

Resiliency for Parents & Children
What it is & isn't AND...
How to Nurture it!

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What is Resilience?

Resilience =

“**Good outcomes*** in spite of serious threats to adaptation and development.”

Ann Masten, Ph.D. (2001, p. 228)

What defines “Good Outcomes?”

Per Masten:

- Academic Performance
- Social Successes
- Healthy Psychological Traits
- Absence of Significant Life Difficulties

Why Important to Talk About?

- Misinformation & Misperceptions about Risk Factors
 - Inherent characteristics of individual
 - Environmental characteristics or events

Why Important to Talk About?

- Misinformation & Misperceptions about Nature of Resiliency

Primary Example:

- Resilience does *NOT* = “High achievers” with some kind(s) of extraordinary abilities or resources
 - Parents
 - Children

Why Important to Talk About?

- Resilience DOES = “*ORDINARY MAGIC*”
- *“Being able to function reasonably well, despite being faced with unusually difficult circumstances.”*

Masten, 2001, p. 227

Why Important to Talk About?

- Resiliency → Benefits in Adolescence & Adulthood
 - Increased competence
 - Healthier adjustment
- Resiliency = Mixture of Biology & Environment (Diathesis Stress Model)
 - Can't change “Biology” or Heritable Components
 - CAN change relative impact of “Environment”

Why Important?

Environmental Risks (*Masten & others*)

- Poverty
- Negative family interactions (poor family relationships)
- Abusive or neglectful parenting
- Parental divorce
- Caretaker job loss
- Mental illness within family
- Alcohol and/or other drug abuse by family members
- Inadequate schools/educational resources

Why Important?

New Evidence for & Interest in Resilience:

- “The ability to adapt effectively in the face of threats to development.”
- Possibility to PROTECT children and teens
 - Buffer negative effects
 - Build skills

What are “Protective Factors?”

- What do we mean by “Protective Factors?”
- What are primary factors?

FOUR broad Protective Factors

1. Personal Characteristics
2. Parental Relationship
3. Social Support outside Immediate Family
4. Community Resources & Opportunities

Protective Factors: Personal Characteristics

- High intelligence
 - Counter deficient educational experiences
- Socially-valued talents
 - Positive, validating experiences in school/
community
- Socially-valued traits
 - Physical attractiveness

Protective Factors: Personal Characteristics

- Temperament*

- “Easy-Going”

- “Sociable Disposition”

- OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK on life

(Martin Seligman, Ph.D.)

- Capacity to adapt to change

Protective Factors: Personal Characteristics

- IN CONTRAST...

Temperamental Characteristics that *may** confer risk:

- Emotional reactivity
- Irritability
- Impulsivity

**Note: Depends on interactions with other factors*

Personal Factors: Warm Parental Relationship

Close relationship with at least one parent

- Warmth
- Attention
- High expectations
- Monitoring
- Organized

CAVEAT: This factor is NOT independent of Personal Characteristics!

- *Personal Characteristics* ↔ *Parental Relationship*

Personal Factors:

Social Support outside Immediate Family

What types of Social Supports*?

- Strong bond with competent, caring adult (need not be parent)**
 - Mentoring Role
 - Academic & Personal Expectations
 - Planning and Goal-Setting
- Associations with rule-abiding peers**
 - Shared Values
 - Achievement Goals

CAVEAT: Social Supports also NOT independent of Personal Characteristics!

- **Personal Characteristics ↔ Social Supports*
- ***Strong Bond with Adult Mentor ↔ Positive Peer Relationships*

Classic Study: Resilience & Benefit of Competent, Caring Adult

“Kauai Study” (Werner & Smith)

- Longitudinal: Infancy → 18 years old
- Identified “high-risk group” (4 or > factors by 2 years old):
 - Problems with physical development
 - Parental conflict
 - Parental substance abuse
 - Low maternal education
 - Poverty
- Identified “resilient sub-group” (of “high-risk group”):
 - Positive social functioning & academic achievement
 - One well-functioning parent
 - Higher intellectual ability
 - Higher physical attractiveness

Personal Factor: Community Resources & Opportunities

- Meaningful Community Supports include:
 - Good schools
 - Health Care & Social Services (Convenient & Affordable)
 - Libraries
 - Recreation Centers
- Opportunities to participate in community life
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Religious youth groups
 - Religiosity* (Masten's recent research)
 - Scouting

Other Benefits of Community Involvement

- Enhanced self-esteem
- Increased responsibility (personal agency)
- Community commitment
- New, meaningful relationships
- New competencies

ALL contribute to/build RESILIENCY

Additional Considerations

- Complex connections between heredity & environmental factors
 - Positive personal characteristics (from innate endowment)
 - Favorable rearing experiences
- Various “combinations” help kids/teens take action to reduce impact of stressful situations

Important Caveat

Multiple risk factors difficult to overcome*

Interventions MUST:

- Reduce risks
- Enhance relationships (home, school, community)

...in order to **INOCULATE** against negative effects of risk.

MUST ATTEND TO BOTH PERSON & ENVIRONMENT

- Strengthen children's capacities
- Reduce hazardous experiences

Even MORE Important!

One of Single Most Influential Factors

Y – O – U

- Parents' Well-Being & Resiliency “Potential”
 - Compassion
 - Tolerance
 - Self-Care
 - Respite*
 - Supports*
 - Help*

Positive Psychology, Optimism* & Building Resilience

Seligman's "*Penn Prevention Program*"

- Cognitive-Behavioral Theoretical (CBT) Foundation
 - Interdependence Thoughts & Feelings & Responses/Behaviors
- Identify ("Catch") Negative ("Pessimistic"), Automatic Thoughts
- Role of "Detective" (Sherlock Holmes vs. Hemlock Jones)
 - Judge accuracy of pessimistic thoughts & self-accusations
 - Challenge (e.g., evidence-seeking)
 - "Re-write" personal narrative
- Parents learn first...and then we teach our children!

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- ABC Model: Change Pessimistic Thoughts → Optimistic Thoughts
 - Adversity
 - Beliefs*
 - Consequences
- Teaching Elements:
 - Introduce Internal Dialogue
 - Use of ABC Model
 - Practice (e.g., Use of “ABC Diary”)
 - Match Thoughts to Feelings
 - ABC Verbal Examples & “Fill-in-the-Blank” Examples
 - Real-Life ABCs

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Change Self-Explanatory Style
- Three (3) Dimensions of Pessimistic Style:
 - Permanence
 - Pervasiveness
 - Personalization

Pessimism = Belief that life setbacks are*:

- Unchangeable -- Persistent
- Undermine many/most areas of life
- Person (not circumstances, chance, or others) is sole cause

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Three (3) Dimensions of Optimistic Style:
- Temporary (*vs. Permanent*)
- Specific (*vs. Pervasive*)
- Impersonal (*vs. Personal*)

Optimism = Belief that life setbacks are*:

- Changeable or transient
- Affect only a few situations or areas of life
- May be caused by particular circumstances, events, or others' actions

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Application of Explanatory Style
- Reference **ABC** Model
 - What is permanence of **B**eliefs?
 - What are “Because of me” **B**eliefs?
 - What is degree of pervasiveness of **A**dversity?
 - Who's to blame for outcomes(**C**onsequences)?

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Next Step: Disputing & De-Catastrophizing
- ABC Questions to Ask Self:
 - What's *evidence* that belief true? Not true?
 - What's *alternative way* to view situation?
 - What's *worst* that could happen? How likely?
 - What's *best* that could happen? How likely?
 - What's *most likely* outcome?
 - What's *my plan of action*, particularly for most likely outcome?

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Practicing Disputation (Parent & Child):

ABCDEs

- D = Disputation (Active challenging)
- E = “Energization”

How do optimistic beliefs make you feel and act?*

Penn's Prevention Program (Cont'd)

- Final* Step → "Real-Life" ABCDEs (Parent & Child):
What will happen next?
 - Be like Sherlock Holmes:
 - What's **evidence** for beliefs? Against beliefs?
 - What are **some other ways** of seeing situation?
 - What's **worst** that could happen?
 - What **can I do to help stop it** from happening?
 - What's **best** that could happen?
 - What's **most likely** outcome?
 - What's **my plan of action** if that happens?

Sampling of Resources

Books by Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D., Director, Penn Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania

- The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience
- Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life
- Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being

Books by Robert Brooks, Ph.D., & Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.:

- Raising Resilient Children. Fostering Strength, Hope, and Optimism in Your Child
- The Power of Resilience. Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life

Other Helpful Books:

Tamar E. Chansky, Ph.D.:

Freeing Your Child from Negative Thinking: Powerful, Practical Strategies to Build a Lifetime of Resilience, Flexibility, and Happiness

Kenneth R. Ginsburg, M.D., M.S. Ed.:

Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings
Letting Go with Love and Confidence

Sampling of Resources

Helpful Books (Cont'd):

John Gottman, Ph.D.:

Raising an Emotional Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting

Karen Reivich, Ph.D.:

The Resilience Factor: Seven Essential skills for Overcoming Life's Inevitable Obstacles

Steven J. Wolin, M.D., & Sybil Wolin, Ph.D.

The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity

Some Helpful Websites:

Resiliency Resources for Parents:

<http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents.htm>

Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE): <http://www.care4teachers.org>

Fostering Resilience: <http://www.fosteringresilience.com/>

Building Resilience in Children in the Face of Fear and Tragedy: <http://www.aboutourkids.org>

Note: References for journal articles/empirical research used in the preparation of this presentation can be provided upon request.

Thank You!

Thanks to Jean Davidson Meister, and to all of you, for the opportunity to meet, talk, and learn from each other. I so appreciate our time together.

Jean, you are such an extraordinary person and advocate for so many. Thank you for all that you do, and for making gatherings like today possible.

If I or any of my staff can be of help to you in finding resources or services in your area, please just give a holler!

I have a number of clinical staff who work exclusively with children, adolescents, and parents/families, and who have a variety of areas of expertise.

One of my clinical staff, Dr. Erin Marek-Krawczyk (x13) typically responds to initial requests for assistance. (Dr. Erin and I meet/speak on a daily basis to determine how best we can be of help/support to you).

Please call her, and/or call me (x12), if we can be of help to you in any way.

The first voice you may hear is our Office Manager, Ms. Susan Beach (x10), who also can be of assistance to you.

Thank you again, very much, and all good wishes to you—

Dr. Theresa M. (Terri) Schultz

630-323-3050, x12

www.tmspsychologicalservices.com