Growing Together: Supporting Resilience in Children and Families

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Introductions and Acknowledgements

- Penina Backer, BA, Research Coordinator at the University of Maryland Division of Psychiatric Services Research and Project Coordinator of the Maryland Resilience Breakthrough Series Collaborative sponsored by the Mental Hygiene Administration.
 - Acknowledgement of BSC leadership team: Joan Smith, MSW, Jan Markiewicz, MEd, Jane Gillham, PhD, Laurel Kiser, PhD, MBA
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What do we mean by "resilience" & "resilience-based" approach to mental health?

One definition: 'Resilience is the process of harnessing biological, psychosocial, structural, [environmental] and cultural resources to sustain wellbeing.' (1)

Resilience-based approach: An emphasis on strengths, resources, and capacities rather than deficits. (2,3)

- Mental health interventions focus on the identifying and promoting strengths, resources and capacities of the child, family and community.
- Increased access to resources through navigation and negotiation –
 is a key element of a resilience approach.

(1) Panter-Brick & Leckman (2013) JCPP, 54(4):333-6. (2) Ager (2013) JCPP, 54(4):488-500. (3) Masten & Narayan (2012) Ann Rev Psych, 63:227–57.

Bouncing back, moving forward



- Resilience is the capacity to bounce back from challenges.
 - Challenges can include everyday stressors (like losing a sports game) or more severe adversities (like witnessing violence).
 - Bouncing back refers to positive adaption moving forward by meeting developmental milestones despite challenges.
- The implication is that people don't just survive challenges; they **develop new capacities** that enhance their ability to thrive in the future.

(Masten et al., 2009; Smith & Elkins, 2010)



- All people have the capacity to be resilient and successful.
- Resilience is a dynamic process that develops over the lifespan.
- Resilience depends on "ordinary magic," not superhuman strengths.
- Resilience is influenced by the interaction of internal and environmental factors.
 - Internal factors: temperament, strengths, and skills
 - External factors: social environment family, community

(Masten, 2001; Smith & Elkins, 2010)

Resilience when faced with Adversity and Traumatic Experiences

- Development stays on track even under difficult circumstances
- Dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation with the context of significant adversity

 (1)
- Resistance to risks due to the presence of protective factors
- Capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful (2)

(1) Luthar, S.S., Cicchetti, D., Becker B. (2000) The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work. Child Development 71 (3), 543–562.; (2) Walsh, F. (1998) Strengthening Families Resilience. Guildford Press: New York.

Resilience Core Concepts

- The resilience core concepts were compiled by the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration's Resilience Committee.
- O They reflect the research literature on **strengths and skill sets** promoting good mental health.





Why talk about strengths and skills?

- Strengths and skills are important!
 - Strengths provide a language for who we are at our best and what we aspire to be.
 - Strengths and skills help us accomplish our goals.
 - O Strengths and skills help us address challenges.
- Everyone in the family has strengths and skills.
 - Strengths and skills are universal; everyone has strengths regardless of age, gender, income, mental health status, etc.



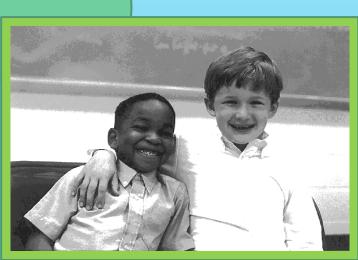
OSense of Competency/ Mastery

- Determination & persistence
- Takes pride in activities
- Develops/evaluates alternative solutions
- Task completion

OCaring and Respect for Self and Others

- Empathy
- Giving back; helping out
- Ability to compromise
- Giving others the benefit of the doubt





Smith & Elkins, 2010

OProblem Solving and 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

OOptimism and Hope for the Future

- Sense of humor
- Belief that things can get better
- Playful; Creativity; Exploration
- Joy in accomplishments





Smith & Elkins, 2010

OAbility to Reframe Stress

- Tolerates frustration
- Understands how perception influences outcomes
- Flexibility; able to adapt to change
- Can improvise

OSense of Purpose and Meaning

- Spirituality; higher purpose
- Feeling that you are loveable
- Self improvement
- Cultural heritage and traditions





Smith & Elkins, 2010

Test your knowledge of your strengths

Maryland Resilience Rating Scale

A Companion to the Maryland Resilience Poster

Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) Resilience Committee Contact: joan.smith@maryland.gov

Part I

The following are skills and strengths that people can develop through the support and example of their families and communities. Success and/or gains in these areas also have to do with age, developmental stage, cognitive ability, temperament, perception, and life events. Research shows that these factors promote resilience and are the basic foundation for good mental health.

Instructions: Please choose to rate either yourself, your child, or your family. Remember to keep the person/people being rated consistent for all the items. Using the scale below, please rate how often you feel that you, your child, or your family demonstrate(s) each component of resilience:

C = sometimes

B = almost never

D = most of the time

E = all of the time

Sense of Competency

- Belief that one can successfully accomplish goals
- Determination and persistence
- ☐ Ability to make independent decisions
- ☐ Ability to take independent action
- Self-motivation
- Pride in activities
- ☐ Healthy risk taking
- ☐ Task completion

Caring & Respect of Self & Others

- ☐ Feeling for what another person is going through
- ☐ Giving others the benefit of the doubt
- Honesty
- ☐ Giving back helping out
- ☐ Ability to compromise
- ☐ Healthy friendships
- ☐ Development of morals/values

C = sometimes

B = almost never

D = most of the time

E = all of the time

Problem Solving & Coping Skills

- Development and evaluation of alternative solutions
- ☐ Help-seeking when needed
- ☐ Willingness to admit and learn from mistakes
- ☐ Ability to soothe oneself
- Belief that one's actions can affect outcomes
- ☐ Accepting instruction and constructive criticism
- Sense that challenges can be understood, managed, and meaningful

Optimism & Hope for the Future

- ☐ Sense of humor
- ☐ Future orientation
- ☐ Belief that things can get better
- ☐ Joy in accomplishments
- ☐ Positive view of self and others
- Playfulness, creativity, and exploration
- ☐ Love of learning

C = sometimes

B = almost never

D = most of the time

E = all of the time

Ability to Reframe Stress, Disappointment, & Adversity

- ☐ Viewing challenges as opportunities
- Understanding how perception influences outcomes
- Tolerance of frustration and uncertainty
- Improvisation resourceful, creative problem-solving
- Positive development and growth in the face of challenges
- ☐ Flexibility
- ☐ Hardiness/endurance

Sense of Purpose & Meaning

- ☐ Spirituality higher purpose
- ☐ Belief that one's life matters
- Connection to cultural heritage and traditions
- Knowing that you can make a difference
- ☐ Feeling loveable
- ☐ Activities that bring fulfillment
- ☐ Self-improvement
- Connection to the natural world

C = sometimes

B = almost never

D = most of the time

E = all of the time

Part II

The following are things that families and communities can do to help people be more resilient, develop strengths, and feel valued.

Instructions: Please choose to rate the presence of these social supports in either your, your child's, or your family's life, using the scale above.

- ☐ Positive, secure relationships
- Nurturing, encouraging relationships
- ☐ High but realistic expectations
- Providing a sense of belonging
- ☐ Respect for boundaries
- ☐ Sense of safety and trust
- Meaningful opportunities for involvement

- Consistency and fairness
- Structure and limit setting
- Providing comfort in times of distress
- Communities that support children and families
- ☐ Modeling ways to be resilient
- Belief that all people can be successful

Character Strengths

- The Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Character Strengths provides another way of looking at "what's right" in ourselves and others.
 - The VIA classification system was developed by a team of positive psychologists led by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman.
 - The system was developed by compiling positive traits that have been consistently valued across cultures, religions, and time periods.
 - Additional information on this classification is available on the VIA Institute on Character website: http://www.viacharacter.org/www/
 - Free VIA Strengths Surveys (adult and youth versions) are available at: http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey

• Wisdom and Knowledge

- Creativity: originality, adaption, ingenuity
- O Curiosity: interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience
- O Love of learning: mastering new skills & topics, adding to knowledge
- Judgment: critical thinking, thinking things through, openmindedness
- O Perspective: wisdom, providing wise advise, looking at the big picture

O Courage

- O Bravery: valor, facing fears, speaking up for what's right
- Perseverance: persistence, industry, task completion
- O Honesty: authenticity, integrity
- Zest: vitality, enthusiasm, energy, feeling alive





O Humanity

O Love:
loving others and being loved, valuing close relationships

• Kindness: generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism

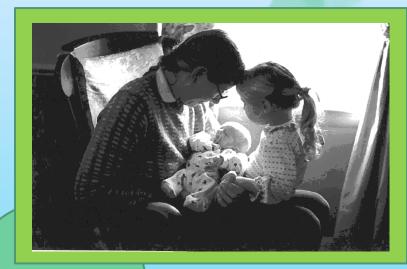
 Social intelligence: emotional intelligence, awareness of motives and feelings of self and others

O Justice

• Teamwork: citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty

• Fairness: justice, not letting feelings bias decisions about others

• Leadership: organizing group activities, encouraging others





O Temperance

• Forgiveness: mercy, accepting shortcomings, giving people a second chance

O Humility: modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves

• Self-regulation: self-control, discipline, managing impulses and emotions

O Prudence: careful, cautious, not taking undue risks

O Transcendence

• Appreciation of beauty: awe, wonder, elevation

• Gratitude: thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed

O Hope: optimism, future-mindedness

O Humor: playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lightheartedness

O Spirituality: religiousness, faith, purpose, meaning





Peterson & Seligman, 2004

VIA Survey & Results

- A free VIA Strengths survey is available at: http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey
- The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. Once you finish, you will get a report ranking your strengths. Your top or "signature" strengths will be listed first.
- We feel most fulfilled (most alive, most like ourselves) when we use our signature strengths. One way to increase wellbeing is to find new ways of using signature strengths. For some excellent suggestions, see 340 Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths by Tayyab Rashid and Afroze Anjum (2005).
- One example: Kindness
 - Do three small acts of kindness each day
 - O Donate blood
 - Visit someone in the hospital, a nursing home, or hospice
 - Use kind words in emails or on the phone
 - Greet people with a smile

Identifying Strengths

- There are multiple ways to identify strengths:
 - Take a strengths assessment, such as the VIA Survey.
 - Look for strengths in your everyday life.
 - Look for other people's strengths in everyday life.
 - Some activities:
 - Reflecting on your personal strengths
 - Strengths spotting identifying strengths in others
 - "Family Tree of Strengths"







- Think about a one family member.
 - Think about the 3-5 strengths you notice most in this person.
 - Write down these strengths along with specific concrete examples of times that this person displayed this strength.
- Go through your day with "strengths glasses."
 - Notice actions related to strengths in others.
 - Variation: Focus on one family member.

Family Tree of Strengths

- The goals of this activity are:
 - To identify the strengths of everyone in your family.
 - To identify the unique pattern of strengths in your family.
- Instructions:
 - Identify family member strengths.
 - Using a family tree format, list every family member's top strengths.
 - Meet as a family and discuss.
- O Discussion questions:
 - What patterns of strengths can we find? Are there some strengths that several family members share? Some that are unique to one family member?
 - Which family member(s) helped you develop your top strengths?
 - Are there behaviors you understand differently now that you know family members' top strengths?

My Family Tree



Promoting Resilience

- Other People Matter.
 - -Christopher Peterson
- O Positive, supportive relationships are the strongest predictor of resilience.
 - -Suniya Luthar







Social Support for Parents







- Positive, supportive relationships with friends, family members, neighbors, and/or community members provide parents with several types of resources:
 - Emotional support i.e., listening and showing empathy
 - O Informational support i.e., offering advice
 - Instrumental support i.e., helping with childcare or transportation
 - Spiritual support i.e., providing encouragement.
- O Positive social connections also allow parents to "give back" to those in need.
- When parents are facing major stressors (i.e., illness, trauma), extra support from formal services can be helpful.

Strengthening Families, Center for the Study of Social Policy http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/the-basics/protective-factors

Social Support for Children

- Children thrive when the social environment (family, community) provides them with a sense of safety, competency, and secure attachments.
- Families and communities can foster children's resilience by:
 - Having high but realistic expectations
 - Demonstrating consistency and fairness
 - Providing a sense of belonging
 - Providing comfort in times of distress
 - Modeling resilience
 - Offering opportunities for involvement
 - Providing a sense of safety and trust
 - Believing that all people can be successful.



Smith & Elkins, 2010

The Role of Family

- There are many "everyday" ways that families support resilience in child and adult members.
 - Positive rituals and routines
 - Shared family meals
 - Family stories
 - Fun and laughter





Positive Routines and Rituals

- Routines and rituals are specific, repeated practices. Routines are focused on getting things done. Rituals involve communication about ideas or beliefs.
- Examples: bedtime, mealtime, holiday celebrations, sports, church
- How do routines and rituals promote resilience?
 - Routines provide structure. They explain who does what in the family, show who is in and who is outside the family, and define roles of everyday life.
 - Rituals provide opportunities for family members to form strong emotional connections with each other.
 - Rituals declare the family's identity and reinforce the family's belief system.
 - Rituals connect the family with past and future generations and encourage positive visions of the future.





Shared Family Meals

- Shared mealtimes are specific family routines that may become rituals for some families.
- Examples: dinnertime, special meals like Sunday dinner or a birthday dinner
- How do shared meals promote resilience?
 - Family mealtimes provide an opportunity for involving multiple family members in joint interaction and for sharing information that organizes family life.
 - Family mealtimes reinforce cohesion, communication, and role modeling.
 - Family mealtimes rich in conversation help children with academic achievement and literacy.
 - Families who successfully carry out shared mealtimes on a regular basis have children with fewer behavior problems.

Fiese et al., 2002; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007

Family Stories

- Family storytelling is a way of talking over family experiences, in which family members develop a shared understanding and sense of meaning about events.

 Examples: Stories about "when you were little" or "when I was a child"
- How do family stories promote resilience?
 - Family stories help members understand family roles and relationships. Stories shared with children about their early years teach them about their place and emotional value in the family, fostering a sense of belonging.
 - Family stories reflect the unique voice and values of the family, helping members understand the family's shared sense of meaning.
 - Storytelling allows family members to "take a step back" and interpret past events with an eye to the future.







Fun & Laughter

- How do fun and laughter promote resilience?
 - Fun and laughter help people relax both physically and mentally.
 - Laughter, like mild exercise, increases blood flow and exercises the muscles. This produces a physical release of tension.
 - Fun and laughter reduce stress by helping people see the lighter side of stressful situations.
 - Fun and laughter help us develop a positive, optimistic outlook on life. Humor helps us see the "big picture," notice the good as well as the bad, and create positive visions of the future.
 - Humor, laughter, and family fun build positive family relationships, which are central to healthy development.

The Role of Resilient Communities

- Children and families flourish when they are supported by resilient communities.
- Community resilience refers to a process of using networked adaptive capacities to promote positive functioning and adaption.
 - Economic development
 - Social capital
 - Information and communication
 - Community competence

Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008

Take Away Message: Sustaining Wellness

- Mental health and health cannot be separated
- No mental health without family unity and community involvement and support
- Change the question from "What is wrong?" to "How can we work together to build on strengths and mobilize resources?"

For Families

Things to look for in selecting a strengths-based mental health provider:

Strengths-based assessment

Includes positively phrased questions

-Example: I expect good things to come my way

Incorporates strengths language

-Example: Is kind to younger children

Strengths-based goal planning

Describes the strengths we want to see rather than the behavior we want to stop

-Example: Deonte will display improved ability to manage conflict with siblings as evidenced by exhibiting good sportsmanship and following directions during structured games.

Incorporates child and/or family strengths as tools to enhance wellness.

-Example: Mike will display improved teamwork and leadership skills by sharing his knowledge of mechanics with peers during model car building and racing activities.

More things to look for in selecting a strengths-based mental health provider:

Strengths-based treatment

Strengths are identified and discussed during each treatment session

-Example: What went well this week? What strengths did you use?

Strengths are used to enhance wellness and address challenges

-Example: You do a great job of showing gratitude to your friends. What other people might you want to show gratitude to? What do you think would happen if you did?

Feedback on strengths-focus

Therapists seek feedback about strengths activities/discussions/goals at the end of treatment sessions

Consumer surveys include a question about strengths

-Example: During therapy, were your/your child's strengths identified and taken into consideration in developing your treatment plan?

For Providers

- Collaborative documentation
 - A process through which clinicians and consumers join in the writing of assessment, treatment planning, and progress notes.
 - This interaction allows consumers to provide immediate feedback on services, including whether strengths were addressed.
- In the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, clinicians found that collaborative documentation:
 - Reinforced treatment goals and progress for consumers.
 - Provided clinicians with immediate feedback.
 - Reduced paperwork burden for clinicians.
- For more information, see The National Council for Behavioral Health website and/or webinar:
 - https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/events-and-training/webinars/
 - http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/NC-C-and-A-CD-Training-3-21-12.pdf

Connecting to Trauma Informed Care

http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma.asp

Respect

Informed

Connected

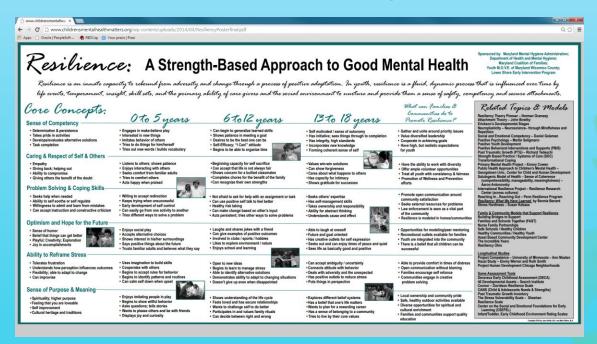
Hopeful regarding their own recovery

Understand interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma (e.g., substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety)

Work in a collaborative way with children, family and support systems, and other human services agencies

Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

- SAMHSA: More information about National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is at http://www.samhsa.gov/children/.
- www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org



Resources

- Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/
- Devereux Resilient Family Blog http://resilientfamilyblog.org/
- Little Children, Big Challenges from Sesame Street

 http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/challenges
- Reaching In... Reaching Out http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/
- Resilience Resource Center (Australia) http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/resiliency/
- Strengthening Families from the Center for the Study of Social Policy http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families
- Strengthening Families Coping Resources http://sfcr.umaryland.edu
- Values in Action Institute http://www.viacharacter.org/www/
- Values in Action Strengths Surveys http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey
- O Zero to Three http://www.zerotothree.org

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network is supported through funding from the Donald J. Cohen National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

www.nctsn.org

http://learn.nctsn.org/

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