



## **RAISING ADAPTABLE KIDS**

Pete's grade-school teacher announced a pop quiz, but Pete wasn't prepared. Unable to answer the questions, he started to cry. This wasn't the first time Pete reacted this way. He frequently needed support when he faced conflicts and challenging circumstances. To put it simply, Pete wasn't able to adapt.

Adaptability is the capacity to adjust to a change in circumstances, particularly when the change is unexpected. Kids are more adaptable when they're able to employ skills like resilience, confidence, persistence, healthy risk and positive self-talk.

Some young people struggle socially, academically or emotionally when confronted with sudden and unexpected change.

How can we as parents help our children to proactively adapt to different situations and adversity so they come out stronger and more capable?

### **Adapt your parenting style**

William was a perfectionistic son. His parents noticed he avoided trying new things because he was afraid of failure. One day, William's parents took him on a ski trip. He kept crying, "I can't do this!" His parents recognized he needed to build his confidence and physical endurance. Rather than push him to try harder when he believed he couldn't, they decided to offer him several active athletic options and let him choose the one he was ready to try. Some children are predisposed to be less adaptable. Work hard to be aware of how your children uniquely process their environment and plan accordingly. Then give yourself permission to parent each of your children differently based on who they are. These differences may be large or small. Be willing to meet your children where they are and to help them grow through customized steps that lead to a more adaptable direction.

### **Let your kids fail**

Lucy was a good student who earned top grades. But her mum noticed Lucy was beginning to neglect her usual good study habits. After a few encouraging prompts to lean into her studies, Lucy's mum decided to let it go and let Lucy deal with the results. When Lucy did poorly on a test, rather than say, "I told you so," her mum directed a conversation that led Lucy to set her own goals for future tests and to make a plan that would allow her to achieve them. Provide clear guidance and expectations for your children, and then **allow struggle**. Adaptability and resilience are forged through challenges. Resist the urge to rescue your children from difficult situations. By allowing them to fail, you help them learn what adaptation feels like and grow in the confidence of knowing they can overcome the unexpected.

### **Require Sharing**

Lastly, as kids share space and possessions with others, they typically grow more flexible. If you have more than one child, require them to share often. If not, be sure your child spends plenty of time with other kids. Either way, encourage involvement in church groups, teams, musical groups and other sources of community. In these contexts, your kids will have plenty of opportunities to learn how to share, compromise and exercise flexibility.