

FOSTERING CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN, DURING CANNULATION AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.

TANYA HOSKEN - COUNSELLOR

Like adults, children are far more likely to cooperate graciously in partnership with caregivers/nurses when they are respected and seen as capable people (regardless of their age/condition/sex etc). This is even more crucial in situations, like cannulation, where their level of power, and or control over the situation is limited. Trusting and expecting your child to be an active participant in their own personal care, health care and well being will send a powerful message to your child and build important skills over time. Start by inviting active participation in day to day activities and personal care tasks.

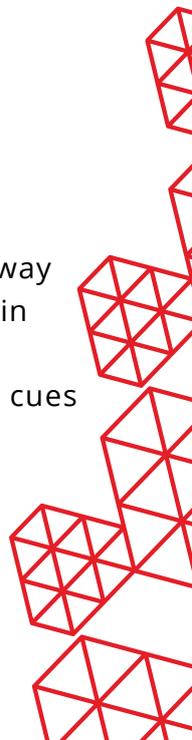
Remember your child doesn't need you to be a perfect parent, the very fact that you are present and caring for them as best you can is enough. The following are ways of building on what you are already doing, that will help foster resilience and confidence in your child's own ability to live and thrive with a lifelong condition.

TIME

Make sure the child is given adequate time to answer your question or to indicate that they have understood what it is you would like them to do. Children's brains are not as developed as adults and they often need more time to respond. Adults often jump in if there is not an instant response. This usually results in the adult providing a 'desirable answer' for the child to agree with. Instead see what happens if you wait another 5-10 seconds. It may feel uncomfortable and perhaps a little awkward, but you will be surprised. A lot can be gained by giving a child the time to understand, respond and prepare. When children are trusted and given adequate respect for their ability to actively participate in their treatment, you not only gain their cooperation, but you also build their confidence to manage and handle hard or challenging situations. It is this confidence that over time builds resilience. Resilience allows us to bounce back from life's inevitable hard times.

CONSENT

It is important children learn about personal boundaries. They need opportunities to practice setting them, as well as learning to respect other peoples. Asking for consent when needing to move, touch or perform a physical examination on a child, is a great way to model healthy boundaries. Remembering that consent can change in time, and within the situation. This means, a 'yes' today, does not mean a 'yes' tomorrow, and a 'yes' to touch my arm is different to a 'yes' to touch my tummy. Use body language and visual cues to make sure the child feels comfortable about what is happening and respond appropriately and respectfully. Advocating for your child when you notice they are feeling unsure or uncomfortable can help support them to develop the skills and words needed to set their own boundaries as they grow older.



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COMMUNICATION

Use direct honest communication. When it comes to information or instructions keep it simple - less is more. You could start by explaining the end outcome and then give them one or two instructions at a time. For example, "the doctor would like you to hop up on the bed...can you start by taking off your shoes?". Relate to your child with an honest and respectful manner. The tone of your voice and volume can also play an important role in communicating your trust and respect for their ability to actively participate. Again, a lot can be gained in terms of cooperation and willingness when we slow things down. Kids, like adults, like time to prepare and be autonomous when and where they can.

TRUST

Kids need to know that they can trust you, and that they are trusted. Give children the opportunity to make age appropriate decisions, but only when there are genuine choices available. These gestures communicate that your child is capable and trusted to know what is best for them and helps build their decision making muscle. Children need to know that no matter what happens or how they may behave that you are the safe and comforting place they can return to. Trusting in yourself and your parenting will also impact on your child's sense of safety. Kids are very receptive and will pick up if you are feeling unsure, confused, overwhelmed, tired etc. Talking things out with a supportive professional can help you gain clarity and get clear on what action you would like to take. Kids will trust and generally respond better when the parent is confident, clear, and calm in their communication and demeanor.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

If you would like information or support around stress and or anxiety in the lead up or during the cannulation process please contact Tanya Hosken counsellor@thalnsw.org.au or 0413 092 060. This service is free and confidential to patients and their families.

