, but every week there was a new reason to wait. "I don't know anyone." "What if I'm terrible?" "What if everyone else is better?" To be fair, those are fairly reasonable concerns — they're also remarkably similar to the thoughts many adults have before walking into networking events. Kate realised Noah wasn't really deciding whether he liked football. He was deciding whether he could tolerate feeling awkward. "You don't have to be good at it today," she said. "You just have to turn up."

The first session wasn't exactly enjoyable. There was a lot of standing around looking like he'd accidentally wandered into the wrong group. Kate resisted every urge to rescue him — she didn't introduce him to everyone, she didn't explain he was nervous, she didn't suggest they leave early and try again another time. She stayed. He stayed. It would have been easy to call the afternoon a disappointment. Noah hadn't come home buzzing. But success, Kate was learning, wasn't measured by whether he'd loved it. It was measured by whether he'd gone.

Why confidence usually arrives after the scary part

The silence probably lasted three seconds. To Isla, it felt closer to thirty. To Kate... somewhere around three business days. Eventually, in a voice only slightly louder than a whisper, Isla ordered her drink. "Great choice," the cashier smiled. And that was it. Nobody clapped. Nobody in the café even noticed. Which is worth remembering, because children often assume everyone is watching them. Adults, meanwhile, are usually just trying to remember whether they ordered the large coffee or the medium one.

On the way to the car, Kate tried to name what she'd noticed — not the result, but the effort. "You looked nervous, and you still did it." "That took courage." "I bet that felt easier once you'd started." The aim wasn't to convince Isla she'd been brilliant. It was to help her notice the evidence she'd just collected about herself. That's how confidence grows — not from hearing "You can do it," but from quietly discovering, *oh... I just did.*

A few weeks later, Kate noticed something interesting. Football wasn't any easier. Noah hadn't become a different child. He'd simply done it enough times to realise he could cope. Confidence, it turns out, is often just evidence remembered.

Once Kate started looking for these moments, she saw them everywhere — ordering lunch, answering a question in class, walking into a birthday party, introducing yourself to another child, speaking to the shop assistant instead of communicating exclusively through your parent's leg. None of these moments look particularly significant. Together, though, they quietly become evidence: *I've done something uncomfortable before. I can probably do it again.*

Kate then noticed something similar during family board games. For years she'd quietly let Noah win every now and then — it seemed like the kind thing to do — until one day he looked at her and said, "You're letting me win."

Children have an extraordinary ability to notice exactly the thing you'd hoped they never would.



So Kate stopped. They played properly. Sometimes Noah won. Sometimes he lost. The first few games were... memorable. Apparently Uno was now “the worst game ever invented” — an interesting development, given it had been his favourite game approximately twelve minutes earlier. Over time, though, something shifted. Losing stopped feeling catastrophic. It became disappointing. Then frustrating. Then simply part of the game. He discovered he could lose, recover, and happily play again the next day.

It turns out children don't just learn how to win through play.

They learn how to lose, how to be disappointed, how to keep going when things don't go their way.

And those lessons have a habit of showing up long after the cards have been packed away. The moments shaping her children's confidence rarely looked remarkable at the time — a café order, a football training session, a game of Uno briefly declared the worst invention in human history. Individually, they didn't seem like much. Together, they were quietly building something far more valuable than confidence. Evidence that said: *I've done hard things before. I can probably do them again.*

Growing Strong

Knowing when to step in... and when to step back

By now, Kate had started noticing something interesting. The moments that seemed to build the most confidence were rarely the ones where she had all the answers. More often, they were the moments where she resisted giving them. That didn't come naturally. Like most parents, she'd become remarkably efficient at solving other people's problems.

A missing school jumper? She'd probably find it first. Forgotten homework? She already knew where it was. Friendship disagreement? She'd mentally drafted three possible conversations before the story had even finished. Parents become excellent problem-solvers. Sometimes a little too excellent.

One morning Noah came flying through the house. “I can’t find my sports bag!” Kate knew exactly where it was. She’d seen it in the laundry the night before. For a second she nearly answered. Then she stopped herself. “Where have you looked?” “Everywhere.” Kate smiled. “Everywhere’s a pretty big place.” Noah sighed dramatically. “My room.” “The hallway.” “The garage.” “What was the last place you remember having it?” He stopped. Thought for a moment. Walked into the laundry. Thirty seconds later he came back carrying the bag. “Found it.” Kate hadn’t taught Noah where the bag was. She’d taught him how to think when he couldn’t find it. Those are very different lessons.

This is one of the quiet traps of parenting.

Every time we solve a problem for a child, we remove an opportunity for them to solve it themselves. Of course, children need help — they’re not expected to independently navigate tax returns or negotiate mortgage repayments. And there are moments when stepping in is exactly right: when they’re genuinely overwhelmed, unsafe, or facing something beyond what they’re developmentally ready for. But many of the everyday problems they’re capable of solving disappear before they’ve even had a chance to try.

Over time, those small opportunities matter. Children slowly build a picture of themselves. Some children learn: “Someone will fix this.” Others slowly collect evidence that says: “I can usually work this out.” That’s the picture we’re trying to build.

Kate started changing one small habit. Instead of answering every question immediately, she answered with another question. “What do you think?” “What could you try first?” “What’s another possibility?”

At first, both children found this mildly irritating. “Can’t you just tell me?” Sometimes she did. Sometimes she didn’t. There wasn’t a scorecard. Kate wasn’t trying to avoid helping. She was simply getting better at noticing when her children needed an answer and when they needed a chance to find one for themselves.

Over time, something shifted. One afternoon, Noah was sitting at the kitchen table, stuck on a maths problem. Kate watched him from across the room. He stared at it. Tapped his pencil. Then, almost to himself: “Hmm. What else could I try?” He didn’t look up. He didn’t ask for help. He just tried something different. Kate didn’t say anything. But she noticed. That was her voice — the question she’d been asking him for months. He’d borrowed it without realising. And one day, it would simply become his own.

The same thing happened after difficult days. When Noah came eighth in the school cross-country, he climbed into the car without saying much. Kate knew better than to tell him it didn’t matter. It mattered enormously to him. Instead she waited. Then asked, “What are you proud of?” He looked out the window for a while. “I didn’t stop.” “No. You didn’t.”

She could have said “You were brilliant.” She could have said “Eighth is great!” But those words would have slipped off. What she’d pointed to instead was something Noah had actually done — something he could keep. Children hear a lot of praise. “You’re clever.” “You’re amazing.” “You’re so talented.” The words are kind, but they accidentally teach children something fragile. If being clever is who I am... what happens when I get something wrong?

Instead, Kate found herself saying different things:

- “I saw how hard you worked.”
- “You kept going.”

- “You didn’t give up.”
- “You were kind.”
- “You tried again.”

Those are the qualities children carry into the next difficult thing. The challenge might be different, but they won’t be walking into it empty-handed.

One evening, after dinner, Kate asked both children the same two questions. “What was hard today?” “And what are you proud of?” Isla said her hard thing was a falling-out with a friend at lunch. Her proud thing was that she’d still said hello to her at the end of the day. Noah’s hard thing was the maths test. His proud thing was that he’d checked his answers twice instead of handing it in straightaway. Kate hadn’t coached either of those answers. She’d just asked the questions.

Some nights, of course, the answers were: “Dunno.” “Nothing.” And occasionally: “Can I go now?” Children aren’t famous for consistently producing deep emotional reflections on demand. But slowly, the questions became familiar. The hard thing. The proud thing. Both belonged. Both were worth talking about.

And that, Kate realised, was probably resilience in its simplest form. Not pretending difficult things don’t happen. Not celebrating struggle for the sake of it. Just learning that every hard experience contains two stories.

What happened to me. And what I did next.

Children have an extraordinary ability to notice exactly the thing you’d hoped they never would.



Before You Go

Kate still got it wrong. She still stepped in too quickly sometimes, still answered questions her children were perfectly capable of answering themselves, still found herself halfway through solving a problem before remembering she'd been trying not to. Old habits don't disappear overnight. Especially when those habits are built from love.

But something had changed. She no longer felt responsible for making life smooth. Her job wasn't to remove every uncomfortable feeling or solve every difficult moment before it reached her children. It was to stay close enough that they knew they weren't facing those moments alone — and to step back often enough for them to discover what they could do without her.

The wind hadn't gone anywhere. There were still friendship dramas, still football matches that didn't go to plan, still tears over homework, still mornings when somebody couldn't find a shoe that was somehow exactly where they'd left it. Life was still wonderfully ordinary. The difference was that Kate no longer saw those moments as signs that something had gone wrong. More often, they were simply opportunities to collect a little more evidence.

"I've felt this before."

"I've handled this before."

"I can probably handle it again."

Not because struggle is worth chasing, or because difficult moments are enjoyable. But because children grow by doing things they couldn't quite do yesterday. Sometimes that growth is obvious. More often, it isn't — it hides inside ordinary days, inside supermarket meltdowns and awkward café orders and board games briefly declared the worst game ever invented and football training that almost didn't happen and homework that takes three attempts instead of one.

Most parents don't notice resilience while it's being built. They notice it months later. The child who once hid behind their parent's leg walks up to the counter and orders for themselves. The child who once gave up keeps going. The child who once waited for someone else to fix the problem starts looking for an answer of their own. Those moments rarely feel remarkable — until you look back and realise how far they've come.

And perhaps that's the most reassuring thought of all. You don't have to raise fearless children. You don't have to get every parenting decision right. You don't have to protect your children from every gust of wind they'll ever face. You just have to help them discover, one ordinary day at a time, that they're stronger than they think.

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**Impacting 10
Million Lives
in 10 Years**