

Resiliency In Action Training & Publications
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Unlocking the Power of RESILIENCY...

“...can be defined as the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social and academic competence despite exposure to severe stress...

Or simply the stress of today’s world.”

From Resiliency In Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators
by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein

“...is about bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts.”

--“Sean” (15-year old high school student)

“...is an innate self-righting and transcending ability within all children, youth, adults, organizations, and communities.”

From “The Philosophy of Resiliency In Action, Inc.

--Nan Henderson, Bonnie Benard, Nancy Sharp-Light

What are "protective factors" ?

"Many adolescents who seem to be at high risk nevertheless do not succumb to risk behavior, or get less involved in it than their peers or seem to abandon it more rapidly than others do.

"A likely answer [as to why this is true] is that there was indeed exposure to and experience of risk, *but that it was countered by exposure to and experience of protection.*"

"Protective factors...moderate, buffer, insulate against and thereby do mitigate the impact of risk on adolescent behavior development."

--RICHARD JESSOR, PH.D., INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

The Resiliency Chart

Name of someone (aged 5 – 20) that you are concerned about _____

PERSONAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS

Individual Protective Factors that Facilitate Resiliency

- " Relationships -- Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships**
- " Service -- Gives of self in service to others or a cause**
- " Life Skills -- Uses life skills, including good decision-making, assertiveness, and impulse control**
- " Humor -- Has a good sense of humor**
- " Inner Direction -- Bases choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)**
- " Perceptiveness -- Insightful understanding of people and situations**
- " Independence -- "Adaptive" distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy**
- " Positive View of Personal Future -- Expects a positive future (Optimism)**
- " Flexibility -- Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations**
- " Love of Learning -- Capacity for & connection to learning**
- " Self-motivation -- Internal initiative, inner motivation**
- " Competence -- Is "good at something"/personal competence**
- " Self-Worth -- Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence**
- " Spirituality -- Personal faith in something greater**
- " Perseverance -- Keeps on despite difficulty; doesn't give up**
- " Creativity -- Expresses self through artistic endeavor, or in other creative ways**

THE RESEARCH OF EMMY WERNER AND RUTH SMITH

1. They began studying all the children born on Kauai in 1955--700 babies.
2. 1/3 of these children were considered "high risk" due to multiple risk factors at birth.
3. Of these "high risk" children, 70 seemed "invulnerable" to the risk--developed no problems.

Two main reasons for this "invulnerability" were identified:

- " They were born with outgoing, social dispositions.
 - " They therefore were able to recruit several sources of support for themselves.
4. The other 2/3 of the "high risk" group did develop problems, but the majority were doing well by their mid-30s by their own and others' reports, psychological tests, and community records (5/6 of the original "high risk" group, 166 of 200, had therefore "bounced back").

How did this process of "bouncing back" happen?

- " They told researchers that someone along the way reached out with the messages: "You matter" and "It doesn't matter what you have done in the past". Sources of this support, other than family members, were most often neighbors, teachers, and informal youth workers.
- " The person was more important than the program.
- " The programs that assisted most provided support similar to an extended family.
- " The group that bounced back from having problems also some kind of competence.

"Our findings and those by other American and European investigators with a life-span perspective suggest that these buffers [protective factors] make a more profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or stressful life events. They appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical, and historical boundaries. Most of all, they offer us a more optimistic outlook than the perspective that can be gleaned from the literature on the negative consequences of perinatal trauma, caregiving deficits, and chronic poverty. They provide us with a corrective lens--an awareness of the self-righting tendencies that move children toward normal adult development under all but the most persistent adverse circumstances."

--Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith, *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*, 1992

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS

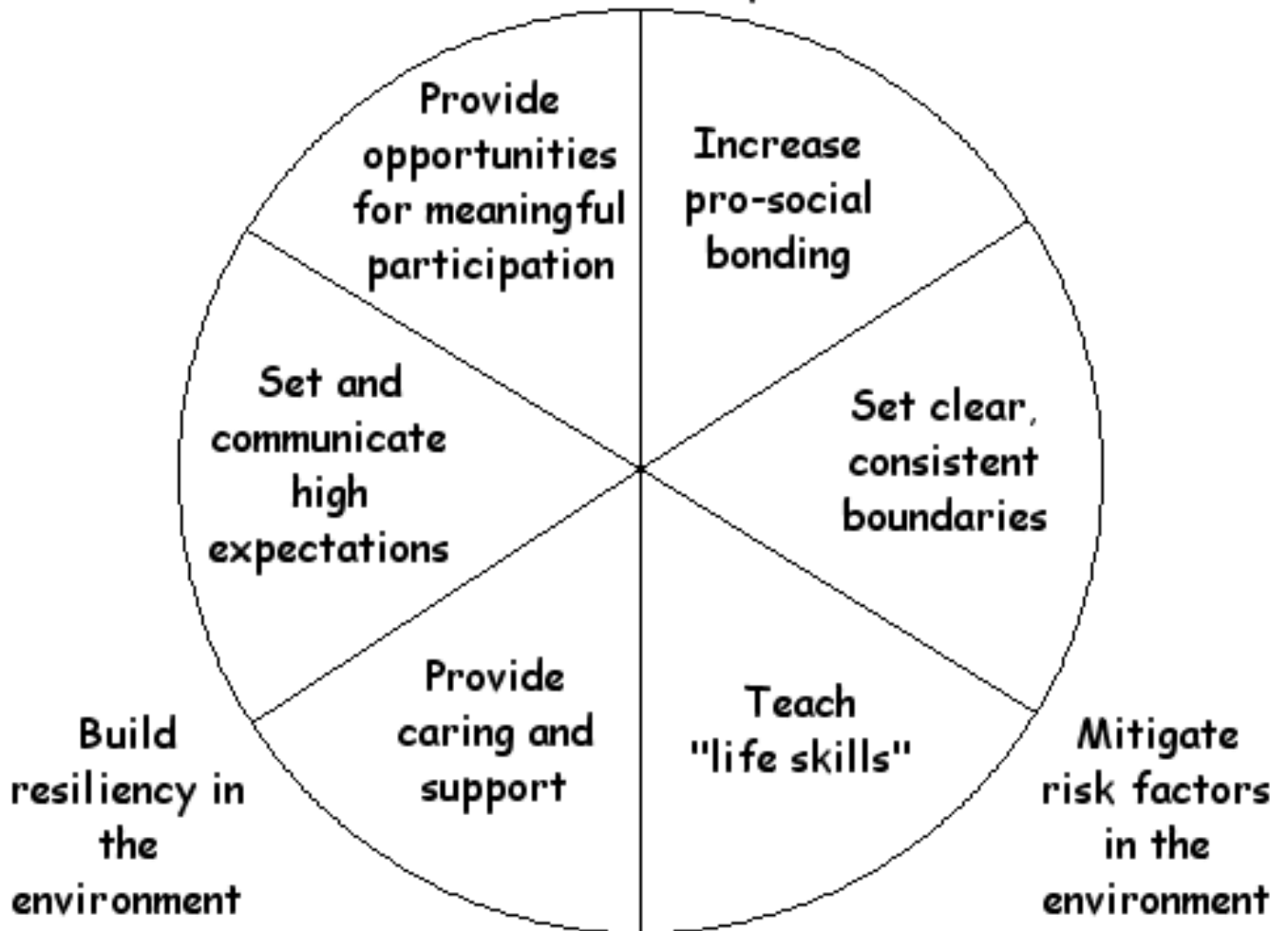
Protective Factors in Families, Schools, Communities, and Peer Groups that Foster Resiliency

- " Promotes close bonds**
- " Values and encourages education**
- " Uses high warmth/low criticism style of interaction**
- " Sets and enforces clear boundaries (rules, norms, and laws)**
- " Encourages supportive relationships with many caring others**
- " Promotes sharing of responsibilities, service to others, "required helpfulness"**
- " Provides access to resources for meeting basic needs of housing, employment, health care, etc.**
- " Expresses high, and realistic, expectations for success**
- " Encourages goal-setting and mastery**
- " Encourages pro-social development of values (such as altruism) and life skills (such as cooperation)**
- " Provides leadership, decision-making, and other opportunities for meaningful participation**
- " Appreciates, develops, and offers opportunity to share the unique talents/gifts of each individual**

(Richardson et al.,1990, Benard, 1991, Werner & Smith, 1992, Hawkins et al.,1992, Wolin & Wolin, 1993)

Adapted from the book, *Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators* by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein, published by Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA (2003, revised ed.).

The Resiliency Wheel



THE FOUR MOST IMPORTANT STEPS TO FOSTERING RESILIENCY: APPT

1. ATTITUDE -- The Resiliency Attitude

“You matter to me...”

“I am not going to judge you based on your past...”

“I believe in your capacity to overcome...”

**“What is right with you is more powerful than anything
that is wrong with you....”**

2. PERSPECTIVE OF STRENGTHS -- Work from a Strengths Perspective

Use “The Resiliency Chart” T-chart, formally and informally

**Ask: What is on the strengths side of the chart that can be
used to intervene with problems**

**Teach people about their strengths: name them, share how
they are being used, suggest how they can be used in the
future**

3. Create a PROTECTIVE WEB --Use the Resiliency Wheel (as a web around each person, family, organization, community—or yourself)

4. TAKE TIME -- Persist: Don’t Give Up!

“Mind these three: TTT; hear their chime: Things Take Time!”

—Emmy Werner, Ph.D.

Recommended Reading and Viewing: Fostering Resiliency

- Benson, Peter, Galbraith, Judy, & Espeland, Pamela. *What Kids Need to Succeed*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit. 1994.
- Benson, Peter. *All Kids are Our Kids*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. 1997.
- Benard, Bonnie. *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*. WestE. San Francisco, CA. 2004.
- Desetta, Al & Wolin, Sybil, (eds). *The Struggle to be Strong: True Stories by Teens*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit. 2000.
(with Leader's Guide)
- The Freedom Writers (with Erin Gruwell). *The Freedom Writers Diary*. New York: Doubleday. 1999.
- Henderson, Nan & Milstein, Mike. *Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 1996.
- Henderson, Nan, Sharp-Light, Nancy, & Benard, Bonnie, (eds). *Mentoring for Resiliency: Setting Up Programs to Move Youth from "Stressed to Success."* Ojai, CA: *Resiliency In Action, Inc. 2000.
- Henderson, Nan, Sharp-Light, Nancy, & Benard, Bonnie, (eds). *Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths—in Youth, Families, and Communities*. Ojai, CA: *Resiliency In Action, Inc. 1999, 2007.
- Henderson, Nan, Sharp-Light, Nancy, & Benard, Bonnie, (eds). *Schoolwide Approaches for Fostering Resiliency*. Ojai, CA: *Resiliency In Action, Inc. 2000.
- Kretzman, John & McKnight, John. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications. 1993.
- Meier, Deborah. *The Power of Their Ideas*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1995.
- Mueller, Wayne. *How, Then, Shall We Live ?* New York: Bantam. 1996.
- O'Connell Higgins, Gina. *Resilient Adults: Overcoming a Cruel Past*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1994.
- Richardson, Glenn, et al. "The Resiliency Model." *Health Education*, (21), 6. Nov/Dec., 1990.
- Saleebey, Dennis. *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman. 1997.
- Thomsen, Kate. *Building Resilient Students: Integrating Resiliency Into What You Already Know and Do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth*. New York: Adams, Bannister, and Cox. 1982,1989.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Journey from Childhood to Midlife: Risk, Resiliency, & Recovery*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Wolin, Steven & Sybil. *The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity*. New York: Villard, 1993.
- Wolin, Steven & Sybil. *Survivor's Pride: Building Resilience in Youth...*(video). Vernona, WI: Attainment Co., Inc.

ACTIVITIES FOR "DISCOVERING AND CELEBRATING YOUR PERSONAL RESILIENCY"

The following activities can be worked into presentations to any audience, including students.

[Note: Individuals need at least a basic understanding of the definition of resiliency and protective factors to do the following activities. Use handout of "Personal Resiliency Builders" for activities.]

1. **WHAT'S IN MY WALLET** Have participants pair up with one person they do not know, and sit knee to knee. Instruct them to show their partner one thing they have in their purse or wallet that is connected in some way to their personal resiliency, and explain how it connects.
2. **NAMING OTHERS' RESILIENCY** Have participants move to groups of four (pairs connect with other pairs who have done "What's In My Wallet" or this activity can stand alone with groups where everyone knows each other, such as a staff or class). Each person must introduce his/her partner by identifying at least one personal resiliency builder he or she has identified in his/her partner (from the list on the HANDOUT on Personal Resiliency Builders) and share how they have observed this resiliency builder in the partner.
3. **WHO AND WHAT MADE ME RESILIENT?** In groups of four, have participants share answers to these questions:
Who and What made me Resilient? How did they do it?
Who and What keeps me Resilient now? How?
4. **TOP RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Ask each participant to look down the list of personal resiliency builders, identifying the top three they use when they are facing stress or crisis. (Make the point that all of us lean towards a few of these based on our personality type and life experiences.) Tell the participants to raise their hands as you call out each of the resiliency builders. Using an Overhead of the list of Personal Resiliency Builders, note the number for each.
5. **USING RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Have participants move to groups of eight, and take turns introducing themselves to one another by sharing their top three resiliency builders and a time they used one of them.
6. **ADDING TO OUR RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Have participants, in groups of eight, share one personal resiliency builder (again referring to the Handout on Personal Resiliency Builders) that they are working on, or think they should work on, and ideas about how to go about it.
7. **RESILIENCY BLIZZARD** Have participants work as a large group, or stay in groups of eight: Instruct each person in the group to write down on a scrap of paper a sentence conveys a message they would like to receive more often that would help them feel more resilient. When they are finished, have participants throw their papers in the middle of the group. Each person should then pick a paper not their own and read it aloud to their group (without comment). Groups should then discuss any common theme they heard.
8. **REFLECTING UPON RESILIENCY** At the conclusion of these activities (or at the end of a resiliency presentation) ask:
 1. Do you feel more resilient than you did at the beginning of these activities?
 2. If so, how does this resiliency feel inside of you?
 3. How did it happen?
 4. Do you feel more able to successfully cope with a problem or make a change?
 5. What does this mean for the work you do? For your life?
9. **DRAWING RESILIENCY** Have participants use crayons and paper that you provide to draw their representation of what resiliency looks like/feels like inside of them. Have them share these drawings in their groups of eight. Display these drawings in a location where all training participants can view them.

The Resiliency Quiz

by Nan Henderson, M.S.W. (reprinted from www.resiliency.com)
©, 2004, 2007 Resiliency In Action, Inc. (Copies can be made for educational purposes only)

I developed this quiz for anyone—teens, adults, elders—to assess and strengthen the resiliency building conditions in their lives. Use it for yourself or use it as a tool to help others you care about build their resiliency.

PART ONE:

Do you have the conditions in your life that research shows help people to be resilient?

People bounce back from tragedy, trauma, risks, and stress by having the following “protective” conditions in their lives. The more times you answer yes (below), the greater the chances you can bounce back from your life’s problems “with more power and more smarts.” And doing that is a sure way to increase self-esteem.

Answer yes or no to the following. Celebrate your “yes” answers and decide how you can change your “no” answers to “yes.” (You can also answer “sometimes” if that is more accurate than just “yes” or “no”.)

1. Caring and Support

- ☐ I have several people in my life who give me unconditional love, nonjudgmental listening, and who I know are “there for me.”
- ☐ I am involved in a school, work, faith, or other group where I feel cared for and valued.
- ☐ I treat myself with kindness and compassion, and take time to nurture myself (including eating right and getting enough sleep and exercise).

2. High Expectations for Success

- ☐ I have several people in my life who let me know they believe in my ability to succeed.
- ☐ I get the message “You can succeed,” at my work or school.
- ☐ I believe in myself most of the time, and generally give myself positive messages about my ability to accomplish my goals—even when I encounter difficulties.

3. Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

- ☐ My voice (opinion) and choice (what I want) is heard and valued in my close personal relationships.
- ☐ My opinions and ideas are listened to and respected at my work or school.
- ☐ I volunteer to help others or a cause in my community, faith organization, or school.

4. Positive Bonds

- ☐ I am involved in one or more positive after-work or after-school hobbies or activities.
- ☐ I participate in one or more groups (such as a club, faith community, or sports team) outside of work or school.
- ☐ I feel “close to” most people at my work or school.

5. Clear and Consistent Boundaries

- ☐ Most of my relationships with friends and family members have clear, healthy boundaries (which include mutual respect, personal autonomy, and each person in the relationship both giving and receiving).
- ☐ I experience clear, consistent expectations and rules at my work or in my school.
- ☐ I set and maintain healthy boundaries for myself by standing up for myself, not letting others take advantage of me, and saying “no” when I need to.

6. Life Skills

- ☐ I have (and use) good listening, honest communication, and healthy conflict resolution skills.
- ☐ I have the training and skills I need to do my job well, or all the skills I need to do well in school.
- ☐ I know how to set a goal and take the steps to achieve it.

PART TWO:

People also successfully overcome life difficulties by drawing upon internal qualities that research has shown are particularly helpful when encountering a crisis, major stressor, or trauma.

The following list can be thought of as a “personal resiliency builder” menu. *No one has everything on this list.* When “the going gets tough” you probably have three or four of these qualities that you use most naturally and most often.

It is helpful to know which are your primary resiliency builders; how have you used them in the past; and how can you use them to overcome the present challenges in your life.

You can also decide to add one or two of these to your “resiliency-builder” menu, if you think they would be useful for you.

PERSONAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS **Individual Qualities that Facilitate Resiliency**

Put a + by the top three or four resiliency builders you use most often. Ask yourself how you have used these in the past or currently use them. Think of how you can best apply these resiliency builders to current life problems, crises, or stressors.

(Optional) You can then put a T by one or two resiliency builders you think you should add to your personal repertoire.

- " Relationships -- Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships
- " Service -- Giving of yourself to help other people; animals; organizations; and/or social causes
- " Humor -- Having and using a good sense of humor
- " Inner Direction -- Basing choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)
- " Perceptiveness -- Insightful understanding of people and situations
- " Independence -- "Adaptive" distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy
- " Positive View of Personal Future -- Optimism; expecting a positive future
- " Flexibility -- Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations
- " Love of Learning -- Capacity for and connection to learning
- " Self-motivation -- Internal initiative and positive motivation from within
- " Competence -- Being "good at something"/personal competence
- " Self-Worth -- Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- " Spirituality -- Personal faith in something greater
- " Perseverance -- Keeping on despite difficulty; doesn't give up
- " Creativity -- Expressing yourself through artistic endeavor, or through other means of creativity

You Can Best Help Yourself or Someone Else Be More Resilient by...

1. Communicating the Resiliency Attitude: “What is right with you is more powerful than anything wrong...”
2. Focusing on the person’s strengths more than problems and weaknesses, and asking “How can these strengths be used to overcome problems?” One way to do this is to help yourself or another identify and best utilize top personal resiliency builders listed in The Resiliency Quiz Part Two.
3. Providing for yourself or another the conditions listed in The Resiliency Quiz Part One.
4. Having patience...successfully bouncing back from a significant trauma or crisis takes time.

Nan Henderson, M.S.W. is an international speaker, writer, and president of Resiliency In Action, a publishing and training company in Southern CA., which she cofounded in 1996 to “redirect the national obsession with risks and weakness to embracing the reality and power of human resiliency.” She has authored/edited several articles and four books on fostering resiliency, including Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths in Youth, Families, and Communities and Resiliency In Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators. (nhenderson@resiliency.com; 800-440-5171; www.resiliency.com.)

Questions for Teaching Youth about their Resiliency

by Nan Henderson, M.S.W.

These questions can be used in a large group discussion. However, depending on the characteristics of the group, often it is more effective for students to pair up or work in groups to answer each question and then come back for a larger group discussion.

1. If resiliency is defined as “the ability to bounce back from, and successfully overcome risks and adversity,” why are you a “resilient” person?
2. What are some of the struggles, challenges, difficulties you have faced in the past (or currently face). Go into as much detail as you feel like sharing.
3. Share how you overcame these difficulties...
 - A. What did you DO?
 - B. What BELIEFS about yourself and others guided you?
 - C. WHO helped you?
 - D. HOW did they help?
 - E. WHAT else helped you?
4. How can you use these same things now or in the future in dealing with problems (or the current problem)? What can you do that worked in a similar situation in the past? Who can you go to for support or more information? Is there a way to maintain a greater access to these individuals?

Is there a place or another kind of resource that would help? How can you access it?

5. Can you connect the personal ways you have overcome problems to the list of resiliency builders that research studies have shown help people overcome problems? (Share both individual and environmental lists of resiliency builders.)

Can you think of other times/ways you have used your resiliency builders?

6. What would you tell another kid who was going through your situation?}or
What advice do you have for other kids going through some of the problems and difficulties you have gone through?
7. What advice do you have for adult trying to help kids to be “resilient”?
8. How well are adults providing the six environmental resiliency builders (refer to part one of The Resiliency Quiz) or to The Resiliency Wheel? What are adults doing well?
What do adults need to do better?
9. What barriers do you think stand in the way of kids being more resilient (in your school, or family, or church, or community)? What ideas do you have about how to change these barriers?

