When Nature Nurtures
Building Resilience in Young Children and Families

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Handbook for Working with Children and Youth
Pathways to Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts
Michael Ungar (2005)
Psychological Resilience and Wellbeing
Stephen Palmer & Kristina Gyllensten (Eds.)
Sage, September 2015
Origin of “Resilience”

Latin verb: *resilire*
“bounce” or “jump backwards”
“bounce back”
Nature  Nurture
Personality Traits  Life Skills
Individual  Collective
Survive  Thrive
Post-traumatic Stress  Post-traumatic Growth
Bouncing Back  Bouncing Forward
Learned Helplessness  Learned Optimism
Life’s a Bitch  Life’s a Beach
SWAG (Sh_ _ We Ain’t Got)  SWAG (Something We All Get)
The Power of Resilience

Biology, Ecology, Physics
Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Medicine
Engineering, Instructional Technology
Organizational Development, Business, Economics
International Studies, Political Science
Crisis Management
Community Development
The Science of Resilience

The dynamic interaction between biology and environment builds the capacity to cope with adversity and overcome threats to healthy development.

- Center on the Developing Child

Biological Indicators

• Genetic Factors

• Brain Function

• Immune-related Responses
The Stress Response

• Genes and the production of brain proteins
• The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and allostatic load
• The “tuned-up” stress system
• The “CEO” of resilience
• Making “left shift” happen
• Exercise = hippocampal therapy
An Evolving Concept

I. “Personality Traits” & “Character Armor”

II. “Experience trumps Genetics”

III. The Social Ecology of Resilience and Lifespan Human Development
    (e.g., the children of Kauai)
Individual Resilience

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their families’ and communities’ capacity to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways.

(Ungar, 2011)
Collective Resilience

Someone carried the hope for me until I was ready to take it back.

I am never stronger than when I am asking for help.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyX6UULJEic#t=47
Parental Resilience

Parents are resilient when they are able to call forth their inner strength to proactively meet personal challenges and those in relation to their child, manage adversities, heal the effects of trauma, and thrive given the unique characteristics and circumstances of their family.

- Center for the Study of Social Policy
RESILIENCE is embedded in RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE
Family Resilience

The family’s ability to withstand and rebound from crisis, prolonged adversity, and stressful life challenges, strengthened and more resourceful.

(Walsh, 2010)
Family Resilience Framework
(Froma Walsh, 2003)

Belief Systems
• Making Meaning of Adversity
• Positive Outlook
• Transcendence and Spirituality

Organizational Patterns
• Flexibility
• Connectedness
• Social and Economic Resources

Communication/Problem Solving
• Clear, Consistent Messages
• Open Emotional Expression
• Collaborative Problem Solving
Seeing is believing.

Western view

We must believe in something to be able to see it.

Native view

We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.

the Talmud
You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Nothing too good or too bad lasts for too long.
- CFP

When you change the way you look at things, the things you are looking at change.
- Wayne Dyer
Am I what happened to me
or what I choose to be?
- Carl Jung

The wound is the place where
the light enters you.
- Rumi

Let nothing dim the light
that shines from within.
- Maya Angelou
STRONGER

That which does not kill us makes us stronger.

- Friedrich Nietzsche

http://youtu.be/Q4Y-FbeCX14
PERMA
(Seligman, 2011)

- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Meaning
- Accomplishment
The 6 R’s

- **Regulation**  
  ability to regulate emotion
- **Reflection**  
  mindful awareness in thinking, feeling, being  
  (skill needed for self-awareness and empathy)
- **Relationship**  
  fulfilling relationships, connectedness
- **Risk**  
  ability to take on challenges, to embrace change
- **Resiliency**  
  adaptively coping with loss, adversity
- **Reward**  
  improved creativity, imagination and sense of meaning, purpose
Essential Life Skills

1. Focus and Self Control
2. Perspective Taking
3. Communicating
4. Making Connections
5. Critical Thinking
6. Taking on Challenges
7. Self-Directed, Engaged Learning

Things All Children Need to Thrive

- Structure
- Consequences
- Parent-child Connections
- Strong Relationships
- Powerful Identity
- Sense of Control
- Sense of Belonging
- Fair and Just Treatment
- Physical and Psychological Safety

(Ungar, 2014)
What Parents Need

• To perceive themselves as competent
• To feel empowered to make a difference in their children’s lives
• To feel connected to a web of supportive relationships – the village
• To feel connected to their pasts, to be emotionally available in the present, and to dare to hope for their children’s future

Josh Sparrow (2013)
PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Personal Resilience
- Social Connections
- Nurturing and Attachment
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Supports in Times of Need
- Strong Communities
- Strong Families
- Successful Children
It Takes a Community (ITC)

- Raising children with care
- Raising children to care
- Creating communities of care
It’s at the end of time and the beginning of eternity.

It’s part of me, but it’s not part of you.