









The Resilience Shield

Building Protective Systems Around At-Risk Youth



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RESOURCES



Sub Stack



SamGoldstein.com



Psychology Today



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Disclosure

- I have co-authored or co-edited 2 textbooks with resilient in the title.
- I have authored or co-authored 7 trade books with resilient in the title.
- I have produced a documentary with " Resilience " in the title.
- I have co-authored 4 book chapters with resilient in the title.
- I have co-developed a parent education program with the title " Resilience.
- I have co-authored 3 journal articles with resilient in the title.
- I am co-developing a tool to measure resilience.
- In the last 6 years, I have given over 50 public and professional talks with resilience in the title.
- I co-host a website with resilient in the address.
- I am developing a resiliency program for golfers.
- A day doesn't pass that the word resilient doesn't cross my lips.

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Overview

This session explores how to build protective systems around at-risk youth by applying research-based insights on resilience.

Participants will examine how biological, psychological, and social factors influence a young person's capacity to thrive despite adversity.

The session highlights how schools, juvenile justice, child welfare, and community agencies can work together to strengthen resilience through practical, strengths-based strategies.

Through real-world examples and interactive discussion, attendees will learn how to shift from reactive to proactive support, fostering long-term emotional, behavioral, and cognitive growth in vulnerable youth across diverse settings.

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Objectives

- **Identify key biological, psychological, and social factors that influence resilience** in at-risk youth and understand how these factors interact to affect development and behavior.
- **Examine research-based strategies that strengthen protective systems** within schools, juvenile justice, child welfare, and community organizations
- **Apply strengths-based and trauma-informed approaches** to support the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive growth of youth facing adversity.
- **Develop collaborative, proactive support strategies** that enhance coordination among agencies and create sustainable protective networks for vulnerable youth.

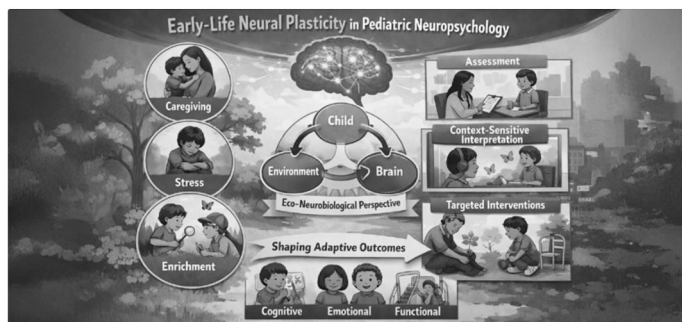
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<https://samgoldstein.com/resources/articles/white-papers/2026/harnessing-early-life-plasticity.aspx>

Harnessing Early-Life Plasticity

Implications for Intervention in Pediatric Neuropsychology

Dr. Sam Goldstein



Sam Goldstein Ph.D.

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<https://samgoldstein.com/resources/articles/white-papers/2025/childrens-development-as-a-continuum.aspx>

A Third Way: Goldstein's Developmental Continuum vs. DSM-5-TR and IDEIA Approaches to Childhood Behavior

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AS A CONTINUUM

Dr. Sam Goldstein



Comparing Goldstein's Developmental Continuum with DSM-5-TR and IDEIA

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Chapter 36

The Future of the DSM

Sam Goldstein

To appear in Handbook of DSM 5 TR Disorders in Children, Springer Publishers, 2026*

Abstract

This Chapter examines how psychiatry's diagnostic framework is transitioning from categorical description to data-driven, biologically informed precision models. Positioned between twentieth-century clinical consensus and twenty-first-century computational psychiatry, the DSM faces epistemic, ethical, and institutional challenges. This chapter forecasts potential trajectories, including global convergence with ICD, AI-assisted dimensional models, and algorithmic governance, emphasizing that psychiatry's next diagnostic paradigm will depend on transparency, inclusivity, and adaptability. Ultimately, the DSM's future may lie not as a fixed manual but as an evolving digital ecosystem integrating neuroscience, data science, and cultural pluralism.

Keywords: DSM, precision psychiatry, artificial intelligence, diagnostic systems, ICD integration

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Knowledge is power.

Sir Francis Bacon

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The greatest obstacle to
discovery is not ignorance - it is
the illusion of knowledge.

Daniel J. Boorstein

10

“I’m not afraid about my girlfriends and myself, we’ll squeeze through somehow, though I’m not too certain about my math.”

Anne Frank
June 21, 1942

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“I have lots of courage, I feel so strong and as if I can bear a great deal, I feel so free and so young! I was glad when I first realized it, because I don’t think I shall easily bow down before the blows that inevitably come to everyone.”

Anne Frank
July 15, 1944

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What Do We Know?

- In 2022 there were 73.7 million children (0 – 18 years) in the U.S.
- By 2030 that number will increase to 85.7 million.
- In 2021 15% lived in poverty
- In 2023 27% were living in one parent homes.
- In 2023 36% lived in homes with at least one significant problem.
- In 2022 over 1/2 million children were in foster care.

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Where Are We Heading?

- Increases in antisocial behavior including crime, drug use and violence.
- Increase in rates of divorce, illegitimacy, teen-age pregnancy.
- Membership in voluntary associations down.
- Rise in personal indulgence.
- Lower scholastic attainment among American students.

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CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

- An American child was reported abused or neglected every 35 seconds in 2023 (3 million).
- 30% of all victims below age 3; 50% below age 7.
- 60% are neglected.
- Nearly 600,000 American children are in foster care, with 130,000 waiting.
- 7 1/2 million children are home alone after school.

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National Center for Children in Poverty

- 37% of American children live in low income families.
- 5% live in extreme poverty.
- 30% of African American and 28% of Latino children live in poverty.

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Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

- Homicide is second leading cause of death among 12 to 24 year olds (5500 killed in 2023)
- More than 750,000 American youth were injured by violence in 2024.
- 17% of teens report carrying a weapon to school in the past month in 2024.
- One half of motor vehicle accidents involving teens were associated with drugs and alcohol.
- A total of 30% of teen suicide is associated with drugs and alcohol.

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Committee for Children

- One of every seven children reports being bullied in school regularly.
- Seventy-eight percent of children reported being bullied at least once in the past month.
- Thirty-one percent of girls and eight percent of boys in grades 8 - 11 reported harassment often.

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In the past 50 years the rate of adolescent suicide has increased to 7.32 per 1000,000 youth between 10 and 24 years. Over 20% of youth in mental health settings have attempted suicide.

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According to the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 10% of high school students reported attempting suicide in the past year. This rate was higher among certain groups: females (13%), American Indian/Alaska Native students (16%), Black students (14%), and lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (22%).

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Applying this 10% figure to the approximately 15.3 million high school students in the U.S. suggests that over 1.5 million teens may have attempted suicide in a given year. Additionally, it's estimated that each day, there are over 3,700 suicide attempts by young people in grades 9-12.

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The Resilience Shield Concept

- Risk does not equal destiny
- Protection can outweigh adversity
- Layered supports
- Built across systems
- Strength-focused

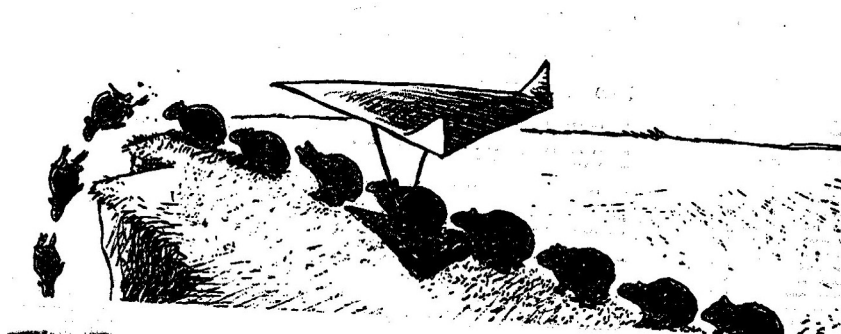
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Resilience Encompasses:

- A process leading to good outcomes despite high risk.
- The ability to function competently under stress.

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What Factors Contribute to Resilient Outcomes?



Lemmings

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Biology is not destiny but it does effect probability. In every risk group there are those who manage to transition successfully into adult life despite their adversities.



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Factors Within:



The Child



The Family



The Culture

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Four Waves of Resilience Research

- Identifying person and variable-focused factors that make a difference.
- Identifying and understanding the operation of these factors within systems with a process focus.
- Intervening on an individual level to foster resilience.
- Intervening on a system-wide level to foster resilience.

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Risk and Protective Factors: In the Individual

Risks

- Female gender
- Early puberty
- Difficult temperament: inflexibility, low positive mood, withdrawal, poor concentration
- Low self-esteem, perceived incompetence, negative explanatory and inferential style
- Anxiety
- Low-level depressive symptoms and dysthymia
- Insecure attachment
- Poor social skills: communication and problem-solving skills
- Extreme need for approval and social support

Protective

- High IQ
- Positive social skills
- Willingness to please adults
- Religious and club affiliations
- Positive physical development
- Academic achievement

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009). Risk and protective factors for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders across the life cycle. Summarized from:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Documents/Prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/IOM_Matrix_8%205x11_FINAL.pdf

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Risk and Protective Factors: In the Individual

Risks

- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Emotional problems in childhood
- Conduct disorder
- Favorable attitudes toward drugs
- Rebelliousness
- Early substance use
- Antisocial behavior
- Head injury
- Marijuana use
- Childhood exposure to lead or mercury (neurotoxins)

Protective

- High self-esteem
- Emotional self-regulation
- Good coping skills and problem-solving skills
- Engagement and connections in two or more of the following contexts: school, with peers, in athletics, employment, religion, culture

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009). Risk and protective factors for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders across the life cycle. Summarized from:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Documents/Prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/IOM_Matrix_8%205x11_FINAL.pdf

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Risk and Protective Factors: In the Family

Risks

- Inadequate or inappropriate child rearing practices,
- Home discord
- Maltreatment and abuse
- Large family size
- Parental antisocial history
- Poverty
- Exposure to repeated family violence
- Divorce
- Parental psychopathology
- Teenage parenthood
- A high level of parent-child conflict
- A low level of positive parental involvement
- Family dysfunction
- Poor parental supervision
- Sexual abuse

Protective

- Participation in shared activities between youth and family (including siblings and parents)
- Providing the forum to discuss problems and issues with parents
- Availability of economic and other resources to expose youth to multiple experiences
- The presence of a positive adult (ally) in the family to mentor and be supportive
- Family provides structure, limits, rules, monitoring, and predictability
- Supportive relationships with family members
- Clear expectations for behavior and values

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009). Risk and protective factors for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders across the life cycle. Summarized from:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Documents/Prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/IOM_Matrix_8%205x11_FINAL.pdf

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Risk and Protective Factors: In Peers

Risks

- Spending time with peers who engage in delinquent or risky behavior
- Gang involvement
- Less exposure to positive social opportunities because of bullying and rejection

Protective

- Positive and healthy friends to associate with
- Engagement in healthy and safe activities with peers during leisure time (e.g., clubs, sports, other recreation)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009). Risk and protective factors for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders across the life cycle. Summarized from:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Documents/Prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/IOM_Matrix_8%205x11_FINAL.pdf

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Risk and Protective Factors: School and Community

Risks

- Poor academic performance
- Enrollment in schools that are unsafe and fail to address the academic and social and emotional needs of children and youth
- Low commitment to school
- Low educational aspirations
- Poor motivation
- Living in an impoverished neighborhood
- Social disorganization in the community in which the youth lives
- High crime neighborhoods

Protective

- Enrollment in schools that address not only the academic needs of youth but also their social and emotional needs and learning
- Schools that provide a safe environment
- A community and neighborhood that promote and foster healthy activities for youth

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009). Risk and protective factors for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders across the life cycle. Summarized from:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Documents/Prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/IOM_Matrix_8%205x11_FINAL.pdf

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Resilience is a developmental process that involves individual differences in children's attributes (e.g. temperament, cognitive abilities) and environments (e.g. supportive parenting, enriched classrooms).

Kirby Deater-Deckard

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Resilient children are not simply born that way nor are they made from scratch by their experiences. Genetic and environmental experiences loom large as protectors against a variety of risks to healthy development ranging from resistance to bacteria and viruses to resilience to maltreatment and rejection.

Kirby Deater-Deckard

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Can resilience be taught?

MAYBE

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Is there a body of prospective
intervention research proving a
cause and effect relationship
between the applied practice of
resilience as a clinical strategy
and positive, long term
outcome?

NOT THAT I'M AWARE OF

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Conclusions

- An early history of developing competence along with supportive, consistent care serves as a powerful and enduring buffer throughout childhood and increases probability of resilience.
- The behaviors and pathways that lead to resilience are complex.
- There is a great need to map the interaction of person and environment factors.

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Conclusions

- Longitudinal research needs to be on a large scale and gene-environment focused.
- We require a broader cross-cultural perspective.
- We need to know more about individual dispositions and temperament as well as sources of family support.

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General Conclusions

- Longitudinal research needs to be conducted on a large scale and gene–environment focused.
- We require a broader cross-cultural perspective.
- We need to know more about individual dispositions and temperament as well as sources of family support.

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Only then will we begin to know
what makes the young of our
species survive and thrive despite
life's adversities.

Emmy Werner

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Five Strategies to Reduce Teen and Young Adult Risk Taking Behavior

- **Support positive behaviors of non-risk-taking individuals.** Declines in risk-taking mean that the share of students taking no risks has increased. These youth need support and expanded opportunities to continue making responsible and healthy decisions as they mature.
- **Target efforts to reduce specific risk behaviors toward multiple-risk students.** Recent public health and policy efforts to reduce the prevalence of key risk behaviors, such as smoking or violence, cannot address these behaviors in isolation from other risk-taking.
- **Encourage positive behaviors of risk-taking youth, such as time spent on extracurricular or faith-based activities.** These behaviors connect students to adults and social institutions and offer opportunities to prevent risk-taking among some students or reduce risk-taking among others.
- **Expand efforts to reach multiple-risk youth in nontraditional settings.** Teen participation in settings such as the workplace, the criminal justice system, and faith-based institutions offers innovative opportunities for health services and education programs and the development of personal relationships with positive adult role models that can reduce risk-taking.
- **Take new steps to reduce risk-taking among Hispanic students.** Further research is needed to better understand both risk-taking and development of this growing group of youth. Programs that are responsive and sensitive to the current ethnic and social diversity of Hispanic youth need to be developed and implemented.

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School Wide Programs



How BARR Works

Eight interconnected strategies help schools accomplish their goals by creating intentional connections between staff and students to address barriers to success.



Focus on the whole student

Educators work to build students' strengths and proactively address nonacademic reasons why students fall behind in school as well as what they need to thrive. Every discussion with or about the student includes a 360-degree perspective.



Provide professional development for staff

Training for teachers, counselors, and administrators starts before implementation and continues throughout the school year. Professional development focuses on enhancing achievement through student-teacher relationships.



Use I-Time Classroom Curriculum to foster learning

I-Time is an interactive weekly lesson taught by core teachers where students work together to strengthen their social and emotional skills, including communication and goal setting. They also work on discussing sensitive issues such as grief, substance use, and bullying.



Create cohorts of students

Groups of students take core courses (typically math, English, and science or social studies) together as a cohort. Each cohort is assigned to a team of teachers to cultivate connections and enhance learning relationships.



Hold regular teacher team meetings

Teachers in a cohort meet weekly for a 360-degree discussion about each student in the cohort. Teacher teams identify student strengths and any interventions a student might need.



Conduct Risk Review meetings

A Risk Review team meets regularly to discuss strategies for students who need more support than the cohort teacher teams can provide. This team identifies and coordinates additional internal or external resources that can best help students thrive.



Engage families in student learning

With BARR, families become active partners in helping students be their best. Teachers call and meet with parents and other family members regularly, and parents are invited to join an advisory council.



Engage administration

Administrators receive training, ongoing coaching, and tools to help them best integrate BARR into their school culture and reach their school-specific goals.

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The Developmental Assets® Framework

Search Institute has identified 40 positive supports and strengths that young people need to succeed. Half of the assets focus on the relationships and opportunities they need in their families, schools, and communities (external assets). The remaining assets focus on the social-emotional strengths, values, and commitments that are nurtured within young people (internal assets).

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The Mindset of a Resilient Youth

- Optimistic and hopeful.
- Feel special and appreciated in the eyes of others.
- Set realistic goals and expectations.
- View mistakes, hardships and obstacles as challenges.
- Solve problems and make decisions.
- Internal locus of control.
- Believe you can and set out to solve problems.
- Possess empathy.

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Only then will we begin to know what makes the young of our species survive and thrive despite life's adversities.

Emmy Werner

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Adopt a Learning to Ride a Bicycle Mindset!



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Through intelligent and ethical educational and therapeutic practices, we can foster self-discipline, mental health, resilience and build educational proficiency in all children without stealing away their dignity and hope.



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THE RESILIENCE SHIELD

BUILDING PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS AROUND AT-RISK YOUTH

STRONG SYSTEMS. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS. BRIGHTER FUTURES.

- SCHOOLS**
- JUVENILE JUSTICE**
- CHILD WELFARE**
- COMMUNITY AGENCIES**

PROTECT. EMPOWER. THRIVE.

UNDERSTAND RESILIENCE
The science behind strength and growth

IDENTIFY PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Build on strengths, reduce risks

COLLABORATE ACROSS SYSTEMS
Working together for lasting change

APPLY PRACTICAL STRATEGIES
From reactive to proactive support

EMPOWER YOUTH POTENTIAL
Every youth. Every opportunity.

RESILIENCE IS NOT JUST POSSIBLE. IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

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Reflection Prompt

- One assumption I will question
- One assessment habit I will change
- One way to emphasize plasticity
- One system I will educate
- One child who may benefit

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Extreme Brains Podcast

EXTREME BRAINS is a lively, thought-provoking podcast in which Sam, David, and James—three friends with sharp wit and unique perspectives—gather around a microphone to critique current events, explore life's challenges, and unpack the absurdity of modern times. Whether dissecting the day's headlines, debating life's perplexing questions, or finding humor in the chaos, this podcast offers listeners an engaging mix of critical insight, camaraderie, and laughs.

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#7 - Sleep: Is it Overhyp...



#6 - When Brains Pretend



#5 - When Good Brains ...

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Questions



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