Bounce Back! Fostering Youth Resiliency through Strengths-Based Strategies

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Disclaimer

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Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

• Explain the relationship between adverse experiences and health disparities as they relate to teen pregnancy and HIV prevention;

• Identify characteristics of resilient youth and the basic resiliency-building characteristics of schools or youth programs; and

• Develop at least two strategies for fostering youth resiliency in adolescent sexual and reproductive health programs.
Our Journey

Introduction and Warm-Up

What Is Resiliency?

Resiliency Wheel

Adopt a Strengths-Based Perspective

Closure
Warm-Up
What is resiliency?
Why do young people succeed despite the odds?
What Is Resiliency?
Resiliency is the process of successfully adapting and developing positive well-being in the face of chronic stress and adversity.
What is adversity?

- Emotional Abuse & Neglect
- Physical Abuse & Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Mother Treated Violently
- Household Substance Use
- Household Mental Illness
- Family Instability
- Incarcerated Household Member
Socio-Economic Status

Multiple Adverse Experiences

Health Outcomes
As adverse childhood experiences increase, teen pregnancy rises...

(Hillis et al., 2004)
As adverse childhood experiences increase, teen pregnancy rises...

...but almost half of youth with the most adversity are resilient.

(Hillis et al., 2004)
Resiliency Activity

Draw a stick figure... like this ➔
Resiliency Activity

Think about a youth in your life who has experienced adversity.
Resiliency Activity

• Write down:
  – On the inside: the characteristics that make them resilient
Resiliency Activity

• Write down:
  – On the inside: the characteristics that make them resilient
  – Around the outside: relationships and environmental factors that support resiliency
Resiliency Study Findings


1/3 at High Risk
4 or more risk factors

Birth Cohort
N=698

Of those at High Risk
1/3 were resilient

Age 18
N=614

Of those at High Risk
5/6 were resilient

Age 32 & 40
N=505 & 489
Individual and Environmental Factors

**INDIVIDUAL TRAITS**
- Social competence
- Problem-solving skills
- Autonomy
- Sense of purpose, belief in a bright future

**ENVIRONMENTAL TRAITS**
- Caring relationships
- High expectations
- Opportunities for participation

(Dotterweich, n.d.)
Seven Themes of Successful Coping and Resilience

• Personal anchors
• Cognitive competence
• Success
• Active coping

• Positive temperament
• Social climate
• Additional support

(Garbarino, 1995)
How Children Succeed
by Paul Tough
Chronic stress impedes learning.
Children with secure attachment to a caring adult do better.
Success does not depend primarily on cognitive skills, but rather on:

- Persistence
- Self-control
- Curiosity
- Conscientiousness
- Grit
- Self-confidence
1) Turn to a partner.
2) Share 1-2 key learnings:
   • What similarities does your drawing have with the research findings? What differences?
   • How would you apply these research findings to your program?
Ah-ha!
The major implication from resiliency research is that if we hope to create socially competent people who have a sense of their own identity and efficacy, who are able to make decisions, set goals, and believe in their future, then meeting their basic human needs for caring, connectedness, respect, challenge, power and meaning must be the primary focus of any prevention, education and youth development effort.
Strategies to Foster Resiliency
The Resiliency Wheel
The Resiliency Wheel

- Increase Prosocial Bonding
- Set Clear, Consistent Boundaries
- Teach “Life Skills”
- Provide Caring & Support
- Provide Opportunities for Meaningful Participation
- Set and Communicate High Expectations

(Henderson, 2007)
Homework

Resiliency Wheel

Assessment
Adopt a Strengths-Based Perspective
What Is a Strengths-Based Approach?

Emerging from the field of social work, it is a set of ideas, assumptions and techniques:

• People are active participants in the helping process (empowerment).

• All people have strengths, often untapped or unrecognized.

• Strengths foster motivation for growth.

• Strengths are internal and environmental.

(Saleebey, 1992; Dotterweich, n.d.)
Using a Strengths-Based Approach

• You believe youth have strengths (attitude).
• You identify personal strengths (look beyond the problems).
• You teach youth that they have strengths (name them, show youth how their strengths are being used, suggest how they can use these strengths in the future).
• You give it time—you persist.

(Dotterweich, n.d.)
Roleplay

• Find a partner.
• One person plays the role of the 15 or 16 year old he/she used to be.
• Other person plays the role of a youth worker.
• Take 3 minutes to have a brief conversation.
• Youth workers find out the specific strengths of the adolescent in front of you.
• Adolescents shed all your adult behaviors!
Reflection

• What strengths did you identify?
• What kinds of questions did you ask?
• What other strategies did you use?
Any Questions
Closure
Take-Home Messages

• All young people have the capacity to be resilient.

• Surround youth with elements of the resiliency wheel.

• Adopt a strengths-based perspective.

• Give it time!
What? So What? Now What?

- **What?** – Write down one thing you learned.
- **So what?** – Write down why it was important or critical to your work.
- **Now what?** – Write down one step you will take to transfer the learning to your workplace.
Resources


http://www.resiliency.com


THANK YOU

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