RESILIENCE

In 2014, Andrew Fuller, one of Australia’s well-known child and adolescent psychologists, conducted a study about resilience involving approximately 16,000 Aussie youths. The children who were most resilient almost universally agreed with two statements that children with the lowest resilience disagreed with. They were:

1. I have a parent who cares about me.
2. I have a parent who listens to me.

Take a moment and ask yourself would my children say ‘yes’ to those two statements? What made you feel cared about as a child, when did you feel listened to and most importantly, how did feeling cared about and heard make you feel? If you are like me, it is not the big holidays or major events that built your sense of worth and resilience. Instead it was the consistent, small interactions that added layer upon layer upon layer to your feelings that you were valued for who you were.

Here is a list of a few things you might be able to do, starting today, to help your children feel cared for and heard.

1. **Stop saying “I’m busy”**
   When we are too busy for our children, when we are rushing them, they suffer. They withdraw. They miss out on opportunities to connect with us. When they are older, our relationship with them will suffer.

2. **Turn off your smartphone**
   There may be no greater sign that you care, and that you will listen, than to put away your phone – or at least put it in flight mode – when your children want your attention. Studies show, definitively, that the mere presence of a phone detracts from the quality of our conversations. Put the phone away when you are talking.

3. **Turn off screens**
   Make certain parts of the day screen-free. No TV. No tablets. No phones. Just focus on the people in front of you. That means no texting, reading or playing games. It means no beeps, pings, whistles or reminders. It’s just you, your kids and conversation. Perhaps it might be at meal times. Maybe it could be while you travel. When you decide to do it is less important than making the decision.

4. **Make eye contact**
   When your children want to connect and communicate with you, pause what you are doing and look them in the eye. Physically turn towards them and pay attention to them in a way that makes it clear to them you really are right there.

5. **Listen**
   Sometimes our children come to us with problems. When they do, just listen. When they tell you about a friendship drama, a challenge on the netball team, another difficulty, ask them to tell you all about it. Listen carefully. When they are finished, ask “what do you think you should do?” and listen again. Usually that’s enough. You don’t have to solve their problems. The answers are inside them.


*Craig Underwood – THPS School Chaplain*