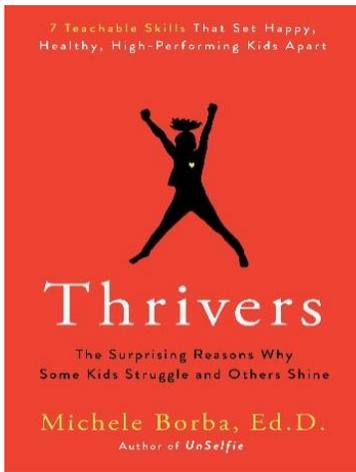


# A 21-Day Parenting Challenge to Raise Thrivers!

*"Thrivers are made, not born," says Michele Borba. Here are 21 skills parents can teach kids from THRIVERS.*



In our uncertain new world, we must re-set parenting to ensure that our kids have a resilient skill-set to handle whatever comes their way. The optimum teaching technique is weaving the skills into everyday family interactions. Here are 21 skills to boost resilience from my book, Thrivers. Find one that appeals to you, then repeatedly use with your family until it becomes a habit, and then add keep adding the next and next. That's how we will raise a generation of [THRIVERS!](#)

- 1. Start with why.** Raising thrivers starts by realizing why we must. Read p1-23, write a note to yourself to commit to help your child thrive, and review often.
- 2. Salute positive thinking.** Tune into when your child does utter optimism and commend it. "It's hard to change, but that being optimistic!", p254.
- 3. Share uplifting stories of helpers and everyday good guys in the news and your community.** Thrivers learn to focus on the positive, instead of the negative, and keep a hopeful outlook, p 250.
- 4. Teach SPARK to brainstorm solutions:** **S**ay the problem; **P**ositives only, no judging ideas; **A**dd to other ideas to create more options; **R**apid fire possibilities: say whatever comes to mind; **K**eep sparking your brain for solutions then choose the best! Then if a problem comes say: "Spark your brain! You got this!", p180.
- 5. Teach: "Do the hardest thing first"** so the child won't stress about a difficult task all night. Chunk hard tasks into smaller parts. "Cover all your problems except the top row. Lower it as you complete each row. Confidence and perseverance build as kids recognize that they *can* complete their tasks *all by themselves*, p220.
- 6. Stop rescuing!** Thrivers learn to build agency, so step back from being kids' safety net. Each week identify an age-appropriate skill-making bed, setting table, budgeting, etc. Show it, do together, step back, and watch until child masters. Then enforce rule: "*Never do for your child what he can do for self*" and teach next skill, p204.
- 7. Redefine "success" as a GAIN.** Stress that success doesn't happen overnight but with small gains over past performance due to personal effort. "Last week you were at 75%; today you're at 79%. That's a GAIN!", p207.
- 8. Teach 1:2 breathing.** "Take a slow, deep breath (inhale) your tummy and slowly exhale twice as long as inhale helps you relax. Pretend to sniff a flower (inhale) and then blow out a candle (exhale). Keep practicing, p123.
- 9. Institute a nightly review of the simple good parts about each person's day** to help your kids look on the bright side of life and develop optimistic thinking: "Sally asked me to play," "I improved in math," p251.
- 10. Encourage constructive arguments** to help kids consider alternative opinions and find their voice. Teach ARE: **A**ssert: Be brief; share main point of your opinion with facts "*I deserve a bigger allowance...*" **R**eason: Give valid or proven reason "*because I'm older...*"; **E**vidence: Offer proof for reason "*and do twice as much work,*" p186.
- 11. Teach goal-setting.** "Goals start with *I will* and have two parts: *what* you hope to do and *when* you plan to achieve it. Model it: "*I will call Ben (what) to thank him when I get inside*" and then teach your child, p211.

12. **Teach 1+2+3 breathing.** “Tell yourself, ‘Relax’ the second you feel stressed. That’s 1. Take a deep breath from your tummy, and feel it slowly going up to your nose. That’s 2. Let your breath leave your lips back *down* to tummy as you *slowly* count to 3. That’s 3. Put them together and you have 1+2+3 breathing”, p124.
13. **Help child identify stress signs or body warnings** that alert you that you’re losing control. Point out in context-louder talker, flushed checks, clenched fists-until child can identify her warnings, then teach how to cope, p121.
14. **Develop assertive comebacks** that child can say in tough situations: “Not cool.” “Cut it out.” “I don’t want to.” Firm, short statements work best. Practice delivery using a firm-not wimpy-voice with head high, p240.
15. **Role play ways to CARE** so kids know how to comfort. **Console:** “I’m sorry.” **Assist:** “Run for first aid or an adult. Ask: “Do you want help?” **Reassure:** “I’m here for you.” **Empathize:** “I know how you feel”, p90.
16. **Teach Connect 4 to make friends:** 1. Look eye-to-eye; 2. Smile; 3. Say “hi”; 4. Ask: “What’s your name?” or “Do you want to play?” Face-to-face connection is a key path to empathy and social competence, p95.
17. **Encourage curiosity to keep kids open to possibilities.** *Encourage:* “Great question.” “Glad you asked.” *Clarify:* “Do you mean...” *Find the answer:* “I’m not sure, let’s find out.” *Solve together:* “Who can we ask?” p191.
18. **Learn “bounce backs.”** Help your child identify a short, positive statement to say inside to self at the moment of challenge: “I can do it!” “I got this!” “I can get through this.” “Stay calm. Carry on.” For younger: “I think I can, I think I can” from *The Little Engine That Could*. Practice repeatedly until the child can use alone, p221.
19. **Teach kids to say to themselves: “Stop, Think, Act Right”** to help them make wise decisions when alone, p129.
20. **Show how to look strong from head to toe** to boost confidence and be taken seriously: **head:** hold high; **eyes:** look eye-to-eye; **shoulders:** back straight; **arms** at sides, **hands** uncrossed; **feet:** twelve inches apart, p241.
21. **Add “yet.”** Teach child to replace negative “can’t, never, won’t” self-assessment with growth stretchers: “I can’t do it **yet**”, I don’t know it **now**”, or “*I’m getting closer*” to realize that with effort, he *can* improve, p207.

**Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine** has dozens of simple, science-backed ways to help children from sandbox to prom learn to thrive. The difference between those who struggle and those who succeed comes down not to grades or test scores, but to seven essential character strengths that set Thrivers apart (and set them up for happiness and greater accomplishment later in life):

- **Self-confidence:** Healthy identify, using personal strengths to find purpose and meaning.
- **Empathy:** Understanding and sharing another’s feelings, and acting compassionately.
- **Self-control:** Managing stress, delaying gratification, strengthening focus.
- **Integrity:** Valuing and adhering to strong moral code, ethical thinking to lead a moral life.
- **Curiosity:** Having open-mindedness and willingness to try new ideas, take risks, innovate.
- **Perseverance:** Exhibiting fortitude, tenacity and resolve to endure so as to bounce back.
- **Optimism:** Learning self-advocacy and keeping unrealistic pessimism to encourage hope.

Each of character strength helps safeguard kids against the depression and anxiety that threatens to derail them. And when those strengths are combined, they become even more potent, creating a Multiplier Effect that amplifies their power and prepares children to succeed in our fast-paced, ever-changing world. The best news of all: these character strengths aren’t inborn. They can be taught – and **Thrivers** shows how to do it.

**Contact Dr. Michele Borba for media, book club, or speaking: [www.MicheleBorba.com](http://www.MicheleBorba.com)**