



# RESILIENCE

~Submitted by Margaret C. Holmberg, PhD, IMH-E®  
President, Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health

Where does resilience come from? Is it something that children learn from caregivers or are they born with it? The foundation for resilience is both innate and learned and comes from first relationships. In an early study by Emmy Werner, ([Werner, Emmy J. Children of the Garden Island, Scientific American, 1989](#)), findings that set the groundwork for our home visiting programs looked at the same 698 children in Hawaii from prenatal to age 30 years and found the prenatal experience impacted the long term outcomes for these children. Resilience comes from very early relationships the infant has with caregivers before and after birth. Today we have confirmation of these findings with the ability to look at babies' brains and see what happens to brain cells when early relationships are compromised.

What is it that promotes resiliency? The infant mental health field teaches us that very early warm and responsive care-giver relationships lay the foundation for resilient children. Those early relationships begin during pregnancy and enable young children to thrive in their other relationships with teachers and peers and to become eager problem solvers. We must pay attention to the prenatal time to assure a baby is born into a warm, responsive, loving family. We must care about babies and their mothers during pregnancy. Share the excitement of pregnancy with your families and do all that you can to develop a warm, responsive, caring, and loving relationship with the families of your young children.