



# Keep Trying (Perseverance)

“Children SEE – Children DO”

RIRO Resilience Activity Module for Parents and Children (birth to 7 years)

## INTRODUCTION

This module contains fun activities for parents and children that promote resilience by encouraging perseverance. Each activity takes less than 20 minutes. The activities can be done “as is” or be accompanied by discussion about the importance of persevering. This module complements *Flexible Thinking*, *Being Calm* and *Understanding Feelings* modules.

## RESOURCES in this MODULE

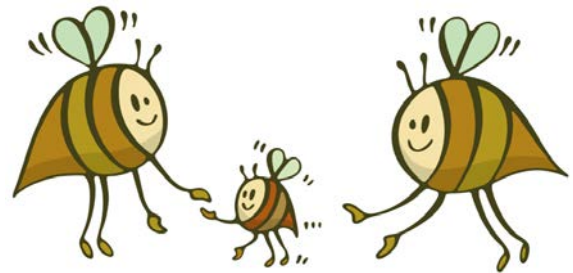
- **GRAB & GO** – activities for facilitators working with individual parents and children (pp. 1-2)
- **Group activities** – plus homework, other resiliency resources and engagement strategies (pp. 3-5)
- **Parent Tip Sheet** and **Poste** – parent handout with ideas on activities that support perseverance

## KEY CONCEPTS

- The ability to keep trying when things don't work at first supports our resilience by helping us develop necessary skills and solutions.
- Accomplishment may take many steps and lots of practice. Making mistakes and asking for help are just part of learning new things.
- When parents model perseverance and show that mistakes are OK, children learn to keep on trying.
- Encouragement to keep trying, as opposed to instruction, can help children feel proud of their accomplishments.

## MATERIALS NEEDED (depending on activity)

- Paper, scissors
- Pencil, crayon, markers
- Cotton balls or wads of paper
- Watch with second hand or timer



## PREPARATION/ ONLINE RESOURCES

- [www.reachinginreachingout.com](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com) (RIRO professional resources)
- <http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents-confidence.htm>
- <http://www.values.com/inspirational-stories-tv-spot/85-The-Wall> (Video – a boy perseveres in learning to build a brick wall with his father's support.)

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## ACTIVITIES

While these are meant to be fun activities, parents may find it helpful if facilitators explain: 1) the role that perseverance plays in the development of resilience, and 2) how children learn to keep trying by watching their parents persevere in everyday life.

### #1: “Keep on Trying” Wiggle”

#### Parent

- Explain the main activity (see activity description on p. 2 under “Parent and child”)
- Help parent plan for the activity by discussing:
  - What will help the child to keep trying?

- What encouraging things can the parent say?
- Highlight modeling, encouragement, patience and acceptance of mistakes.
- (Optional) You may also wish to talk with the parent about what has helped him/her persevere in the past – help parent to realize what is helpful to him/her may also help the child keep trying.

Ask parent:

- What helped you to face a situation that required you to keep trying?
- What were your thoughts about trying again and again?
- What are things others did that helped you?
- What did you want to hear from others?

### Parent and child

- Use a ball or balloon or other handy object (e.g., Kleenex box, toilet paper roll).
- Have parent and child hold the ball between their bodies while standing face-to-face.
- Without the ball falling, the goal is to try to move:
  - across the room
  - through a door.
- This activity can also be done in a sitting position on the floor (side-to-side) (e.g., ball is between parent and child's hips or shoulder).
- Encourage parent and child to keep on trying to accomplish activity.

### #2: "Cotton ball hockey" (parent and child)

- Use a cotton ball (or small paper wad) for the "puck".
- The parent and child then blow the puck across the table or floor.
- Parent and child can be across from each other and try to get "a goal" by blowing the puck into the other's hands, or other defined spot on opposite ends.
- Parents and child can work together to blow the puck into a specific place ("the goal").
- Help parent to think of a slightly harder task (e.g., a smaller goal or one further away).
- Encourage parent and child to persist in practicing. When that is done, another "goal" can be set.
- Parent and child can see themselves, as they practice, getting better on making goals.
- Can give stars or "high fives" each time parent and child get closer to the goal.



### #3: "Perseverance paper puzzle" (parent and child)

- Draw a picture and cut (or tear) it into pieces. (It may be more meaningful if it is the child's hand or foot tracing, or a picture of something they want to do or be in the future.)
- See how fast parent and child can put it together. Repeat, then try again – and again. Comment on how the child gets faster (or more creative, or neater, or more confident or calmer, etc.) with repetition.

### #4: "Perseverance story" (parent and child)

- Read story about a character who perseveres (see suggested books on p. 5).
- Have parent ask what else the character could do, and then, tell child the benefits of perseverance.

### #5: "Parent and infant activities"

- Pick a developmentally-appropriate task and plan with the parent how to encourage the child to meet the task, e.g., learning to take food from a spoon.
- Help parent start with small steps to accomplish this – e.g., help infant to get used to seeing the spoon, then touching the spoon, feeling the spoon on lips, spoon in the mouth, spoon with food, etc.

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

*NOTE: These activities are designed for professionals and paraprofessionals who have completed RIRO Resiliency Skills Training Program and who have group facilitation experience.*

### Parent group (no children)

- Have parents do Activity #1 (parent version) starting on p. 1.
- Discuss the experience of doing the activity.
- Introduce content on perseverance.
- Ask:
  - What helps people keep on trying?
  - Has anyone helped them persevere? What did that person do?
  - What were their thoughts about “keeping on trying”?
- Brainstorm and then have parents create a list of what they can do to help their children persevere. (Make sure to highlight modeling, encouragement, patience, and acceptance of mistakes.)
- Share other perseverance activities (pp. 1-2) and “Take home” activities (see bottom this page).

### Parent-child group

- Have parents and children do Activity #1 (parent-child version) on p. 2.
- Use descriptive feedback to comment on how continued trying helped them make progress.
- Highlight modeling, encouragement, patience, and acceptance of mistakes.
- Discuss the importance of perseverance.
- Discuss differences in their performance, attitude to achievement and relationships.
- Parent and child pairs do another round of the same or another activity while parent focuses on encouragement, role modeling and fun.
- Discuss what helped their children.

### Facilitators’ suggestions

- Some of these activities work better in group format than with individual parents.
- Facilitators can “stage” making mistakes by dropping the ball to role model that mistakes are OK.

### TAKE HOME OPTIONS (for individuals or group)

- Continue cotton ball hockey (or other fun activity) – point out when child gets better with practice.
- Say “out loud” the steps parent takes to get things done – like making dinner, buying groceries, getting your child dressed – this helps children learn the need to persevere in everyday life.
- Share stories and real-life community examples of people who keep trying.
- By words and expression, parent lets child know s/he is pleased when the child keeps trying. Even infants can recognize a parent’s attitude.
- To help children stay calm when trying new things, parents can use a “try three times, then take a break” method.

## THINGS PARENTS CAN SAY TO THEIR CHILDREN

### Encouragement

- *“I see you’re trying; I bet you’ll get it soon.”*
- *“You figured it out.”*
- *“I bet we can learn something from this mistake – what do you think?”*

- *“It is fun to try to get better at something.”*
- *“It may be hard, but let’s see if you can do it.”*
- *“Keep trying.”*

### Small steps

- *“First you did \_\_\_\_\_, then you tried \_\_\_\_\_, then you asked a question. What’s next?”*  
(point out steps)

## SUGGESTED OPENINGS/ APPROACHES WITH PARENT AND CHILD

### Role modeling...

#### Role model with parent (examples):

- *“I haven’t yet been able to figure out where is the best place to park at your building. I have tried at the front and in the back. Next time I will try the right side and see if it is easier to get out.”*
- *“I know I have the paper here somewhere...hmm, it’s not in my pocket, not in my briefcase. Oh, here it is in my purse. I am glad I kept looking.”*

#### Role model with parent and child (examples):

- *“I bet if you let (child's name) try again, he can reach that toy. Let's see.”*
- *“What else can we do for this drawing?”*

### Questions you could ask...

- *“How long would your child sit and try a task before he got frustrated or you did it for him? Allowing your child to keep trying helps him learn. If he can see you being patient with him trying, he will be more comfortable to keep learning.”*
- *“Are there things your child has a hard time getting done? What about you?”*

### Things you could say...

- *“Remember when your child (started to walk/ learned to sit, talk, etc.)? S/he really had to work hard and keep trying. Not giving up helps children persist until they find something that will work.”*
- *“You can encourage your child to keep on trying by things you do with him/her, what you say and how you respond.”*
- *“Allowing your child to keep working on things to figure them out builds persistence.”*

### Things you could point out...

#### About the child:

- The child kept trying
- Ways that s/he tried
- When the child gets frustrated (and could use some encouragement)
- Reasonable expectations for the child's stage of development

#### About the parent:

- When s/he watches and is patient with the child
- Ways that the parent has persevered (e.g., raising the child, working with the service provider, etc.) and how that has made some positive change
- How the parent encourages the child to persevere

#### About the community:

- Any relevant community figure in the news who is demonstrating perseverance (could also be a point for supporting empathy and participation)
- How people in the community persevere for success – e.g., a grocer down the road, etc.

## OTHER RESOURCES

### Books

- RIRO Children’s Booklists to support resilience on RIRO’s website:  
[www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-booksKids.htm](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-booksKids.htm)

- Selected storybooks about “perseverance”:

Carle, E., **The Very Busy Spider** (1984)

*A spider works hard to create her web.* (Recommended for children 1 yrs.+)

James, S., **Little One Step** (2003)

*With his older brother’s encouragement, a baby duck discovers that if you take one step at a time, you eventually get where you are going.*(Recommended for children 3 yrs.+)

Henkes, K., **Kitten’s First Full Moon** (2004)

*Kitten tries all kinds of ways to reach the “saucer full of milk” she sees when she looks at the full moon.* (Recommended for children 2 yrs.+)

Oxenbury, H., **Tom and Pippo and the Bicycle** (1993)

*Tom is frustrated when his stuffed animal, Pippo, keeps falling off the back of his bike. However, his older friend helps him make a seat for Pippo and reassures him that someday he will have a big bike, too.* (Recommended for children 18 months+)

Pomerantz, C., **Flap Your Wings and Try** (1989)

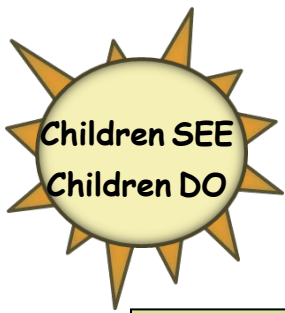
*A baby bird wishes he could fly like the older birds in his family. With his sister’s encouragement, he finds out that all he has to do is try.* (Recommended for children 2 yrs.+)

Tolstoy, A., **The Great Big Enormous Turnip** (1968)

*A farmer and all his relatives persevere until they finally yank an enormous turnip from the earth.* (Recommended for children 2 yrs.+)

Watanabe, S., **I Can Build a House** (1982)

*A young bear is determined to build a playhouse that doesn’t fall over. With some imagination and problem solving, he succeeds.*(Recommended for children 18 months+)



# Keep Trying

When parents keep trying and offer encouragement, children learn to keep trying, too.  
Learning from mistakes helps us grow and keep trying as we face life's challenges.

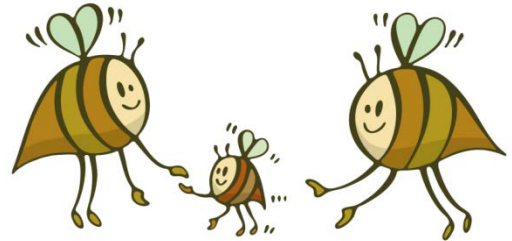
## SHARE your 'keep trying' outlook and patience with your child...

- **Offer encouragement**

- "I think you can do it. Keep trying."
- "You really want to learn how to do that."
- "Let's see how much you can do."

- **Show them that mistakes are OK**

- "Everyone makes mistakes. That's how we learn."
- "That's OK. Mistakes help us know what to do differently the next time."



- **Tell them progress takes practice**

- "You may not get it right the first few times, but that's OK. It takes practice to learn new things."
- "You kept trying to put the puzzle together. And, look, you only have a few pieces to go!"

- **Talk about how you keep trying**

- "First, I get the broom, and the dustpan, then I sweep, and then I put the dirt in the trash can."
- "I am so glad I kept trying. Look, I learned how to fix the lamp."

- **Point out people or characters who keep trying**

- "Look at the baby learning to walk. She keeps falling down, but then she gets back up."
- "The little red engine kept on trying. It was hard, but he finally got up the hill."

## ASK your child about trying...

- "How about trying again? I think you can do it"
- "What do you need to help you start?"



## PAUSE and THINK about different times you can encourage your child...

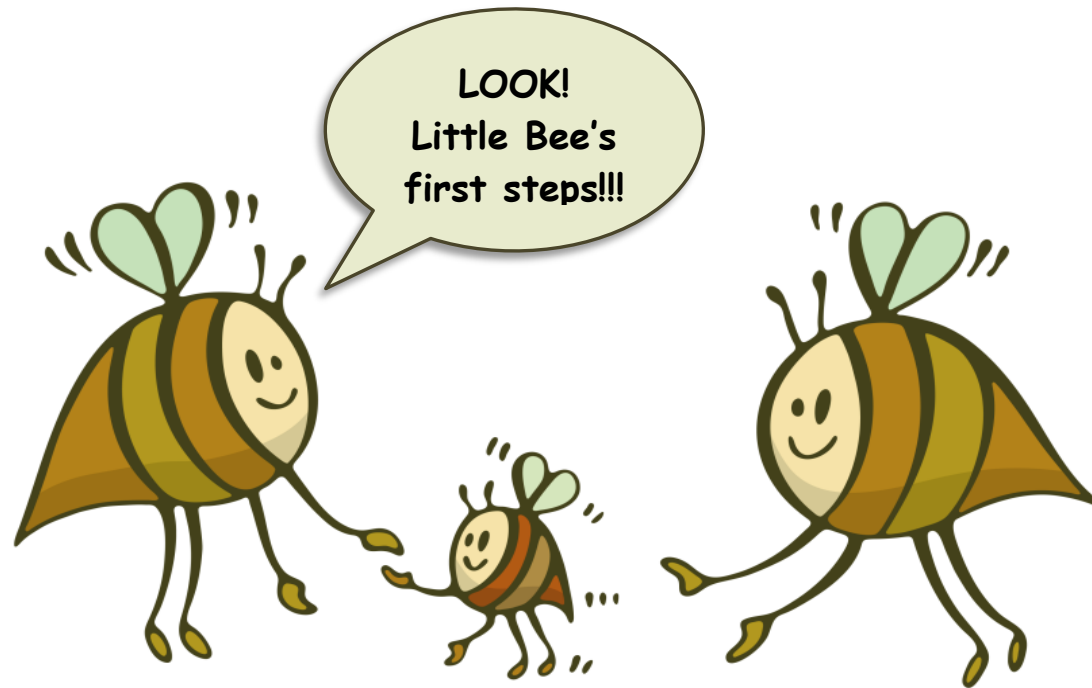
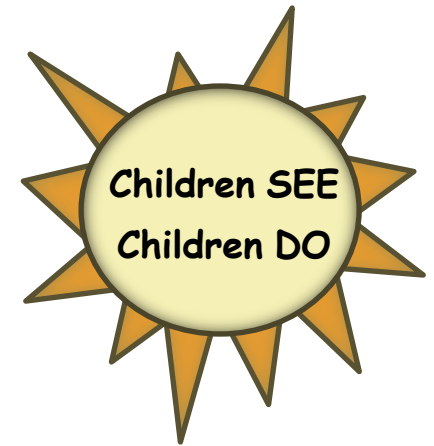
- When your child is playing
- Learning something new
- Getting dressed
- When s/he is frustrated or discouraged

## AND babies and toddlers, too!

- Give them lots of time and encouragement as they practice new skills. "You almost reached your rattle! Try again. There, you got it!"
- Help them learn new things one small step at a time.

More FREE online resources to build your child's resilience

[www.reachinginreachingout.com/parents](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/parents) (videos, books, parent stories, articles, newsletter and more)



You can do it - keep trying!