Building Resilience in Our Children and Teens

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Cultural Considerations and Context
Definitions of resilience and what constitutes resilient behavior need to take into account cultural context, diversity and family constellation.

During the pandemic: loss of life, divisiveness, exhaustion and daily uncertainty and unrest.


Family values, religious beliefs, and cultural norms regarding emotional expression. Is strong emotion expression acceptable? How might it be expressed > body?

Racial and ethnic identity and involvement with religious institutions.

Outside systems at play:
If family speaks several languages, what is the vocabulary for emotion expression?

What resources are available?

Disclosure

Co-author: Resilience Builder Program for children and adolescents: Enhancing social competence and self-regulation;

Relaxation and Self-Regulation Techniques for children and teens: Mastering the Mind-body connection (CD and digital);

Relaxation and Wellness Techniques: Mastering the Mind-body connection (CD and digital)
Royalties: Research Press.

Co-author: Conquer Negative Thinking for Teens: A workbook to breaking the nine thought habits that are holding you back. Royalties: New Harbinger.
What makes us Happy, Motivated, Engaged and Productive and helps us Overcome Challenges & Adversity?

Increasing the Odds

“Life is not always a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes of playing a poor hand well.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

Resilience video

Goal is to increase the number of protective and resource factors in the life of a child and family (and at school and the community)
Kauai Study (Werner and Smith)

- Central component contributing to effective coping in adulthood appeared “to be a feeling of confidence that the odds can be surmounted”.

- The key concept is that while you can’t control everything, you can control many aspects of your life. BEING PROACTIVE!

What factors contribute to resilience?

Risk & Protective Factors Related to Substance Misuse, ADHD, LD, etc.

**Risk Factors**
- Physical trauma
- Temperment
- Early aggressive behavior
- Poor self-concept
- Poor parental monitoring
- Parental alcoholism & drug use
- Peer substance use
- Academic failure
- Lack of commitment to school
- Characteristics of community

**Protective Factors**
- Self-advocacy
- Strong personal social skills/esteem
- Ability to recover from upset
- Parental monitoring/supervision
- Emotional support
- Positive bonding
- Affiliation of close friends
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- Social support networks
- Community sponsored activities
Self-Efficacy

- What CAN you control?
- What CAN you do something about?
- Belief that you CAN try – make a difference
- Not catastrophize – what would you tell a friend in the same situation?
- Using Reality checks

Building Resilience

**Identity Development (APA, 2021)**

- **Cultural socialization**
  Promoting racial and ethnic pride by teaching about history and customs.
- **Preparation for bias**
  Building awareness about discrimination and helping children and adolescents develop coping strategies.
- **Promotion of mistrust**
  Communicating the need for caution and vigilance when interacting with people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- **Egalitarianism**
  Emphasizing equality among all racial/ethnic groups.

**Mental Flexibility**

Making mistakes and tolerating uncertainty

**Holding on to the negative means carrying a lot of stuff around – takes a toll**
**Proactive Orientation**
- Self-efficacy (Rutter, Bandura)
- Positive future orientation (Wyman et al)
- Personal control (Walsh)
- Initiative (Werner & Smith)
- Optimistic thinking (Seligman)
- Hopefulness
- Independence & Self-Reliance with the ability to ask for help when needed
- Flexible Thinking and problem-solving

**Self-Regulation**
- Stress Management
- Eating properly and **sufficient sleep!**
- Perspective-taking
- On-the-Mark Thinking leads to On-the-Mark emotions and behavior
- Environmental Controls
- Interrelated: bonding & better control > involved w/ friends/activities/family

**Relaxation and Calm Down**
- Guided Imagery
- **Self-Talk**
- Visualization
- Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Yoga
- Physical Activity
- Mindfulness vs. Mindlessness

**Academic Achievement**
- Classroom Engagement
- Academic Motivation
- Resources to support learning
- Good Problem Solving Skills (Options & Choices)
- Planning Ability
- Commitment to school
Special Talents, Creativity

- “Island of Competence” (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001) – sports, arts, etc., what is your child interested in?
- Insight
- Positive Self-Concept; Sense of Uniqueness
- Ability to use one’s talents effectively
- Sense of Humor

Proactive Parenting

- At least one warm, loving parent or surrogate
- Firm limits and boundaries
- Consistency and structure
- Monitoring
- High behavioral expectations
- Helping children take the initiative and responsibility – self-reliance and self-assurance
- Positive Attachment

Connections and Attachments

- Positive Social Orientation
- Good Communication Skills
- Sense of belonging & attachments
- Support systems
- Having at least one close friend
- Ability to express empathy
- Friends that support health

Specific Praise & cooperation among sibs

Encourage the behaviors and attitude you WANT to see, and not what you don’t want

Selective attention is powerful
Community Protective Factors

- Elders in the Community
- Adult Role Models
- Presence of at least One Confidant
- Teachers who challenge, listen, and root for them!
- Involvement in activities
- Effective schools

CBT Model

Mind-Body-Behavior-Emotion Connection

Resilience Builder Program® (RBP)

- Group therapy intervention developed by Dr. Alvord in 1992; published in 2011.
- Framework: Uses CBT strategies to teach resilience-based skills.
- Aims: Build resilience, enhance social competence & self-regulation of emotions/behaviors.
- Flexible adaptation:
  - Kindergarten through high school
  - Transdiagnostic presentations: ADHD, anxiety, autism, etc.
  - Clinical and school settings
Resilience Builder Program® (RBP)

- Incorporates the Protective Factors from the resilience literature
- Evidence-based
- Focus on Leadership skills

Encouraging hopefulness, building self-esteem, and focusing on gratitude

Compliment basket

Being ProActive (empowering) vs. Reactive (disruptive) vs. Passive (helpless victim)


Teach kids and teens about Self-Talk

Off-the-Mark for Children gr 3-8: p 270 Seven Thinking Errors or Bouncing Buddies for K-2

For teens: The “I Can’t” Habit; The Catastrophizing Habit; The All or Nothing Habit; The Zooming in on the Negative Habit; The “I Should, You Should” Habit; The Fortune-telling Habit; The Mind-reading Habit; The Blaming Habit; The “It’s Not Fair!” Habit.

(Alvord & McGrath, 2017)
I CAN – try – change – I CAN

Resilience

Bottom-Line Core skills
- Proactivity - initiative & responsibility
- Self-efficacy. Self-talk. Optimism, hopefulness, and problem-solving
- Identity Development
- Reciprocity
- Flexibility & adaptability
- Self-regulation
- Attachments & Connections
- Social support

Resources: Resilience in Minorities
- Task Force Report on Resilience and Strength in African-American Children and Adolescents (apa.org)
- Building resilience among black boys (apa.org)
- How to discuss race with Black teens and their families (apa.org)
- Psychological Research on Immigrants and Refugees (apa.org)

Resources on Resilience from APA
- Building your resilience (apa.org) (for adults!)
- Resilience guide for parents and teachers (apa.org)
- Resilience for teens: Got bounce? (apa.org)