

# The Resilience Revolution: Bergen County Educator Josephine Hunt Helps Families Build Strength, Confidence and Calm

By Carly Mac Manus

When longtime educator and parent coach Josephine Hunt talks about children, she doesn't start with academics or achievements. She starts with humanity.

"I genuinely just want to get the message out to help people," Hunt says. "People don't realize how much of this isn't instinctive—it's learned. If parents can walk away with even one tool that moves the needle a little bit, I'm happy."

For more than two decades, Hunt has taught in school districts across Bergen, Essex and Passaic counties. She holds dual master's degrees, including an MA in Educational Leadership from Ramapo College, along with educational leadership credits through Rutgers University. With years of experience in special education, instructional coaching and leadership, she has become a trusted voice for families navigating a childhood landscape shaped by academic pressure, digital distraction and rising anxiety.

Her message is simple: resilience is not born; it's built. And children need opportunities—not protections from discomfort—to develop it.

## A Teacher, a Parent and a Coach

Hunt began her career at 19, working part-time in a Montessori school and quickly realizing that supporting children and families was her calling. After earning degrees in elementary education and English literature from William Paterson University, she taught in Ridgewood, Roselle, Caldwell–West Caldwell, Hasbrouck Heights, Waldwick and Closter.

She later pursued advanced clinical training at New York University, focused on learning differences and child development, and was accepted into NYU's semester-abroad program at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, where she studied the work of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget.

"I realized right away that if I have 24 students in front of me, I have 24 different perspectives," Hunt says. "Each child requires something unique."

That belief carried into her parenting as she raised her three daughters. Natural and logical

consequences became foundational.

“When we remove all discomfort, we unintentionally remove the chance for children to develop grit and determination,” she says. “Resiliency is cumulative.”

Returning to the classroom, Hunt noticed students struggling with common social challenges at increasingly intense levels, reflected in rising HIB (Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying) reports. Many incidents were developmentally typical, she says—but children lacked the tools to manage them.

COVID-19 only deepened those gaps. Combined with early smartphone use, reduced in-person socialization and well-meaning parents smoothing every obstacle, Hunt saw an urgent need to help families understand how resilience is truly built.

### **The Resilience Loop™**

Through years of teaching, parenting and coaching, Hunt developed what she calls the Resilience Loop™, a five-part cycle reflecting how children grow stronger.

It begins with challenge—moments of discomfort or uncertainty. That’s followed by support, not rescuing, but scaffolding and calm presence. Then comes reflection, where children consider what happened and what they might try next time. That leads to growth, as new strategies are applied, and ultimately confidence—not praise-based, but earned through experience.

“Confidence isn’t something we give kids,” Hunt says. “It’s something they build.”

### **Building Resilience at Home**

Hunt emphasizes that resilience is a skill set parents can intentionally develop. Among her core recommendations:

- Give children meaningful responsibilities to build competence.
- Offer age-appropriate choices to strengthen autonomy.
- Model calm behavior and emotional regulation.
- Encourage problem-solving before stepping in.
- Allow natural consequences, with empathy.
- Normalize discomfort as part of learning.
- Celebrate effort over perfection.
- Teach perspective-taking to build empathy.
- Encourage activities outside of school.
- Introduce coping tools like breathing, movement or journaling.

“Children co-regulate with adults,” Hunt says. “We have to regulate ourselves first.”

### **Parenting in a High-Pressure World**

In high-achieving communities like Bergen County, Hunt sees parents deeply invested in their children’s success—but sometimes at the cost of resilience.

“Kids don’t need everything done for them,” she says. “They need to believe in themselves.” Whether navigating social disappointment or academic challenges, she encourages parents to

pause, resist immediate rescue and trust their child's capacity to grow.

"When parents believe in their child's skills," Hunt says, "the child learns to believe in themselves too."

### **What's Next**

Hunt now provides professional parenting coaching and consultation through Raising Resilient Children Parenting Services, working directly with families across New Jersey. Her work has reached a broad audience, including a recent ONNJ News interview on teaching children resiliency.

She has presented workshops at NJEA TRANSFORM, NJPSA/FEA events, NJASCD conferences, and district trainings statewide, and is trained in three evidence-based parenting frameworks: STEP, the Logical and Loving Parenting Program, and the Positive Parenting Program.

Hunt is also developing positive parenting podcast content and appearing as a guest on educational podcasts—an extension of her coaching and workshop work.

"It's been meaningful to see how families are connecting with these resources," she says. Her goal remains steady: empowering parents to trust themselves and their children.

"I just want to be part of moving the needle," Hunt says. "Resilience isn't built in a moment—it's built over time."