Resilience: A Strength-Based Approach to Good Mental Health

Sponsored by: Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration;
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;
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Resilience is an innate capacity to rebound from adversity and change through a process of positive adaptation. In youth, resilience is a fluid, dynamic process that is influenced over time by life events, temperament, insight, skill sets, and the primary ability of care givers and the social environment to nurture and provide them a sense of safety, competency and secure attachments.

Core Concepts:

	0 to 5 years	6 to 12 years	13 to 18 years	What can Families & Communities do to Promote Resilience?
Sense of Competency • Determination & persistence • Takes pride in activities • Develops/evaluates alternative solutions • Task completion	• Engages in make-believe play • Interested in new things • Imitates behavior of others • Tries to do things for him/herself • Tries out new words / builds vocabulary	• Can begin to generalize learned skills • Shows patience in meeting a goal • Desires to be the best one can be • Self-Efficacy; "I Can!" attitude • Begins to be able to organize time	• Self motivated / sense of autonomy • Has initiative; sees things through to completion • Has integrity, high standards • Incorporates new knowledge • Forming coherent sense of self	• Gather and unite around priority issues • Value diversified leadership • Cooperate in achieving goals • Have high, but realistic expectations for youth
Caring & Respect of Self & Others • Empathy • Giving back; helping out • Ability to compromise • Giving others the benefit of the doubt	• Listens to others; shows patience • Enjoys interacting with others • Seeks comfort from familiar adults • Tries to comfort others • Acts happy when praised	• Beginning capacity for self sacrifice • Can accept that life is not always fair • Shows concern for a bullied classmates • Completes chores for the benefit of the family • Can recognize their own strengths	• Values win-win solutions • Can show forgiveness • Cares about what happens to others • Has capacity for intimacy • Shows gratitude for successes	• Have the ability to work with diversity • Offer ample volunteer opportunities • Treat all youth with consistency & fairness • Promotion of Wellness and Prevention efforts
Problem Solving & Coping Skills • Seeks help when needed • Ability to self soothe or self regulate • Willingness to admit and learn from mistakes • Can accept instruction and constructive criticism	• Willing to accept redirection • Keeps trying when unsuccessful • Early development of self control • Can easily go from one activity to another • Tries different ways to solve a problem	• Not afraid to ask for help with an assignment or task • Can use positive self talk to feel better • Healthy risk taking • Can make change based on other's input • Acts persistent; tries other ways to solve problems	• Seeks others' expertise • Has self-management skills • Takes ownership and responsibility • Ability for abstract thinking • Understands cause and effect	• Promote open communication around community satisfaction • Seeks external resources for problems • Law enforcement is seen as a vital part of the community • Resilience is modeled in homes/communities
Optimism and Hope for the Future • Sense of humor • Belief that things can get better • Playful; Creativity; Exploration • Joy in accomplishments	• Enjoys social play • Accepts alternative choices • Shows interest in his/her surroundings • Says positive things about the future • Trusts familiar adults and believes what they say	• Laughs and shares jokes with a friend • Can give examples of positive outcomes • Involved in clubs / sports / hobbies • Likes to explore environment / nature • Enjoys school and learning	• Able to laugh at oneself • Future and goal oriented • Has creative outlets for self expression • Seeks out and can enjoy times of peace and quiet • Sees life as basically good and positive	• Opportunities for modeling/peer mentoring • Recreational outlets available for families • Youth are integrated into the community • There is a belief that all children can be successful
Ability to Reframe Stress • Tolerates frustration • Understands how perception influences outcomes • Flexibility; able to adapt to change • Can improvise	• Uses imagination to build skills • Cooperates with others • Begins to accept rules for behavior • Begins to identify patterns and routines • Can calm self down when upset	• Open to new ideas • Begins to learn to manage stress • Able to identify alternative solutions • Demonstrates ability to adapt to changing situations • Doesn't give up even when disappointed	• Can accept ambiguity / uncertainty • Connects attitude with behavior • Deals with adversity and the unexpected • Has positive outlets to reduce stress • Puts things in perspective	• Able to provide comfort in times of distress • Open communication without blaming • Families encourage self reliance • Communities engage in creative problem solving
Sense of Purpose & Meaning • Spirituality; higher purpose • Feeling that you are loveable • Self improvement • Cultural heritage and traditions	• Enjoys imitating people in play • Begins to show willful behavior • Asks questions; tells stories • Wants to please others and be with friends • Displays joy and curiosity	• Shows understanding of the life cycle • Feels loved and has secure relationships • Wants to challenge self to do better • Participates in and values family rituals • Can decide between right and wrong	• Explores different belief systems • Has a belief that one's life matters • Wants to plan for a rewarding career • Has a sense of belonging to a community • Tries to live by their core values	• Local ownership and community pride • Safe, healthy outdoor activities available • Diverse opportunities for spiritual and cultural enrichment • Families and communities support quality education

Related Topics & Models

Resiliency Theory Pioneer – Norman Gramezy
Attachment Theory – John Bowlby
Erickson's Developmental Stages
Neuroplasticity – Neuroscience– through Mindfulness and Repetition
Social and Emotional Competency – Daniel Goleman
Positive Psychology – Martin Seligmann
Positive Youth Development
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) – Richard Tedeschi
Strength Based Practice / Systems of Care (SOC)
Transformational Coping
Primary Mental Health Project – Emory Cowen
Public Health Approach to Children's Mental Health – Georgetown Univ., Center for Child and Human Development
Salutogenic Model of Health – Sense of Coherence (comprehensibility, manageability, meaningfulness) – Aaron Antonovsky
International Resilience Project – Resilience Research Center (across cultures)
Reaching In…Reaching Out – Penn Resilience Program
Resiliency: What We Have Learned by Bonnie Benard
Stress Hardiness – Susan Kobasa

Family & Community Models that Support Resilience
Building Bridges to Support
Families and Schools Together (FAST)
Nurse Family Partnerships
Safe Schools / Healthy Children
Healthy Communities / Healthy Youth
Asset Based Community Development Center
The Incredible Years
Resiliency Ohio

Longitudinal Studies
Project Competence – University of Minnesota – Ann Masten
Kauai Study – Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith
Project Human Development Chicago Neighborhoods

Some Assessment Tools
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)
40 Developmental Assets – Search Institute
Connor – Davidson Resilience Scale
CANS (Child & Adolescents Needs & Strengths)
Post Traumatic Growth Inventory
The Stress Vulnerability Scale – Sheehan
Resilience Scale
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
Infant/Toddler, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales

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