

# RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

## Do you live in a childfriendly community?

*Communities have to work at being childfriendly. Once children were a significant percentage of the population so they were very much part of every day community life. Now there are more people of grandparenting age than children so local neighbourhoods need to work hard to remain conscious of children and meet their needs.*

A child-friendly neighbourhood is one where there are safe spaces and places for children to play, navigate and explore. However the environment should not be so sanitised that it becomes boring, predictable and denies a sense of adventure. Children need interesting, challenging places that enable them to explore their own boundaries and use their imaginations. Currently, communities are very conscious of keeping kids safe but run the risk of removing all challenges from children in the name of personal safety.

A child-friendly neighbourhood offers opportunities for children to experience healthy relationships with adults and young people, as well as each other. This means having adults who care for them and take a genuine interest in their well-being.

In healthy neighbourhoods adults let children and young people know when their behaviour is inappropriate. Children have an awareness that there are others within their environment who are watching them and ensuring that their behaviours stay within accepted community standards.

Child-friendly neighbourhoods provide plenty of



adults who model positive, healthy lifestyles and who are potential mentors for young people.

A child-friendly neighbourhood fosters a sense of pride and belonging and engenders a yearning by children and young people to become a part of that community as adults. It provides opportunities for children and young people to participate in the community and make improvements to the neighbourhood as well. In short, children and young people have opportunities to be community resources rather than neighbourhood problems.

Once the majority of children were raised in small communities and villages where connectedness was experienced and contribution expected. Now the majority of children in western countries experience suburban living, which often offers sanitised, highly organised and isolated childhoods. The challenge for urban communities is to make our neighbourhoods resemble villages, in this modern, global world.

## WHAT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD LIKE? IS YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILD-FRIENDLY?

1. Would your child say that he feels safe and protected in most areas of his neighbourhood and able to go about daily activities free from fear?  
Yes [2] No [0]
2. Are there a variety of groups for your child to join and activities that he can participate in available within close proximity?  
Yes [2] No [0]
3. Does your child have an ongoing informal relationship with one adult in the neighbourhood?  
Yes [2] No [0]
4. Are there a variety of positive, healthy adults who model effective conflict resolution and responsible

- behaviour and who are motivated to achieve?  
Yes [2] No [0]
5. Would you say that your neighbourhood values children and usually acts in their best interests?  
Yes [2] No [0]

### SCORE:

- 10:** Quite a neighbourhood for children that probably already attracts families.
- 6-8:** Child-friendly but may need to work on some areas.
- 0-4:** This is a concern and needs some adult leadership to change.



## TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To help your child feel a connection to his neighbourhood try the following four strategies:

1. Help your child learn the **names** of at least ten people in your neighbourhood.
2. Talk with your child about the **good features** of the neighbourhood you live in.
3. Encourage your child to **join** in at least one neighbourhood-based leisure, sports, club, team or community activity.
4. **Help** your child become involved with one local or broad community social or environmental issue that affects them or you.

## ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)

## QUOTE

'It is in the shelter of each other that people live.'

IRISH PROVERB