Building Resilience in Adolescence

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Risk & Resilience

- Why do some adolescents grow up to be healthy adults despite facing difficulties?

- Risk & resilience are important factors for mental and physical health in adolescence

- Healthy development involves a balancing act between risk factors and protective factors
Risk Factors

- Parent neglect/maltreatment/abuse
- Traumatic events
  - Death of a loved one
  - Natural disasters
  - Family turmoil/separation
- Low-income household
- Poor academic achievement
- Limited or poor access to healthcare
- Parent mental illness
- Poor social skills
- Low self-esteem
- Peer rejection
- Peer rejection
- Etc...
Protective Factors

- Also called *promotive* and *positive* factors
- Individual Factors
  - Coping skills
  - Temperament
  - An optimistic view
  - Sociability combined with a sense of independence
- Family Factors
  - Supportive parent-child relationships
  - Family cohesion
  - Stimulating environment
- Community Factors
  - Safe neighborhoods
  - Access to health care
  - Youth serving/recreational facilities and programs
  - Economic opportunities for families
What is Resilience?

• Resilience vs. Grit

• **Resilience** is the idea of “bouncing back” or adapting after something stressful, negative, or traumatizing happens
  • Coping with failure, family struggles, etc.
  • Functioning normally or better than expected
Models of Resilience

- Compensatory Model
  - A compensatory factor directly influences an outcome, it does not interact with risk factors

- Challenge Model
  - Dealing successfully with the *appropriate amount* of stress enhance resiliency through competency

- Protective Factor Model
  - Protective factors interact with risk factors, reducing the probability of a negative outcome
Protective Models of Resilience

- **Protective–stabilizing Model**
  - Higher levels of risk → higher levels of negative outcomes *unless* a protective factor is present, in which case the relationship may disappear

- **Protective–reactive Model**
  - Protective factors don’t completely eliminate the risk-outcome relationship, but may diminish or “buffer” it

- **Protective-protective Model**
  - One protective factor can increase the effects of another
My connections.
Fill in the Connections circle below. List those people who you connect with the most in the circle closest to the middle (ME).

Next to each person, write where do they fit with your connections - are they from school? A community group? Family? Friend? Friend online? etc.

With the connections you have listed closest to you, share how they make you feel connected / could feel connected.

What community organisations are in your area that can help you connect / reach out (online and offline)

ReachOut.com has fact sheets, stories and forums to help with feeling connected. Below is a story from ReachOut.com (Keeping Connected). Check it out! http://www.reachout.com/keeping-connected

Tools & Interventions

- Reachout.com
  - Includes lesson plans for schools to help teens deal with difficult situations

- The lesson plans help students to explore and build seven elements of resilience:
  - Emotional awareness and self-regulation
  - Impulse control
  - Optimism
  - Flexible and accurate thinking
  - Empathy
  - Self-efficacy
  - Connecting and reaching out

Tools & Interventions


- Interventions incorporating mindfulness and/or CBT techniques have shown to have a moderate positive effect on resilience

- Most involved a combination of
  - Psychoeducation
  - Mindfulness
  - Cognitive skills
  - Self-compassion skills
  - Gratitude practice
  - Emotional regulation training
  - Relaxation
  - Goal setting
Tools & Interventions

- **The Penn Resiliency Program**
  - University of Pennsylvania strengths-based prevention
  - Equip participants with practical skills to strengthen ability to overcome adversity and challenges, manage stress
  - They’ve worked with organizations from secondary schools, government agencies, military personnel, colleges, etc.
  - Train a trainer model
Building Resilience as Parents and Educators

- Understand stress
  - Positive, tolerable, and toxic
- Modeling healthy coping mechanisms
- Create a routine or something constant, give teens a sense of control
- Relationships with others
  - At least one stable, strong relationship with caring adult
  - Friendship support
  - School connectedness
- Bolstering self-efficacy/competence
  - Focus on strengths
  - Facilitate skills but allow mistakes
- Strengthening self-regulation skills
  - Encourage expressing emotions in a healthy way
- Help build confidence
“Life is supposed to be a series of peaks and valleys. The secret is to keep the valleys from becoming Grand Canyons.”

Bernard Williams