



# LITTLE children BIG challenges

**THIS KIT INCLUDES:**

- A Sesame Street DVD
- A Family Guide with tips and strategies for day-to-day challenges





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**Little Children, Big Challenges:** Executive Vice President, Education, Research, and Outreach: Lewis Bernstein, Ph.D.; Senior Vice President, Outreach and Educational Practices: Jeanette Betancourt, Ed.D. • Vice President, Outreach Initiatives and Partners: Lynn Chwatsky; Senior Director, Outreach and Content Design: María del Rocío Galarza; Senior Curriculum Specialist: Amelia Swabb; Curriculum Specialist: Brittany Sommer; Project Manager: Christina App; Project Coordinator: Angela Hong; Project Assistant: Andrea Cody; Spanish Language Editor and Content Manager: Helen Cuesta; Spanish Translator: Mario Chavez; Spanish Proofreader: Laura Rozenberg; Director, Domestic Research: David Cohen; Director, Domestic Research: Autumn Zitani-Stefano; Assistant Director, Domestic Research: Jennifer Schiffman; Director, Project Finance: Carole Schechner • Writers: Joshua Briggs and Rebecca Honig-Briggs; Copy Editor: Jeanette Leardi; Proofreaders: Jeanette Leardi, Andy Lefkowitz, and Evelyn Shoop • Vice President, Marketing and Brand Strategy: Suzanne Duncan; Vice President, Creative Services: Theresa Fitzgerald; Production Director, Creative, Marketing and Brand: Jennifer Toro; Designer: Beth May; Spanish Typesetting: Karla Henrick

**Special Thanks:** The entire *Little Children, Big Challenges* team

**Advisors:** Catherine Bradshaw Ph.D., M.Ed., Associate Professor, Department of Mental Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Barbara Coloroso, M.A., Author, Educational Consultant, kids are worth it! inc; Stephen J. Cozza, M.D., COL, USA (Ret), Associate Director, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; Jerlean E. Daniel, Ph.D., Former Executive Director, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Robin D'Antona, Ed.D., Educational Consultant and Adjunct Professor, Nova Southeastern University; Author; Stan Davis, Social Worker, Stop Bullying Now; Co-researcher, Youth Voice Project; Suniya S. Luther, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Teachers College, Columbia University; Department of Psychology, Arizona State University (effective 01/01/14); Charisse Nixon, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology, Penn State Erie; Geraldine V. Oades-Sese, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Institute for the Study of Child Development, Department of Pediatrics, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rutgers University; William (Bill) Pfohl, Psy.D., Professor of Psychology, Western Kentucky University; Ken Seeley, Ed.D., President, The Partnership for Families & Children; Rose Segreti, Chief, Special Initiatives, Child Care Aware® of America; Patty Shinske, Board Member, Military Child Education Coalition and Chair of its Living in the New Normal initiative; Board of Managers of The Army Emergency Relief; Sandra Spencer, Executive Director, National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health; Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy); Joseph L. Wright, M.D., M.P.H., Professor and Senior Vice President, Children's National Medical Center

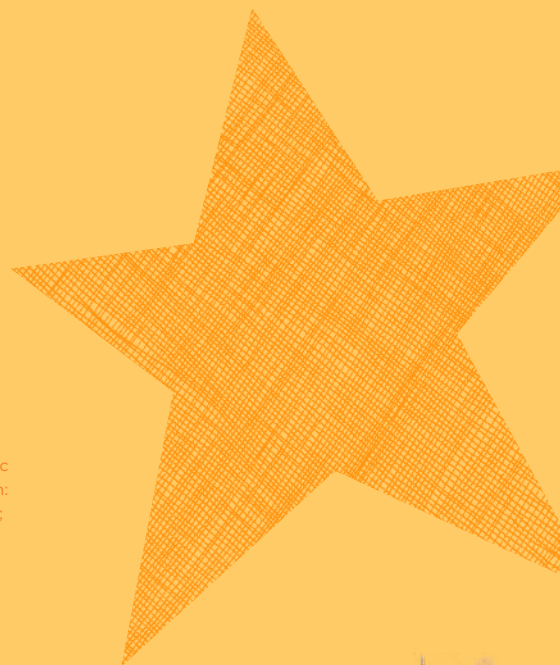
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# Introduction

## You're already on your way to raising a strong child!

Everyday challenges are a part of life and happen all the time. When you give your child the tools to overcome the little and big obstacles that come his way, you help him to learn and grow.

Providing your love and support is the first and most important step in helping your little one develop the confidence to overcome anything he faces.

Sesame Street has created this guide to support you in helping your child develop resilience skills to face challenges that occur throughout the day. Use this resource as your go-to guide for easy ideas to try when these challenges occur.

### You'll find tips and strategies to help your child build resilience skills, such as

- being persistent,
- understanding, expressing, and managing emotions,
- being patient,
- overcoming disappointments and learning from mistakes, and
- having confidence and being independent.

### The guide will also provide strategies for coping with more stressful situations, such as

- mean or aggressive behavior,
- sibling rivalry, and
- relocation.

You know your child best. Use this guide as your resilience resource, and adapt these ideas and strategies to address your family's unique challenges.

**Use the *Start with a story and Talk about it* ideas throughout the guide with your child as tools to address day-to-day challenges.**



MORNING CHALLENGES

# I Can't Do It!

**Start with a story:** Mika is excited to wear her new sweater. She is able to put her arms in the sleeves but has trouble pulling the sweater over her head. "I can't do this!" she shouts. She flops down on the floor, saying, "I'm not getting dressed."

**Talk about it:** Ask your child, "How do you feel when it's hard to do something? Do you get frustrated? What helps you feel better?"

## Strategies for helping your child to be persistent

Frustration is a normal part of life. By encouraging your child to keep trying, you help her to work past her frustration and to learn from it.

**When your child is frustrated, you can help her to “Breathe, Think, Do.” Here’s how:**

**Breathe:** First, help your child calm down.

- Encourage her to put her hands on her belly and slowly take three deep breaths in through her nose and out through her mouth.
- Ask her to sit and whisper to herself, “Calm down” or another encouraging phrase.

**Think:** Next, help her to understand the problem and think about a plan to solve it.

- Encourage your child to tell you how she is feeling and why. You can help her find words by telling her what you notice (“It seems like you feel frustrated and disappointed because you’re having trouble putting on your sweater”).
- Help her to come up with a plan for solving the problem (“What if you try unbuttoning the top button of the sweater?”).

**Do:** Now, encourage her to choose a plan and try it out.

- Ask, “Which plan is best? Let’s try it.”
- If her plan doesn’t work, ask, “How else could you do this?” and then try the new plan.
- Remind her that learning new things takes practice. It’s not that she *can’t* do it; it’s that she *can’t* do it *yet*.



**A child’s perspective:** Children are learning everything for the first time and may get frustrated when they discover that some things require a lot of practice. Frustration can feel a lot like anger to a child. This is why a frustrated child might misbehave.

### Recipe for Resilience

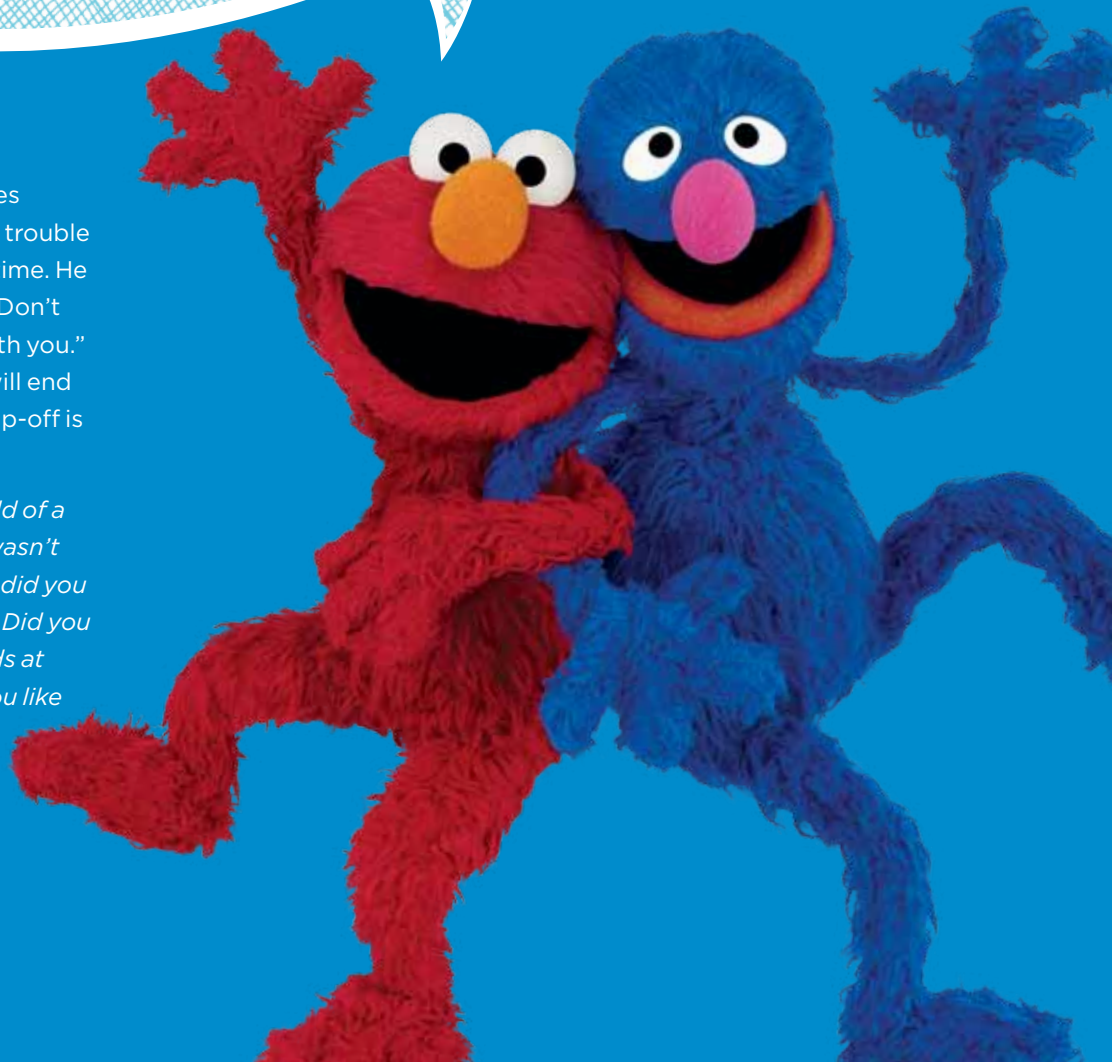
**It worked!** Together, keep a list of plans that have helped solve past problems so you can refer to it in the future. Help her to state the problem and her plan, and encourage her to illustrate the plan.

MORNING CHALLENGES

# Good-bye. See You Soon!

**Start with a story:** Antonio loves school, but sometimes he has trouble saying good-bye at drop-off time. He clings to his father and says, “Don’t leave me here. I want to go with you.” His dad knows that Antonio will end up having a great day, but drop-off is still hard.

**Talk about it:** Remind your child of a time when saying good-bye wasn’t that hard. You can ask, “What did you do to help you say good-bye? Did you think about seeing your friends at school, or about how much you like your teacher?”



## Strategies for coping with emotions related to separation

When you have concrete strategies and routines with your child about separating, the separation will be much easier for both of you.

**To comfort and assure your child as you say good-bye, you can say this poem:**

Bye, bye for now.  
 I'll see you soon.  
 I'll be back.  
 The time will zoom!  
 You will be fine.  
 You'll have fun, too.  
 And don't forget,  
 I love you!

### Recipe for Resilience

**Good-bye routine** Learning to separate can take time, and young children may need practice in order to do it confidently. Using a routine can help make the good-bye as concise and as structured as possible. Try giving your child two hugs and a kiss. Then say a funny parting phrase such as, "See you later, alligator!"

**I'm thinking of you.** Build your child's sense of security by letting him know that you are thinking about him. You might leave a little note in his lunchbox or keep a small photo album in his cubby.



**A child's perspective:** Separating from a parent or caregiver can cause overwhelming emotions such as anxiety and fear that the caregiver will not return.

# The Great Wait

**Start with a story:** Ella and her dad are waiting in a long line at the grocery store. After a few seconds, Ella begins to ask, "How much longer?" Her dad assures her, saying, "A few more minutes." Ella does not like this answer. She kicks her feet against the shopping cart. "I wanna go now!" she whines.

**Talk about it:** Ask your child, "What does it feel like when you have to wait for something? What are some fun things you can do to keep busy while you wait?"





## Strategies for practicing patience

Patience is a valuable skill in school and in life. By practicing patience, children discover that waiting can lead to wonderful things.

**Though your child can't be expected to wait for long stretches, you can find fun ways to pass the time.**

**Try these strategies:**

- Give your child a special challenge such as spying things that are red, counting the people in line, or making up a story about something she sees on the shelf.
- Search for the first letter in your child's name or for familiar words on the items displayed on the checkout shelves.

### Recipe for Resilience

**Telling time** Explain time in a way that your child will understand. If she asks, "How long?" you might say, "As long as it takes to brush your teeth" or "As long as it takes to walk to school."



**A child's perspective:** Five minutes can feel like an hour to a child. This can make it particularly difficult for children to be patient. As your child learns more fun strategies for being patient, it will get easier and easier for her to wait.



## AFTERNOON CHALLENGES

# Oh, No!

**Start with a story:** Sam is trying to build a block tower. He's worked hard to stack the blocks, but when he adds the final one, it topples over. Sam kicks the blocks and begins to cry. "I'm terrible at towers," he says.

**Talk about it:** Ask your child, "How does it feel when things don't come out the way you want them to? What can you do when that happens? Can you try another way?"

## Strategies for overcoming mistakes

Children who learn from their mistakes are more likely to try new things and make discoveries.

### If your child is struggling with mistakes, here are some ways to respond:

- Assure him that mistakes are part of learning and that everyone makes mistakes.
- Remind him that the way to get better at something is to practice doing it. Remind him of other things that he's gotten good at because he practiced.
- Help him cope with the problem by trying the "Breathe, Think, Do" strategy (see page 3).

### Recipe for Resilience

**Super solver** Give your child a superhero name and let him know that he has the power to figure things out. The next time he gets upset about a mistake, say, "This sounds like a job for [insert your child's superhero name]!"

**Lead the way** Be a role model for your child. When you confront your own mistakes, try to control your emotions. Let him hear you say aloud as you solve a problem, "First I'll do this, then I'll do..."



**A child's perspective:** Children are excited to do many things, but they can feel disappointed when things do not go their way. As your child learns how to control his emotions, making mistakes will be less upsetting.



NIGHTTIME CHALLENGES

# Together Time

**Start with a story:** It's the one time of day during which everyone is together, but no one seems to talk or interact during dinner. "Why do we all have to sit here?" Carla wants to know. "I want to go play," she whines.

**Talk about it:** Ask, "What are your favorite things to do at the dinner table? What are some new things we might do to help make dinner even more fun? Let's come up with a list of questions to ask one another as we sit together."



## Strategies for building your child's sense of security and ability to communicate

Your child will gain so much from the moments you share with her. By exchanging stories about your day, asking her questions, and letting her know you will always be there to listen, you help build her confidence and communication skills.

### To make the most of your time together, try these ideas:

- Use dinner as an opportunity to learn more about one another. Share something interesting about your job, and ask your child questions about her activities and interests (“What story did you read at circle time? What was it about?”). You might put questions into a hat and then pick some out to ask as you eat.
- Take turns naming your favorite colors, songs, sports teams, and foods.

### Recipe for Resilience

**Family mission** Involve your child in preparing a meal or setting the table. Make it her mission to create and arrange place cards for the family or to help you with a special dish. The more she feels involved in the meal, the more she'll enjoy it.



**A child's perspective:** Children can have a lot of trouble sitting still. Making dinnertime a family time and adding fun activities and engaging conversations can help your child to be more patient.

NIGHTTIME CHALLENGES

# Bedtime

**Start with a story:** It's bedtime, but Joey runs around his room. "Just one more minute," he says. "I have to do something." After a few minutes pass, he's still not ready. He runs away when Mom tries to help him put on pajamas, and he giggles, "I'm never going to bed."

**Talk about it:** Ask your child, "How do you feel when I say, 'It's bedtime'? What are your three favorite things to do before bed?"



## Strategies for creating routines that build independence

No matter what challenges children face throughout the day, they are comforted by knowing that certain events will occur.

### Turn bedtime into a routine with these tips:

- Do the same things every night and at the same time. You might begin with a bath and brushing teeth, read two books, and then turn out the light for bed. To help your child remember the steps, give the routine a special name, such as “B, B, B, B” for bath, brushing teeth, books, and bed.
- End each bedtime with the same words. You might list three good things to dream about and then say, “I love you, and I’ll see you in the morning.”



**A child’s perspective:** Bedtime can be a challenge for many children. Your child may want to make the day, and his time with you, last just a little bit longer.

### Recipe for Resilience

**Bedtime routine** It can be helpful to post your routine where your child can easily see it. Write the steps in simple language and then draw an icon to go along with each step. Read it several times to your child and then give him the chance to “read” it back to you using the pictures as a guide.



STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

# Mean or Aggressive Behavior

**Start with a story:** Gus is playing in the sandbox with his friend Chen. There is only one shovel, and Chen has been using it to build a castle for quite some time. Gus really wants the shovel and has started to feel angry that Chen is not sharing. “Do you like my castle?” Chen asks. “No!” shouts Gus, as he storms over to the castle and knocks it down.

**Talk about it:** Ask your child, “Has anyone ever been unkind to you? How did it make you feel?”





## Strategies for addressing mean or aggressive behavior

When your child knows how to express his emotions in positive ways and can understand the emotions of others, he'll be better able to face social challenges.

### Here are some ways you can ease your child's aggression:

- Encourage him to “Breathe, Think, Do” (see page 3).
- Remind him that he's in control of his actions by asking, “When you were feeling that way, what else could you have done?”
- Make some rules that he can quietly say to himself in heated moments, such as, “Tell, don't touch,” or “Say it with words.”

### Recipe for Resilience

**C is for calm.** When children are feeling angry, frustrated, hurt, or even confused, they may act aggressively. When your child is worked up about something, help him to calm down with “Breathe, Think, Do” (see page 3). Encourage him to sit in a favorite place where he can have some quiet time and whisper to himself, “Calm down” or “Slowly take a deep breath.”



**A child's perspective:** Young children are still learning to express their emotions in productive ways. Big feelings can be overwhelming and may cause a little one to act out or behave aggressively.

*Being bullied is not your fault.*



### When mean behavior becomes bullying

Bullying is a specific type of aggressive behavior that includes repeated hitting, kicking, and calling of mean names, as well as excluding. If your child is involved in bullying, work with school officials and counselors to stop the behavior. Provide them with the date, time, place, children involved, and specifics of the incidents and their effects.

#### If your child is bullying another child, try these tips:

- Intervene immediately. Help your child figure out how to change his behavior and to do something kind for the other child, such as make an apology card.
- Help your child to engage in caring behavior, such as choosing some of his toys to donate.
- Bullying behavior may be a sign that your child is struggling with big feelings. Help your child to explore his feelings. You may want to reach out to his school counselor or teacher for help, as well.

#### If your child finds himself witnessing or experiencing unkind behavior, try these tips:

- Let your child know that it is always OK to tell an adult and ask for help.
- Encourage him to tell you how he is feeling. Ask, "How did you feel when...?"
- If your child is being bullied, assure him that being bullied is not his fault.
- If your child is being bullied, have him practice saying, "I don't like the way they are acting. I am going to play with someone else."

STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

# Sibling Rivalry

**Start with a story:** There are times when Sarah does not like it when her sister, Marcy, uses her toys without asking for a turn. Sometimes their games end in tears. “Marcy took my toy,” Sarah cries. “It’s mine!” shouts Marcy.

**Talk about it:** Ask each child, “Has sharing ever been hard for you? What helped make it easier?”



## Strategies for helping children work through sibling rivalry

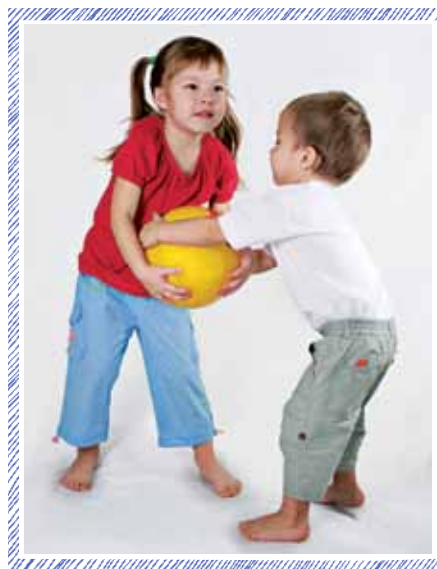
Helping siblings to practice patience and solve problems will help them to work through conflict and build an even stronger bond.

### If your children have trouble sharing, try these strategies:

- Help each child to manage her feelings before she reacts. Try the “Breathe, Think, Do” strategy (see page 3).
- Encourage each child to actively work through a conflict. If one child says, “Maxine won’t let me use the markers,” you might say, “Have you tried asking her for the markers in a nice way?” If one of your children tries to tell her sibling to stop doing hurtful things and the sibling doesn’t listen, you should step in and insist that the mean behavior stop.
- Point out times that your child has successfully shared and ask her how it felt.
- After a conflict is resolved, talk together about how the situation can be handled in the future. You might ask, “What are some things we can do the next time this happens?”

### Recipe for Resilience

**Mine, yours, ours** Set up shelves or boxes where each of your children can place items that they do not wish to share. Then you can designate some items that are always for sharing.



**A child’s perspective:** Each sibling develops at her own pace. Older children might have a sense of how to cooperate and share, while younger children aren’t as good at taking turns. It can be very hard for an older child to accept that a younger sibling “just doesn’t know how yet.”



## STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

# Relocation

**Start with a story:** Darius just changed schools. He spends most of his first week watching others play. He tells his aunt Jenny that he really misses his old friends. "I don't like this place," he says. Jenny notices that Darius is having trouble sleeping and he's started getting more emotional when things don't go his way.

**Talk about it:** Ask, "What are some changes you've had to make? What kinds of things helped to make those changes easier for you?"

## Strategies for adjusting to a move

Moving can mean big changes and transitions. You can prepare your child by incorporating familiar routines into new situations, letting him know what to expect, and introducing him to some things he can get excited about.

### Preparing to move

- If possible, take your child to his new neighborhood or school before you move. Show him some new places and things that you think will excite him.
- In one box, pack your child's special toys and family pictures so that when you get to your new home, he will be able to use these things right away.

### Adjusting after a move

- Create new routines at your new home, and point out the things that will stay the same no matter where you are.
- Go on a walk and note some of the places you are excited to explore.

## Recipe for Resilience




**Making new friends** Using dolls or puppets, practice ways to approach a friend. Act out a scenario with your child with language he might use to approach a new friend (“Hi! My name is [his name]. What’s your name?”). Before you do, encourage him to think about the qualities of a good friend. Ask, “What does a good friend act like? What does a good friend say? What does a good friend do?”



**A child's perspective:** It's normal for a move to arouse insecure feelings, new worries, and new fears in a child. It may also cause a child to regress and act out. Maintain familiar routines and be aware of your behaviors and conversations at this time. If your child sees that you are positive and optimistic, he'll be much more likely to feel that way, too!



For more Sesame Street resources on everyday challenges:

-  Explore [SesameStreet.org/Challenges](https://www.SesameStreet.org/Challenges)
-  Connect with [Facebook.com/SesameStreetInCommunities](https://www.Facebook.com/SesameStreetInCommunities)
-  Download the **FREE** *Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame* app
-  Watch the playlist at [Youtube.com/SesameInCommunities](https://www.Youtube.com/SesameInCommunities)