

The Path to Resiliency

Orlando J. Gonzalez, MEd, LMHC
Director
UM Employee Assistance Program

Objectives

1. Define and gain a better understanding of resiliency
2. Identify characteristics of resilient individuals
3. Outline ways to develop resilience

Question?

How is it, when several people are exposed to the same stressor, that some of them break down while others remain healthy or even thrive?

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory has its roots in the study of children who proved resilient despite adverse childhood environments.

Resilience theory addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity.

Resilience Defined:

George Vaillant (1993) defines resilience as the “self-righting tendency” of the person, “both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back” (p. 248). (Goldstein, 1997, p. 30)

Resilience Defined:

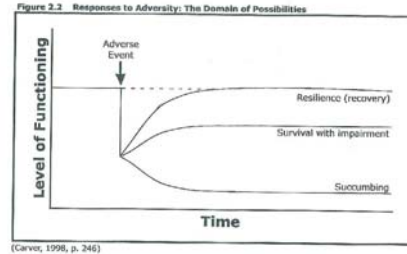
“the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant source of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors, it means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences.”

The Road to Resilience, American Psychological Association, helping.apa.org

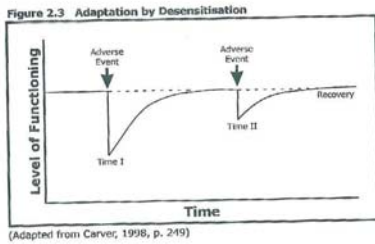
Resilience Defined:

Resilience is primarily defined in terms of the “Presence of **protective factors** (personal, social, familial, and institutional safety nets)” which enable individuals to resist life stress (Kaplan et al., 1996, p. 158)

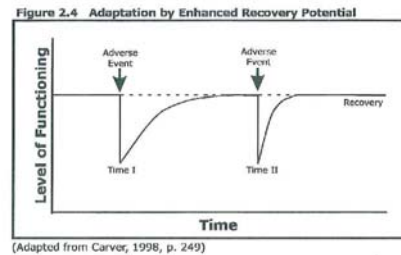
Response to Adversity - The Domain of Possibilities



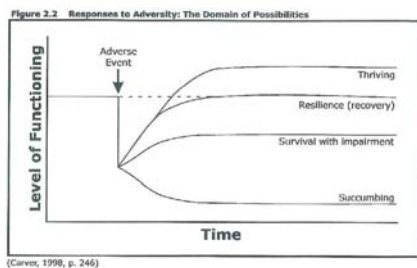
Adaptation by Desensitization



Adaptation by Enhanced Recovery Potential



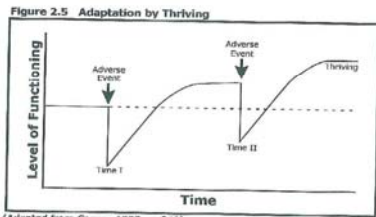
Response to Adversity - The Domain of Possibilities



Thriving

“Thriving refers to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge (learning about themselves, learning new coping skills, etc), of new confidence or a sense of mastery, and enhanced interpersonal relationships” (VanBreda, 2001, p. 36).

Adaptation by Thriving



In this process the functioning of the individual is enhanced by adversity.

Thriving

Thriving thus conceptualized is a transformation, involving a “Fundamental cognitive shift in response to a challenge” (O’Leary, 1998, p. 430).

“...events that shake the foundation of one’s life, calling into question one’s sense of purpose, meaning or identity. These events are at the extreme because they are the ones that provide the greatest opportunity for a heroic response.” (p. 430)

Four Patterns of Resilient People

- 1) Dispositional Pattern
(Physical and ego-related psychosocial attributes)
Poses a sense of autonomy or self-reliance, a sense of basic self-worth, good physical health
- 2) Relational Pattern
(An individual’s role in society)
Manage a broad range of roles - from close and intimate to the roles in their broader social system

Resilience Theory: A Literature Review, Van Breda (2001, pp. 5-6)

Four Patterns of Resilient People

- 3) Situational Pattern
Poses good problem solving abilities, ability to evaluate situations and responses, have the capacity to take action
- 4) Philosophical Pattern
(world view or life paradigm)
belief that positive meaning can be found in all experience, belief that self development is important, the belief that life is purposeful and change inevitable

Resilience Theory: A Literature Review, Van Breda (2001, pp. 5-6)

Factors Present in Resilient Children

Refer to Handout

Factors present among those who thrive:

- Sense of Coherence
- Hardiness
- Learned Resourcefulness
- Self-efficacy
- Locus of Control
- Potency
- Stamina
- Personal Causation

Factors: Sense of Coherence

“...global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one’s internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected.” (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 103)

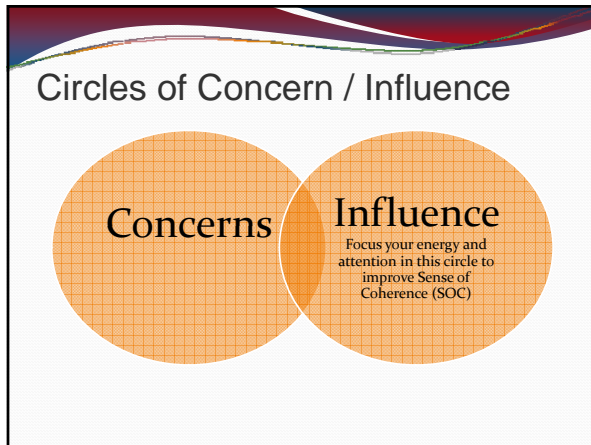
Factors: Sense of Coherence

Three components:

Comprehensibility – there is a fundamental conviction that internal and external stimuli or situations will make sense

Manageability – the belief one has the resources to cope with problems – a sense things are under control

Meaningfulness - life is emotionally worthwhile, sensible and meaningful.



Factors: Hardiness

“Hardy persons have considerable curiosity and tend to find their experiences interesting and meaningful. Further, they believe they can be influential through what they imagine, say, and do. At the same time, they expect change to be the norm, and regard it as an important stimulus to development.” (Kobasa et al, 1981, p. 368)

Factors: Hardiness

Three components:

Commitment – the valuing of ones life, self, relationships and the investment of self in these values, a sense of purpose will carry us during difficult times

Control – the belief that life events are in part a result of ones own actions and attitudes, and thus amenable to change.

Challenge - based on the belief that change, rather than stability, is the normative mode of life.

(Kobasa et al, 1981, p. 368)

Factors: Learned Resourcefulness

“...an acquired repertoire of behaviors and skills (mostly cognitive) by which a person self-regulates internal responses (such as emotions, cognitions, or pain) that interfere with the smooth execution of a desired behavior” (Rosenbaum & Ben-Ari, 1988, p. 200).

Factors: Learned Resourcefulness

Process of self-regulation:

Representation – when an individual experiences a cognitive and/or emotional reaction to changes within him-/herself or the environment

Evaluation – of the changes, first, as desirable or threatening, then, if threat is appraised, evaluation whether anything can be done about it;

Action (or coping) to minimize negative effects of the internal or external changes.”

(Rosenbaum & Ben-Ari, 1988, p. 200).

Factors: Learned Resourcefulness

“Next time difficult situation arises, they are more adept at regulating their internal processes and are thus better able to respond effectively to the situation” (Strumpfer, 1990).

...not a personality trait, but rather a cluster of cognitive skills.

Factors: Self-Efficacy

“...people who entertain serious doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up altogether, whereas those who have a strong sense of efficacy exert greater effort to master the challenges. ...High perseverance usually produce high performance attainment” (Bandura, 1982).

Factors: Locus of Control

“The individual who has a strong belief that he can control his own destiny is likely to (a) be more alert to those aspects of the environment which provide useful information for his future behavior; (b) take steps to improve his environmental condition; (c) place greater value on skill or achievement reinforcements and be generally more concerned with his ability, particularly his failures; and (d) be resistive to subtle attempts to influence him” (Rotter, 1966, p. 25).

Factors: Potency

“... a person’s enduring confidence in his own capacities as well as confidence in and commitment to his/her social environment, which is perceived as being characterized by a basically meaningful and predictable order and by a reliable and just distribution of rewards” (Ben-Sira, 1985, in VanBreda, 2001, p. 52)

Factors: Stamina

“The physical and moral strength to resist or withstand disease, fatigue, or hardship; endurance” (Strumpfer, 1990, p.70)

Factors: Personal Causation

“Being the master one’s fate” or “being an agent of change in the environment” (De Charms, 1998, p. 269)

Factors which Contribute to Resilience (Summarized):

- (Primary) Having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family that:
 - a. Create love and trust
 - b. Provide role models
 - c. Offer encouragement and reassurance

help bolster a person’s resilience.

The Road to Resilience, American Psychological Association, helping.apa.org

Factors Which Contribute to Resilience (Summarized):

- 2) The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
- 3) A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
- 4) Skills in communication and problem solving
- 5) The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses

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10 Ways to Build Resilience

- **Make connections** – Close relationships are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
- **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems** – change the way you interpret and respond to stressful events. Develop an objective perspective and look beyond the present to how future circumstances may be better.
- **Accept that change is part of living** – Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

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10 Ways to Build Resilience

- **Move toward your goals** – Do something regularly that enables you to move toward your goals.
- **Take decisive actions** – Act on adverse situations as much as you can.
- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery** - Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of personal strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.
- **Nurture a positive view of yourself** – Develop confidence in your ability to solve problems.

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10 Ways to Build Resilience

- **Keep things in perspective** – Avoid blowing stressful events out of proportion.
- **Maintain a hopeful outlook** – Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
- **Take care of yourself** – Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Eat and sleep well. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

The Road to Resilience, American Psychological Association, helping.apa.org

Thank you for:

Your participation
Completing the evaluation

University of Miami
Employee Assistance Program
305-284-6604

References

Comas-Diaz, L., Luthar, S. S., Maddi, S. R., O'Neill, H.K., Saakvitne, K. W., Tedeschi, R. G. (2008). The Road to Resilience. Helping.apa.org.

VanBreda, Adrian DuPlessis (2001, October). Resilience Theory: A Literature Review, Military Psychological Institute, pp. 1-56.

Nine Phenomena that Correlate with Resiliency

Barnard (1994, pp. 139-140) identified nine individual phenomena that the literature repeatedly has shown to correlate with resiliency:

- "Being perceived as more cuddly and affectionate in infancy and beyond.
- "Having no sibling born within 20-24 months of one's own birth.
- "A higher level of intelligence.
- "Capacity and skills for developing intimate relationships.
- "Achievement orientation in and outside of school.
- "The capacity to construct productive meanings for events in their world that enhances their understanding of these events.
- "Being able to selectively disengage from the home and engage with those outside, and then to reengage.
- "Being internally oriented and having an internal locus of control.
- "The absence of serious illness during adolescence."

Factors Present in Resilient Children

VanBerda (2001, pp. 10-11)

Research has shown that the following factors are present in resilient children (Benard & Marshall, 1997; Bogenschneider, 1996; Butler, 1997; Cederblad et al., 1994; Hawley & De Haan, 1996; Parker, Cowen, Work, & Wyman, 1990; Rutter, 1979; Werner, 1984, 1990):

They had an outgoing, socially open, cooperative, engaging, likeable personality. They were able, from infancy on, to gain other people's positive attention. Their behavior was open, kind and calm.

The children had good early bonding with their mothers or some other caregiver (i.e. a grandmother, older sister or another relative).

They had a variety of alternative caregivers who played important roles as positive identification models.

Their mothers had steady employment outside the home.

They were required to participate in household chores and activities, i.e. 'required helpfulness'.

There were clearly defined boundaries between subsystems within the family.

They weren't colicky.

They were active, cuddly and good-natured.

They had at least average intelligence.

They were more likely to be girls.

They experienced no separations from their primary caregiver during the first year of life.

They were more likely to be the oldest child.

They did not have another sibling born before they turned two.

They attended good schools that set appropriately high standards, that provided teacher feedback to students, that praised students for good work, that gave students positions of trust and responsibility, that provided extramural activities, and where teachers were good behavior models.

They had a high self-esteem.

They had strict parental supervision.

They had good positive coping skills. They had an active, evocative approach towards solving life's problems, enabling them to negotiate successfully emotionally hazardous experiences. They had flexible coping skills that could respond to the changing environment and their own changing development.

They perceived themselves to be competent.

They tended to perceive their experiences constructively, even if the experiences caused pain or suffering.

They had better interpersonal skills.

They had an internal locus of control.

They had good impulse control.

They had high energy and were active.

They enjoyed school.

They had a strong ability to use faith to maintain a positive view of a meaningful life. Their faith provided them with a sense of rootedness and coherence, a conviction that their lives had meaning and a belief that things would work out in the end despite unfavorable odds.

They were autonomous and independent.

They had special interests and hobbies.

They were able to ask for support when they needed it.