Helping Kids Build Resilience: Bouncing Back From Hard Times

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The world breaks everyone. And afterward some are strong in the broken places.

-- Ernest Hemingway
A Farewell to Arms
Learning Objectives

• To become familiar with the concept of resilience and the power of mindsets
• To know the “7 Cs of Resilience”
• To have a plan to help your children enhance their resilience.
• To help kids bounce back from bullying
• To encourage your own resilience
What Are the Odds…?

• Multi-racial children from Kauai who, before the age of 2, had more than 3 of these risk factors:
  – Poverty
  – Divorce
  – Family violence
  – Low maternal education
  – Family mental illness
  – Family alcoholism
Jamie

- 16 year old girl going into 11th grade
- Sister with serious mental illness
- Type 1 Diabetes,
- Addison’s Disease,
- Fibromyalgia,
- Orthostatic tachycardia,
- Depression;
- Currently home-schooled
- Bullied at former church and school;
What Challenges Do Your Children Face?
The Rest of the Story

• 30% of the Kauai children => competent, confident adults
  – Average or better education
  – No legal problems
  – All were employed
  – Lower rates of chronic health problems

• Personal and parenting factors
  – Ability to regulate emotions
  – Ability to attract others (e.g., engaging, sociable)
  – A talent valued by peers
  – Connection with adults that encouraged trust, autonomy, and initiative
Definition

- **Resilience** is the capacity to deal effectively with adversity
- Sense of Mastery:
- Sense of Connection:
- Emotional Stability:
- Thoughts, behaviors, and actions that most can learn
Resilience & the Stress Response

• Resilience is associated with an efficient response to threat;
  – effective hormonal reaction with
  – quick return to baseline (Kent, 2010)
The Power of Mindsets
( Robert Brooks, 2011 )

- **Mindsets**: The assumptions and expectations for ourselves and others that guide our behavior.
A “troubled youth’s” Mindset

- It’s not fair
- No one understands
- I can’t do it
- I’m broken and defective
- I don’t matter
- I’m a burden
- I’m helpless
- It’s hopeless
The Mindset of Resilient Youth

- I’m hopeful
- I’m appreciated
- I’m close to others
- I know my strengths AND weaknesses
- I accept help
- I can solve problems
- I can do it
- I learn from mistakes
Parents’ Mindsets for Fostering Resilience (Sam Goldstein, 2006)

- I change “negative scripts”
- I accept my child/teen for who s/he is
  - help them set realistic goals (and alternatives)
- I nurture islands of competence
- I provide my child with opportunities to contribute
- I discipline in a way that promotes self-discipline and self-worth
  - My child is a “disciple”
  - I ask “what lessons are being learned from “discipline”?"
Changing “negative scripts”

• Accept YOUR responsibility to change
• Know the problem—know the goal
• What have you done? Why hasn’t it worked?
• Every problem has a positive solution
• If at first you don’t succeed…try, try again
Nurture Islands of Competence
Competence breeds competence
Providing Opportunities to Contribute

• To the family
  – “We could really use some help. What would you like to do?”
  – Direct efforts to talents, not onerous tasks
  – Establish an identity as a “charitable family”

• Neighborhood
• School
• Community
• World
Teach Empathy by Practicing Empathy

• “Walking in the other’s shoes” is an essential part of
  – Emotional intelligence
  – Forming satisfying relationships

• Teaching empathy
  – [Be sure YOU are calm and rational]
  – Listen to understand
  – Validate statements and emotions
  – Use guiding questions
Effective Thinking

• When explaining negative events, consider:
  – Me Vs. Not me
  – Always vs. sometimes
  – Everything vs. some things

• What is the evidence for your belief?

• What are worst/best/most likely outcomes?
Enhancing Self-Discipline

- Natural & logical consequences
- Guidance vs. lecture/solution
- Problem-solving
  - *Why* the problem IS a problem
  - A chosen action from a field of solutions
  - Involvement of all in the solution
  - Consequences if the solution succeeds/fails
- Making Amends
- Earned Freedoms
  - “When_____________, then,_____________”.
7 Cs of Resilience
(Ginsberg, 2010)

- Competence
- Confidence
- Connection
- Character
- Contribution
- Coping
- Control
Using the 7 Cs

• With my children, do I:
  – highlight strengths?
  – express my confidence in their abilities?
  – work to “walk a mile in their shoes”?
  – “practice what I preach”?
  – encourage the use of his/her talents in ways that can make a contribution?
  – show good coping skills?
  – focus on those things s/he can control?
Bullying

- Boys ~ physical;
- Girls ~ relational aggression
  - 2x as likely to be a cyber-bully
- 20% of high school student report being bullied
  - ~90% of LGBTIQ are verbally harassed
  - Both cyber-bullies & victims have lower self-esteem
  - 2x as likely to take weapon to school
  - 2/3 of school shooters felt bullied
- Bullying associated w/ health problems
Characteristics of Victims

• Are cautious, sensitive, quiet, withdrawn and shy
• Are often anxious, insecure, unhappy and have low self-esteem
• Are depressed and engage in suicidal ideation much more often than their peers
• Often do not have a single good friend and relate better to adults than to peers
• If they are boys, they may be physically weaker than their peers
Kids’ Solutions

• Learn to discriminate
  – Playful tease or hurtful slur?
  – Adults can provide alternative attributions
• Talk with friends: feel connected
• Don’t just “take it”: talk to authority
• Resilient self-talk
  – “This doesn’t mean anything”
  – “They don’t really know me”
  – “Don’t do the bullies’ work for them”
LIVING
WELL
IS
THE BEST
REVENGE
Jamie’s Poem
“My Personal D-Day”

• The day the fates ruled I was meant for something else than they had originally decided. Since then, my life has been a series of battles, ending mostly in frustrating draws. My psyche locked inside a box. Hope was trapped by Pandora. I walk alone, but I’m never truly by myself, am I? I am Atlas, I’m too young to be this weary. I remain tall. Whatever the future brings, I will take it, head on. Is there any other way?
Examples from Social Media

- **(People) Carleigh O’Connell:** posted picture of herself by demeaning graffiti about her body; "I wanted to show whoever decided to write that that I was stronger than that."

- **(Locally) Julia Kordon:** Founded The Bullying Ends Now

- **(Locally) Caleb Laieski:** 1000s of letters to schools, urging compliance w/ protection laws

- **(Locally) Merik Castro:** testified at school board
What Parents Can Do

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON
What Parents Can Do

- Find out about the conditions at YOUR child’s school that promote bullying
- Teach assertiveness (Steps to Respect)
  - Clear message that it’s unacceptable
- Encourage speaking up for others
  - If one bystander speaks up, 50% of bullying stops
  - Just stand next to the victim
- Limit and monitor time online
- Olweus’ school wide Bullying Prevention Pgm
Legal Recourse

• Federal law prohibits bullying on basis of gender, disability, race, color, or national origin.

• Arizona law ARS 15-341.37
  – Prescribe and enforce policies and procedures to prohibit pupils from harassing, intimidating and bullying other pupils on school grounds, on school property, on school buses, at school bus stops, at school-sponsored events and activities and through the use of electronic technology or electronic communication on school computers, networks, forums and mailing lists.
Examples from Books and Movies

• Stand and Deliver
• The Gettysburg Address
• I Have A Dream
• Ecclesiastes
• Ruth & Naomi
• Robert Frost
• Clara Barton
Books on Bullying

• Elementary:
  – *Bullies Never Win*
  – *Enemy Pie*

• Middle School:
  – *The Misfits*
  – *Bullies are a Pain*

• High School
  – *Nineteen Minutes*
  – *Some Girls Are*
• “When people hurt you over and over, think of them like sandpaper. They may scratch and hurt you a bit, but in the end, you end up polished and they end up useless.”

• --Chris Colfer
  – actor
Resilience in Parents

Caring for yourself IS good parenting

Be a model of good coping
manage stress
eat well
exercise

Serenity Prayer
Summary

- Resilience shifts the focus to assets and developing resources.
- Resilience increases when children develop confidence in their competence that is born of their contributions.
- Building your own resilience is a great way to help your children build theirs.
Resources

- Steps to Respect: [http://www.cfchildren.org/steps-to-respect](http://www.cfchildren.org/steps-to-respect)
- Swearer, S. (2009) *Bullying Prevention and Intervention*