

Supporting Children's Well-being and Building Resilience as Our Climate Changes

A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

As a caregiver, you can have a positive influence on your child's life by being a transformative mentor who bolsters their resilience, particularly as our climate changes. This guide is intended for anyone who cares for children, with information and age-appropriate recommendations to build their resilience and support well-being in a changing climate.

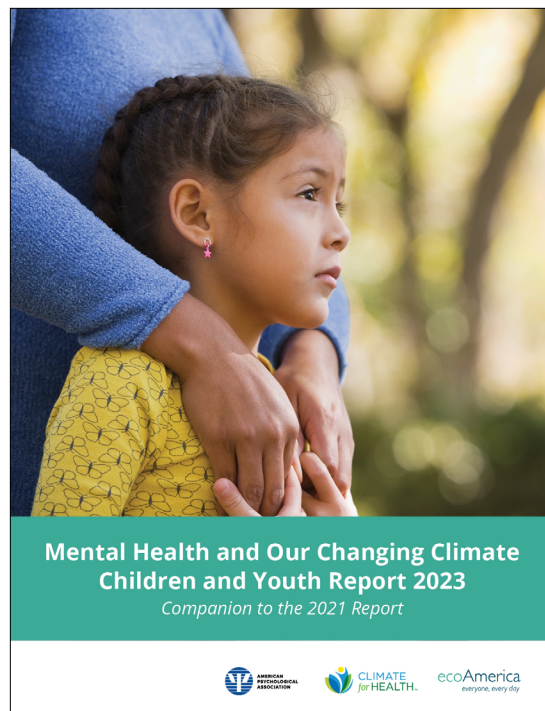
Family Support Matters

Family support is essential for children's mental and emotional health, especially during crises. Studies show that **children's well-being is closely tied to caregivers' own well-being**. Parents and caregivers who maintain stability and capacity to support their children can help them become more psychologically resilient lifelong. And, mental and physical health are linked; **the healthier the family life, the healthier the child**.

Support Yourself First

Caring for children is easier when you also take care of your own physical and mental health. Here are tips, and more can be found here.

- ✓ Build a trusted circle of support around you — family, friends, neighbors, colleagues — to bolster your own resilience and expand the safety net for your child.
- ✓ Seek mental health support when needed to reduce stress and anxiety.
- ✓ Access community services to help with practical needs (e.g., financial support, housing, food assistance, etc.) to let you focus on supporting your child.



- ✓ Learn about climate change, its impacts, solutions, and ways to engage to support the development stage of your child.

Support Your Children in Age Appropriate Ways



Younger Children:

Need guidance on understanding climate change, managing fears, and finding hope.



Older Children (8+) and Teens:

Need you to listen without judgment, to have honest conversations about their worries, and support for taking action.

Create a Positive and Supportive Environment for your Child

Positive, involved parenting styles are linked to better youth mental health. If they express emotions about climate change:

- ♥ Be open to meaningful conversations; listen to your child's concerns.
- ♥ Avoid dismissing their worries — ask them to name their [emotions](#), then acknowledge and validate them.
- ♥ Show empathy and offer reassurance to help them process their emotions.
- ♥ Seek professional help if your child shows signs of worsening anxiety, depression, or other concerning mental health symptoms.

Help your Child Build Healthy Coping Skills

When speaking to your child about climate change:

- Use **positive, solution-focused language** centering on hope, purpose, and action rather than despair or fatalism.
- **Problem-focused coping strategies** encourage children to directly address the source of their stress while increasing a sense of personal agency.
- This could range from community gardens to more sustainable “green” shopping, to advocacy for climate solutions, or simply having open and honest conversations.
- **Avoid trying to suppress or dismiss their feelings**, as it can lead to worse mental health outcomes and a greater sense of isolation.

Strengthen your Child's Resilience

Helping your child learn how to be resilient can help them now and benefit them lifelong. You can:

Teach and model essential skills to build your child's ability to process the breadth of emotions and situations they may face:

- ☆ **Self-regulation** — Managing emotions, even during stress
- ☆ **Perseverance** — Following through on tasks
- ☆ **Empathy** — Understanding others' feelings
- ☆ **Adaptability** — Flexibility and creativity in problem-solving

Bolster your child's **interpersonal skills** so that they can collaborate with others to take action by coaching them on:

- ☆ Conflict resolution
- ☆ Cooperation

Foster **involvement** to empower children to make an impact because an action is an antidote. Invite them to:

- ☆ Engage with activities around the home such as recycling, reuse, energy conservation
- ☆ Participate in educational or volunteer activities at school or in the community
- ☆ Practice public speaking or advocate for community solutions
- ☆ Connect with youth and climate efforts and organizations in your community and nationally
- ☆ Address and engage people in power

The content of this guide is adapted from the [Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Children and Youth Report 2023](#), a collaborative publication by ecoAmerica and the American Psychological Association. Please refer to pages 36-37 of the report for a full list of guiding resources for Parents and Caregivers.

To learn more about caring for mental health in a changing climate at any age, also refer to our [2021 Edition](#).