

When we view children and youth as transcendent beings with an amazing capacity for resiliency, rather than as a conglomerate of risks and problems, we will change their worlds and thus, change the world we all live in. (from Resiliency in Action, p. 3)

How to Help Children Build Resilience

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Risk Factors, Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

- ACES Survey
- Reflections

The Basics

- Risk and Trauma
- Paradigm and Framework—The Inborn Capacity for Self-righting, transformation and change
- Stories
- Our Resilience
- Making a difference—Effective tools and an Outward Mindset

Case Study—Sara and others



What We Know

- At least 50%, and up to 70-75% of children who grow up in "high-risk" conditions develop social competence and lead successful lives.
- The "biological imperative for growth and development" provides an innate resiliency and the capacity to develop traits found in resilient people.
- Resilience is an inborn capacity for self-righting.
- Families, schools and communities **can enhance resilience** by providing environments and relationships known to buffer the effects of adversity and provide opportunities for children in risky environments that enable success and positive outcomes.

Positive Outcomes

- Protective factors (buffers) have a greater impact on the life course of children than do risk factors themselves.
- Protective Factors transcend ethnic, social class, geographical and historical boundaries.
- The plasticity of the brain combined with the thrust of all human development toward progress and potential move children toward normal adult development in all but the most persistent adverse circumstances.

(from, Resiliency in Action, Nan Henderson, Editor)

Relationships and Process

- Resilience develops at the relational level where beliefs and opportunities for participation and personal power are an inherent part of every interaction, every intervention and every experience.

It is ALWAYS process and not program or product!

One thing we can do NOW!

What are WE to DO?

- The question is, "Will we care for, nurture and teach children who do not yet exhibit appropriate and socially acceptable behaviors in environments that support their goodness, their strengths and their potential?" ^{LP}

Risk Factors—a few

- Poverty without access to resources
- Sexual abuse
- Removal from home
- Parental substance abuse
- Parental mental illness
- Teen age parents
- Chronic parental unemployment
- Learning disability—especially difficulty reading!
- Difficult temperament

Biology and Experience

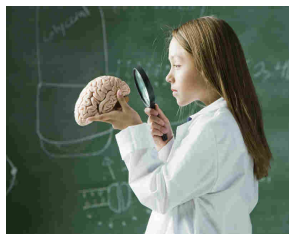
- Typical developmental processes can be damaged or delayed by repeated (severe) trauma and daily experiences in which it is frightening or futile to ask for what you need or even to exist.^{LP}

Hypervigilance

- Reactive and protective behaviors that develop in response to the child's relationships and experiences.
- Initially present at birth, but not ameliorated by nurture, the reactive brain, in pursuit of survival and warmth, attempts to get human responses in exaggerated and often inappropriate ways. Without healing, development may be diminished and delayed.
- Mis-cues, non-attuned and incoherent adult responses, including abuse and neglect, strengthen the existing reactive neural pathways, resulting in a hypervigilant response system.

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The Hand Model of the Brain




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Impact on the Brain

Because the Stress Response directly effects the brain and the development of memory, "Children who experience adversity at an early age **are more likely to exhibit deficits in executive functioning.**"

Impulse control and self-regulation are specifically effected!



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Behaviors in Children and Adults

- Explosive
- Volatile
- Angry
- Anxious
- Unpredictable
- Intense
- Erratic



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Taming the Bear--Calming the Hypervigilant Reactive System

Impulsivity is the default and will reign supreme and grow stronger absent the creation of and support for a system of new and different neural pathways to compete with the existing impulsive survival system.

Two things have to occur through caring relationships:

1. Diminish the existing impulsive path, script and destination through intentional non-triggering.
2. Create a new path, script and destination through healing relationships, gentle, nurturing, attuned and responsive interactions


Optimal Period = First 9-10 months of life, then early childhood.

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Make it Worse or Make it Better?

Competent Giant

Chris



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What Children Need From Us

- Security
- Trust
- Connection
- Contribution
- Capability
- Friendship
- Emotional Regulation=Social Skills



Buffer—A consistent nurturing person

- Children who live in and experience risk factors and ACEs in an environment that includes at least one **consistently available nurturing person** seem to be able to cope and integrate their experiences effectively.

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Healing comes through

- Relaxation
- Joy
- Fun
- Happiness
- Physical activity—especially outdoor time!
- Happy relationships
- Music, Art and Creativity

Measuring Up

- How do our Early Learning Programs and K-12 education measure up to the processes we KNOW will benefit children at all ages—even ALL children?

Things we KNOW work!

- Warm, caring adults
- Reasonable expectations with support and encouragement for attainment
- LOTS of outdoor time
- Art (not crafts)
- Music
- Open-ended time for child initiated learning experiences

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Every Person Needs

- To know that someone cares
- Someone to listen to their stories
- To feel safe
- To make meaningful contributions
- To feel successful
- To make progress
- To have joy and happiness
- To have time to explore and discover
- To use their personal power


The Outward Mindset

- Kansas City PD
- Parents invitation to children

What is it that we want?

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

— Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa



The Process

- How do we decide what to feel?
- How do we decide what to think?
- How do we decide what to believe?
- How do we decide what to do?

Not Determinate

- Resilience is the capacity to draw forth our courage and cleverness in the face of challenges, struggles and hardship. Early childhood professionals have a great opportunity to give children the tools and skills they will need to find their inner strength and reach their potential.

Everyone will have hardships

- All people experience adversity during their lifetime. Trials, disappointments, sadness, sickness, and heartache are a difficult part of life. Learning to manage, cope, and integrate life experiences occurs effectively in **an environment of understanding and encouraging** families and schools that empathize, understand, support and then call us up to keep going, keep trying and keep progressing. LP

Hard isn't bad, it's just hard!

- We cannot prevent loss, pain or sadness nor protect children from every difficulty that will fall upon them, but we can be there to catch them and lift them.
- Listening, wondering and inviting resilience will change them and may change the trajectory of their lives.

Belief Behind the Behavior

- Describe the experience in a phrase
- Perceive/Observe (The most vivid part)
- Interpret: What were you feeling and thinking?
- Decision: In order to survive in this world, I need to _____
- Belief system: I am _____ others are _____ the world/life is _____ and therefore, I belong (am loved) only if I _____
- Behavior adopted

Process and Share

- How has your experience shaped your relationships and decisions?
- Were you aware of the belief behind the behavior? Of the feelings and thought behind the belief?
- How can you change your decision, your belief and your behaviors to support your life?
- What do you wish would have happened?

Desirable Characteristics

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsiveness Cultural flexibility Empathy Caring Communication skills Sense of humor Problem solving Optimism Spiritual connectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical and creative thinking Autonomy Self-efficacy Self-awareness Task mastery Adaptive distancing A sense of purpose Faith and hope Educational aspirations
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Resilience Informed Practice

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the resiliency attitude! Be curious about what the child needs. Adopt a strengths perspective. Use the Resiliency Wheel Provide care and support Set reasonable expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote contribution and involvement Improve and increase bonds and connections Collaboratively set and maintain clear boundaries Develop life skills Be patient! Give it time.
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Individual Resiliency Builders—

Resilient children usually demonstrate a core set of 3 or 4 of these.

■ Relationships	■ Positive View of Personal Future
■ Service/Gives to a cause	■ Flexibility-adjusting to change
■ Life Skills	■ Love of Learning
■ Humor	■ Self-motivation
■ Inner Direction	■ Competence
■ Perceptiveness	■ Self-Worth
■ Independence	■ Spirituality
■ Perseverance	■ Creativity

Relationships that Buffer and Enhance Individual Resilience

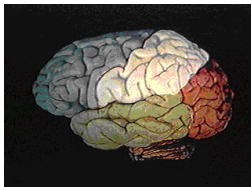
1. Help children feel connected—Belonging and Significance
2. Are mutually respectful and encouraging—Kind and Firm at the same time.
3. Recognize that children are ALWAYS feeling, thinking and deciding about their experiences, their world and how to thrive or survive in it.
4. Teach important social and life skills—respect, problem solving, cooperation and contribution.
5. Invite children to discover how capable they are and encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy. (from Positive Discipline, by Jane Nelsen)

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Connect to Heal

■ The Three Part Brain

- Survival
- Emotion
- Thinking



Community

- If we have contact with another, we are part of their community, part of their tribe. Each of us can help to provide experiences, relationships, knowledge and support for children and their families to become full participants in the community. Anything less is _____.

A Booklist for Resilience

- *The Anatomy of Peace*, The Arbinger Institute
- *Leadership and Self-deception*, The Arbinger Institute
- *The Outward Mindset*, The Arbinger Institute
- *Parenting From the Inside Out*, Daniel Siegel
- *White Fang*, Jack London
- *Call of the Wild*, Jack London
- *Hatchet*, Gary Paulsen
- *Tribe*, Sebastian Junger
