



Resilient Children:

First Food or Fast Food

by

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Some of us are able to accommodate the stresses we're exposed to and continue life on an even keel; others are knocked off balance, which they express through their behavior or illness. Resilience is a term used to describe what it takes to remain on track.

Humanity today is exposed to a vast array of stressors on all levels—physical, electromagnetic and psychological. The environment has been manipulated by technology to such an extent that chemicals in food, water, households and the air are difficult to avoid. The use of electricity, radio, cell phones and internet determines that the air is congested with foreign electromagnetic and sound waves. On one level our bodies are made up of chemicals and waves, so this must be impacting us, not to mention the physical and emotional stress of conflict, trauma and just plain overdoing it that we inflict on ourselves and others on an ongoing basis.

We take experience into ourselves through sensing, food and the air that we breathe. Inside of ourselves, whether it is in the psyche or the body, we digest what we've brought in, make meaning of it and incorporate it into the sense of who we are. In this way we build ourselves up. There is a fine balance between challenging ourselves enough to grow, but not so much that we overwhelm ourselves. Resilient children have, through their experiences, developed a sense of self and bodily strength that enables them to meet challenges they're presented with and remain centered.

One of the areas in which we can help children to develop resilience is through the food that they eat. Each food has its own signature, or quality, depending on the conditions of growth and which part of the plant or animal is used as food. The signatures can be used to stimulate specific forces in the growing child and to balance one-sided tendencies. Food in its natural state, as close to nature as nature intended, is imbued with an etheric or life force that, when met by the individual through digestion, helps to build up our own life force. The life force is represented in a plant or animal by a mix of vitamins, minerals, enzymes and other compounds, and we respond to the mix of elements as a WHOLE. For example, the wheat berry contains in its sheath all the B vitamins, magnesium, manganese and fiber essential for digesting starch. Processed wheat flour has many, if not all, the vitamins and minerals leached out, leaving pure starch. The vitamins and minerals essential for digesting the starch are taken from body stores, leaving us depleted on other levels. Each step of food processing removes more of the life force. Vegetables that are peeled, chopped and stored in plastic bags in fridges with artificial lighting have already lost something.

One of the elements present in the signature of the food is warmth. In order to live comfortably in one's body, an optimal level of warmth is required; awareness of this is particularly important during winter. Some of us never feel warm enough and are constantly looking for the closest fire; others are overheated and need to get rid of excess warmth. As a rule, the color, fluid content and density of the food indicates the amount of warmth that the food will imbue to the body. Green foods tend to be cooling while yellow, orange and red foods tend to be warming. Watery foods will be more cooling than dense foods. The method of cooking may also be used to enhance temperature effects. Long, slow cooking imbues more warmth than short, fast cooking, and raw food is the most cooling.

Fats and oils are an essential part of the daily diet and stimulate the body to produce its own warmth. A reaction to the high prevalence of heart disease has caused many misunderstandings about fats. As well as stimulating warmth, fats and oils in the right balance modulate the immune system and provide protection for the nervous system. The fats, solid at room temperature and originating mostly from land animals in the form of milk, butter, cheese, chicken and mutton or beef, have the effect of hardening in the body. They need to be balanced out with the oils, which are liquid at room temperature and are extracted from seeds, nuts, certain fruits and fish. Within the oils are found three main types of fatty acid, the much spoken about omega 3, 6, and 9, all of which are needed in the diet. The omega 3 oils are typically deficient in our western diets, and one needs to make a conscious effort to include them, the main sources being fish, flax seeds or oil, and walnuts.

These are just a few of the many considerations in choosing one's food. Unless one makes a conscious effort, the diet can become one-sided and limited. An interesting exercise is to count how many times a day or week we eat wheat. Considering that there are at least another seven grains, each with their own subtle qualities, how are we restricting ourselves by not including them? To help children develop resilience, for now and for the rest of their lives, one can start to build healthy eating habits whereby their bodies become accustomed to a broad range of natural, fresh foods. In time they may begin to notice the difference in their sense of wellbeing and seek out these foods of their own accord.

