

Why Some Bounce Back and Some Never Do...



.....The Phenomenon of
Resilience

Today's presenter:



- Pat is currently a trainer with the Rutgers University School of Social Work. She has spent over 40 years working in the field of abuse and neglect prevention.
- She has worked to establish child abuse prevention programs in 16 countries outside the US. She has also written a Protective Factors curriculum which stresses the important role we all play in keeping children safe, supporting families and strengthening our communities.
- She is a well known speaker/trainer across the country well as abroad.
- Today, she will share her research and experience about a topic she has presented on for more than 10 years – the phenomenon of resilience.

Today's Presentation:

- Define "resilience"
- Brief history of our research
- New innate connections to resilience
- The effect environment can have on resilience
- Protective Factors that promote resilience
- How we can teach resilience

A Quick Survey:

1. Resilience is a trait some people seem to be born with and others are not.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Not sure
2. Have you ever heard of a genetic connection to resilience?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

"Resilience" – We hear a lot about bouncing back!



What does it mean to you?

- Positive coping
- Persistence
- Adaptation
- Success despite adverse circumstances
- The ability to keep going during very difficult times

Webster's Dictionary defines it as:

“the capacity to spring back to the original form or shape after being stretched, bent or compressed; flexibility, *elasticity*; the capacity to rebound quickly from misfortune or illness.”

But for the purposes of this webinar, let's define resilience as:

“The human capacity to face, overcome, *be strengthened by* or even *transformed by* the adversities of life.”

Poll!

I am the person I am today based on the difficult experiences I have had in my life?

- 1. True
- 2. False
- 3. I don't know



So what do we know about this thing called “resilience?”

We know it begins in infancy and continues all through adulthood.



However, resilience is *not* a “trait”. It is a skill.

Resilience is re-newable.



Resilience takes work and practice!

In some ways, building resilience is like building muscles....you have to work at it!

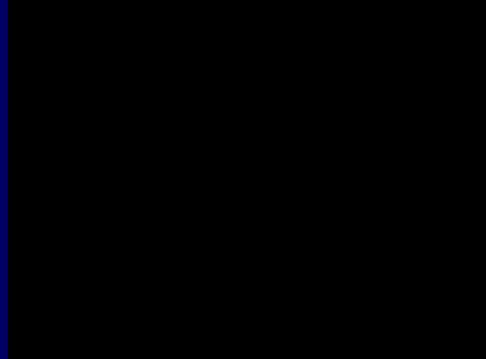


Resilience is not a “crash course” – it takes PRACTICE!

We know that whether or not individuals become resilient to stressors often depends on whether or not there are *positive interventions* by *significant individuals*.



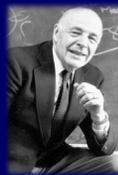
Center for the Developing Child - Harvard University



Resilience has been studied for decades!

Dr. Norman Garmezy, from the University of Minnesota - considered the "Grandfather of Resilience Research" - began his research in the 1960's.

Dr Ann Masten, a fellow U of M researcher joined him in 1970 and, together, they changed the face of resilience research.



This may surprise you...

■ "Perhaps the most surprising finding about resilience is how ordinary it is -- because what began as a quest to understand the *extraordinary*, has revealed the power of the *ordinary*."

■ - Dr. Ann Masten, U of MN

Relatively new research is showing us a genetic pathway to discovering the "why" of resilience.

G (genes) **X** **E** (environment)

Acting alone and together.....



In 2003...an amazing discovery!

Terri Moffett from the Rutter's Institute in London & Avshalom Caspi from the U of Wisconsin discovered an actual *resilience gene*!



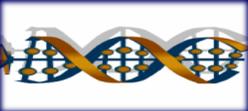
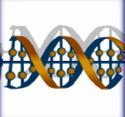
This newly discovered 5HTT-LPR gene has one function....
to carry and regulate Serotonin in the brain.

If regulated properly, serotonin promotes well-being and protects against depression when there is stress or trauma.




In humans, each 5-HTT-LPR gene has 2 alleles (characteristics of the gene)

Each allele occurs in either a long or a short version.

How do they differ?



The longer version is twice as efficient as the shorter one in transporting needed serotonin to the brain.

Which version of the gene would you rather have?

1. Two shorts
2. Two longs
3. One of each



...research has found that people with at **least one short allele** are less resistant to depression than those with 2 long versions

Two longs seem to give the carriers a better chance of “bouncing back” under negative circumstances.





Can rhesus monkeys with 96% of our DNA tell us something about this newly discovered gene?



Dr. Stephen Suomi set out to find how the 5HTT-LPR gene works in his lab monkeys

Two years later, he began to experiment with the 2 groups:

Hundreds of times, strangers kept entering the lab – people the monkeys had never seen before.



The results of Suomi's experiment supported the role of the 5HTT-LPR gene.

- Peer-raised monkeys all ran to the back of the cage - highly distressed, hanging onto each other.
- Mother-raised monkeys: disinterested, stayed in middle of cage
- Slowly, some peer-raised monkeys ventured to the center of the cage... though some never did.
- When tested, the peer-raised monkeys who came forward, were generally the ones with **two long alleles**.

Suomi's Findings

"Short versions of the 5HTT-LPR gene are associated with deficits in neurobehavioral functioning and in poor control of aggression as well as low serotonin metabolism in monkeys who experienced insecure early social attachments but..... not in the monkeys who developed secure attachments with their mothers during infancy."

University of California at Davis 2006

IOW.....the environmental bond of mother and child proved more influential than the genetic make up of the "short versioned monkeys"!

Further findings:

- "Monkeys possessing long versions of the 5HTT-LPR gene exhibit normal neurobehavioral functioning, control of aggression and serotonin metabolism regardless of their early attachment relationships!"
- IOW..... monkeys who had long versions of the gene, still were able to cope even if they did not have the nurturing attachment of their mothers!

Monkeys are OK... but what about humans and the 5HTT-LPR gene?

Dr Joan Kaufman – Yale University

- 196 children – 5-15 years old
- 109 removed from their homes by CPS
- Compared to a second non-abused group of children with the same demographics
- Questionnaire about people in their lives
- DNA testing of all children – 5-HTT

Her findings:

The abused children with **2 short 5-HTT-LPR versions** had a higher mean score for depression than the abused children with **two longs** - and the non-abused children – no matter what version they had!

But when the “E” (**environment**) is considered, marked differences occur!

The mean depression score for abused children with **2 short alleles** who *rarely* saw the adults they named as “someone significant” to them - was off the charts.

But abused children with **2 short alleles** who saw the adults they counted on *daily or almost daily*, had depression scores very close to the scores of children with **2 long alleles** and within reach of the children who had not been abused!

Why is this so significant to us and to our families?

- As a group, children with 2 short 5HTT-LPRs fared pretty badly when their environments failed them.
- But those with 2 long 5HTT-LPRs seemed to have a genetic shield which helped them to “bounce back”.



5HTT-LPR acts as a buffer to adversity but in the *absence of adversity*, it never kicks in!

That's why this is strictly a resilience gene! If there is no stress, no trauma, the need for serotonin is minimal, so the gene lies dormant - dropping out of the psychological picture!

Time Magazine: January 17, 2011

“Scientists have found that people with one form (shorter allele) of a gene that carries serotonin are especially prone to difficulty when faced with traumatic events, such as being diagnosed with an illness or being a victim of childhood abuse. That version prevents nerve cells in the brain from reabsorbing serotonin, which may make it harder for them to recover emotionally from a crisis.”

“Are you wondering.....?”

- 17% of the human population is estimated to have 2 shorts, 51 % carry 1 long and 1 short and approx. 31% have 2 longs.
- 33% of the white population has 2 long alleles.
- African-Americans are more likely to have a long.



Americans Want to Know!



NeuroMark, Inc. began selling test kits in 2006....so you can find out about your 5HTT-LPR gene!*

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)

Drugs which inhibit the movement of excess serotonin back into the nerve endings which released it.

Lexapro



So what does all this mean to us?



But remember, that's the "G" influence....where does the "E" come in?

Genes are only one factor on a scale that can be tipped - significantly - with good support and meaningful relationships.

"E"nvironment can have a profound influence on resilience.



Within our environments, we have people who may interact with us in a variety of roles. They can build *protective factors* which reduce risks, build capacity and foster resilience.

What are those protective factors that shield us - and especially our children - from these environmental dangers - that help to make them more resilient to trauma?



If we increase these Protective Factors we can increase levels of resilience.

- Caring relationships
- High expectations
- Belief in one's self and the ability to make a difference

1. Caring Relationships

- Trust
- Unconditional love
- Quiet availability
- Simple, sustained kindness



We all need to feel that our families *and* people outside our family care about us.



“For some kids it takes 10,000 gallons, and for some kids it’s just a couple of little drops.”

— Geoffrey Canada,
Harlem’s Children’s Zone



“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” -Leo Buscaglia

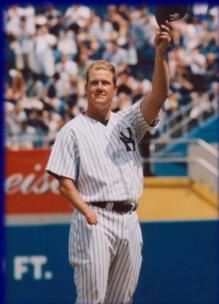
Who do you remember??



2. Setting goals - means there’s a future.
Goals give kids hope.
Goals lead to accomplishments.

Jim Abbott:

- U of M- retired number
- Golden Spikes Award
- Gold in 1988 Olympics
- 1st Round Draft in MLB
- 1993 - No Hitter against Cleveland Indians (Albert Belle, Jim Thome, Manny Ramirez, Kenny Lofton, Sandy Alomar)



3. They can make a difference in the world.

Give individuals a “sense of purpose”.

Why are they here?



In order to help them find that “meaning to their lives,” we need to look beyond the surface.



As a review: Which of these three strategies for increasing resilience do you think you might be able to work a bit harder on – adapt more fully with your children, your clients?

1. Increase Caring Relationships
2. Focus on Setting the Bar High
3. Tell People They Matter
4. Not really useful

Resilient people....

....Ask for help!

....Don't dwell on the past.

...Connect!
Connect!
Connect!

....Are optimistic

....Laugh every chance they get!

Time for a promise...

1. Resilient people stay socially connected even in this “social distancing” world!



“Being isolated without connections is the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day – health-wise.”

-Dr. Darlene Minninni
University of Southern California
The Emotional Toolkit



Task: Before midnight tomorrow, contact someone you have not spoken to in a while....

2. Resilient people are problem solvers.



Need it near?
You'll find it here!

My Community Directory+Diary

They also ask for help!

Task: Think of ways to teach your children that asking for help is a *strength*! How can you do that? What might convince them?

3. Resilient people are often “positive copers”.

If you avoid unpleasant thoughts, emotions and memories, researchers are discovering that you might actually be able to *adapt to adverse situations and recover more quickly*.



Task: What are you ruminating about?
“Let it go!”

4. Resilient people are often positive and optimistic

“Frame adversity as a *challenge*, and you become more flexible and able to deal with it, move on, learn from it, and grow. Focus on it, frame it as a *threat*, and a *potentially traumatic event* becomes an enduring problem. You become more inflexible, and more likely to be negatively affected.”

-Dr. George Bonanno - Columbia University Teachers College

Task: How can you 're-frame' some of this stressful time and turn it into something positive?



5. Resilient people have a sense of humor!



Laughter

- ...triggers your endorphins,
- ...boosts your immune system
- ...relieves tension and stress
- ...relaxes muscles for up to 45 minutes!



Task: Count how many times you laugh tomorrow!

Some more recent discoveries:

Long term studies in human brain development have resulted in scientists discovering the "neuroplasticity" of the brain - its ability to evolve during our lifetime – *growing, adjusting, adapting* as we face a plethora of experiences.



What would happen to us if we did not have this neuroplasticity?

... *growing, adjusting, adapting*

Dr. Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun- UNC Charlotte
Specialize in bereavement and trauma in adults - 30 years of research

Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) – Although an experience is traumatic, in the aftermath of it, people find that they have learned something valuable, they have changed the way they look at life, their values have changed or, for many, they have had a "personal transformation".

Their findings indicate:

50%-75% of those they worked with, report a **positive change** as the result of the trauma they experienced and the way they got through it. It is *not* the trauma that made them grow but the way the trauma itself was *handled* that created a positive, growth experience for them.

5 Domains where people experienced PTG

1. Personal Strength
2. New Appreciation of life
3. Relate better with others
4. New possibilities
5. Spiritual change

So far:

History of resilience
Characteristics of resilience
Genetic connection to resilience
Characteristics of resilient individuals
Why resilience is important
New discoveries about PTG



- “All humans possess the same fundamental stress-response system, which has evolved over millions of years and which we share with other animals. The vast majority of people are pretty good at using that system to deal with stress. When it comes to resilience, the question is: Why do some people use the system so much more frequently or effectively than others?”

- NY Times Magazine, December 2016
“The Profound Emptiness of Resilience”

A simple exercise:

- Think about a time when a close friend was struggling with a rather big mistake he or she might have made and has come to you for advice/support or just to air his/her feelings.
- Please write down the words of encouragement/support might you offer your friend. What word might describe the **tone** you would use as you offer to help?



Now, think about a time when you made a rather big mistake and were stressed.

- How do you typically talk to yourself in these situations?
- Now, write the words you might say to yourself.
- What **tone** would you use as you talk to yourself?



Is the way you responded to your friend similar to the way you talk to yourself?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Somewhat

Poll!



Dove Commercial

Another Approach: Asset Building:
International Resilience Project headed by Dr.
Edith Grotberg

- Experts from 30 countries developed a practical guide to promote resilience in children- intended originally for children who live in war or are severely disadvantaged



The Philippines

Northern Ireland

Sudan

Thailand

Cost Rica

South Africa

Croatia

Russia

The International Resilience Project

- 30 nation representatives discovered their issues were similar to those around the world.
- What has been effective in building resilience?
- Three sources of resilience – people may have one but that may not be enough to help them flourish. All three working together is the optimal scenario.

Their findings: Children need
3 sources of resilience.

“I Have” – external supports such as relationships, structure, role models

“I Am” – internal, personal strengths such as feelings, attitudes and beliefs

“I Can” – social and interpersonal skills such as communicating, organizing, problem solving,

“I have....”



- External Supports:

.....people who love me.

.....friends who can help me.

.....someone to take care of me if I am sick.

.....a teacher who thinks I am great!

“I am....”

Internal Personal Strengths:

-a confident person.
-able to see life's positives.
-a responsible person.
-honest and hard working.



“I can...”

Social and Interpersonal Skills:

-talk to someone if I have a problem.
-control my emotions when I am upset.
- help others with their problems.
-ask for help if I need it.



None of these factors is *solely* responsible for resilience

When they work in *unison* – external supports, personal strengths and social skills - resilience can be the result.



The Search Institute in Minneapolis, MN

Their 40 Assets document has become a well-known source of information on how to encourage and evaluate healthy, caring children



40 Developmental Assets® for Early Childhood (ages 3 to 5)

40 Developmental Assets® for Children Grades K–3 (ages 5-9)

40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood (ages 8-12)

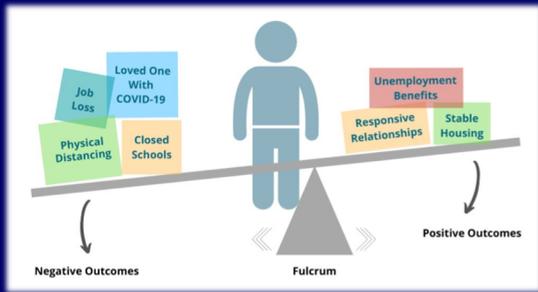
40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

The Pandemic and Resilience



We can't see the enemy.....which makes it much more frightening!

Center on the Developing Child,
Harvard University



Remember: Resilience is a **SKILL**. We can learn it! That means, we can teach it!



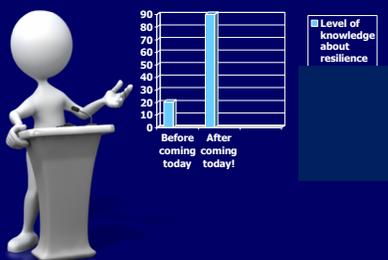
1. To re-frame your experiences.
2. To re-examine your many assets.
3. That resilience is a *skill* that takes practice – everyday!
4. The tasks you promised to do ..call someone, let things go, be more positive andlaugh a lot!



“People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.”

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Thank you for
attending this workshop!
I hope you have learned a lot!



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