Understanding and Applying Resilience Theory in Educational Care

Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor
University of Utah
School of Medicine

www.samgoldstein.com
info@samgoldstein.com
drsamgoldstein
@doctorsamgoldstein

Disclosure

My expenses for this talk are supported.
I am a compensated speaker.
I have developed tests marketed by Multi-Health Systems, Pro-Ed and Western Psychological Services.
I am Editor in Chief of the Journal of Attention Disorders (Sage) and Co-Editor of the Encyclopedia of Child Development (Springer)

Knowledge is power.

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

Daniel J. Boorstein

Caution should be taken in jumping to readily onto the bandwagon of whatever happens to be the prevailing enthusiasm of the moment.

Sir Michael Rutter

A Man Goes Fishing
The Future

Questions in Need of Answers

Is there a need for a conceptual process like resilience?
Is resilience an evidence based concept?
Is there sufficient research to suggest resilience is a powerful antidote for the myriad of adversities children face today?
Is there sufficient research to suggest that resilience theory guide the practices of education, mental health and parenting?
Can resilience be measured?
Can resilience be taught?
Should resilience be the featured theme at a school psychology conferences?

The purpose of life is to prepare the next generation for their future.
Survival of the Species

- Salmon and snakes are born with sufficient instincts to survive.
- Bear cubs require at least one or two years with their mother to insure survival.
- Higher primates require three or four years.
- Humans require at least ten years.

Michael said “a good day is when bad things don’t happen.”

My Grandparent’s Future
My Parent’s Future

Moms are Important Too!

Our Family’s Future
Preschool Graduation

How Will They Feel in Five Years?

How Children Become Failure Avoiders
   Todd’s Story
"I thought he'd be a smart criminal..."

Dear Ms. Walter,

I'm writing in the hotel room to say hello. I'm really... dumbed. I guess I feel... motivated. I feel... how do I feel? I feel... like a complete and total idiot.

Ryan's Letters To Ms. Walter Part I

Ryan's Letters To Ms. Walter Part II
We fail to appreciate that children are genetically endowed
What Are These Traits?

- The drive to help.
- The drive to mastery.
- Intrinsic motivation.
- Instinctual optimism.
- Altruism.
- Fairness.
- Problem solving.
- Social connection.
- The drive to acquire knowledge.

Big Shifts in Education

Knowing…………………………..Doing
Teacher Centered……………..Student Centered
The Individual………………. The Team
Consumption of
Information.............Construction of Meaning
Schools.......................... Networks
Single Sourcing .................Group Sourcing

With these changes comes a new appreciation of the science of resilience and stress hardiness.
Is the concept of Resilience popular?

Oh Yes!!
Defining Key Concepts

Mid 17th Century origin from the Latin resilient - ‘leaping back’, from the verb resilire.
Webster's defines resilient (adjective) as:

- (of a substance or object) able to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching or being compressed.
- (of a person or animal) able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

Defining Key Concepts

Resilience is a pattern of positive adaptation in the context of past or present adversity.

Coping = Resilience
Defining Key Concepts

Is resilience inversely related to impairment?

Is there a need for a conceptual process like resilience?

What Do We Know?

In 2006 there were 73.7 million children (0 – 18 years) in the U.S.
By 2030 that number will increase to 85.7 million.
In 2012 15% lived in poverty
In 20013 27% were living in one parent homes.
In 2003 36% lived in homes with at least one significant problem.
CHILDREN’S DEFENSE FUND

An American child was reported abused or neglected every 35 seconds in 2011 (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.

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.

In 2014 4,599 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 committed suicide.
Is there a need for a conceptual process like resilience?

YES

Resilience Encompasses:
A process leading to good outcome despite high risk;
The ability to function competently under

What Factors Contribute to Resilient Outcomes?

Find the resilient lemming.
Factors Within:
The Child
The Family
The Culture

Four Waves of Resilience Research
1. Identifying person and variable-focused factors that make a difference.
2. Identifying and understanding the operation of these factors within systems with a process focus.
3. Intervening individually to foster resilience.
4. Creating community wide programs.

U.S. Large Scale Longitudinal Studies
The Kauai Study (698 children born in 1955)
Rochester Study (180 children in 1970).
Chicago Study (1200+ children in 1983).
Worldwide Large Scale Longitudinal Studies

British National Child Development Study (17,000 children born in 1958).
British Cohort Study (14,000+ children born in 1970).
Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (1,000+ children born in 1972 - 1973).
Queensland Study (8,500+ children born in 1981).
Lundby Study (590 children born in 1997)
Copenhagen High Risk Study (207 children)

Person Attributes Associated With Successful Coping*

- Affectionate, engaging temperament.
- Sociable.
- Autonomous.
- Above average IQ.
- Good reading skills.
- High achievement motivation.
- Positive self-concept.
- Impulse control.
- Internal locus of control.
- Planning skills.
- Faith.
- Humorous.
- Helpfulness.

* Replicated in 2 or more studies.

Environmental Factors Associated With Successful Coping*

- Smaller family size.
- Maternal competence and mental health.
- Close bond with primary caregiver.
- Supportive siblings.
- Extended family involvement.
- Living above the poverty level.
- Friendships.
- Supportive teachers.
- Successful school experiences.
- Involvement in pro-social organizations.

*Replicated in 2 or more studies.
The idea of resilience has different meanings for different people,

Howard Kaplan
Alternatively it might be argued that the concept of resilience is useful,

Does resilience refer to characteristics and outcomes of individuals or does it refer to characteristics and outcomes of more inclusive variables such as gender, intellect, etc.?

Is resilience isomorphic to, partially overlapping, or orthogonal to a variety of other terms that appear to be functionally equivalent to that term?
Is resilience the opposite of non-resilience or vulnerability?

Is resilience defined in terms of the nature of the outcomes in response to stress or in terms of the factors that interact with stress to produce the outcomes?

What is the relationship between resilience and the experience of distressful life events?
Is resilience reflected in the ability to bounce back from, function with or caused by adversity?

Should resiliency be defined in terms of some overall criterion or

Which general or specific factors are equated with resilience?
How does resilience determine the nature of the factors that place an individual or system at risk?

Though good studies are available, much of the evidence is based on retrospective, cross-sectional or short term. longitudinal studies with relatively small samples absent controls.

It is also critical to remember that resilience is never directly measured in these studies.
Resilience is inferred based on the measurement of risk.

The pathways that lead to positive adaptation despite high risk and adversity are complex and greatly influenced by context therefore it is not likely that we will discover a magic (generic) bullet.

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.
Is resilience an evidence based concept?

YES

Can Resilience Be Measured

In an individual?
In groups?
As single or multiple protective factors?
As a cumulative phenomena?
As a predictor variable?

Efforts to Measure Resilient Factors in Clinical Practice

- Tennessee Self-Concept Scale
- Students Caring For Each Other Scale
- Self-Perception Profiles for Adolescence
- Self-Efficacy Scale
- Self-Description Questionnaire
- Search Institute's Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes & Behaviors
- Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale
- Review of Personal Effectiveness & Locus of Control
- Community Involvement Scale
- Adolescent Coping Scale
Efforts to Measure Resilience in Clinical Practice

Devereux Elementary Student Strength Assessment (81 item rating scale).
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment. (45 items).
Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (60 + item rating scales).
Psychological Resilience Scale (25 items).

Assessment of Risks and Strengths
Risk Inventory and Strengths Evaluation (RISE)

- Protective Behaviors
  - Emotional Balance
  - Interpersonal Skill
  - Self Confidence

- Risky Behaviors
  - Bullying
  - Delinquency
  - Health
  - Sexual
  - Substance Abuse
  - Suicide

RISE Overview

- The first tool to look at these concepts within the context of each other
- Ages 9 through 25 years; Parent, Teacher and Self Forms
- 15-20 minutes administration time
- Norm-referenced T-scores examine broad constructs of risk and strength
- Response validity scores also available
- For educational psychologists, counselors, clinical psychologists and other mental-health professionals working with children, adolescents and young adults (Level C)
Can attributes and behaviors associated with resilience be measured?  

YES

Is there sufficient research to suggest resilience is a powerful antidote for the myriad of adversities children face today?  

MAYBE

Todd Finds A Path
“I think I could do this!”

Can these measurements be used to assess risk and make accurate predictions?

MAYBE
Is there sufficient research to suggest that resilience theory guide the practices of education, mental health and parenting?

MAYBE
Do we know what effect this will have?

NO

Has the promotion of resilience as a feel good, great hope for all that ails humanity concept outpaced the available data?

YES
Can resilience be taught? MAYBE
Can skills considered to foster resilience be taught.

YES

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

But some people think so...
Teaching Resilience to our Children

Affirming and teaching resilience, the capacity to “bounce back” in the face of stress or chronic stress, can help us understand and support the development of children. The presence of risk factors in homes, schools, and in the community does not mean that children will fall into negative or destructive behavior patterns. In fact, the resiliency of the child is supported by building on the developmental assets, for the child may thrive despite the presence of risk factors.

40 Developmental Assets for Children

In the book "The Resilience Book" T. Barlow and E. Seifriz-Weiss identified the following units of resiliency.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight Guideposts to Foster A Resilient Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teach and convey empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listen, Learn, Influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Accept children for who they are conveying unconditional love and setting realistic expectations.


5. Help children learn from rather than feel defeated by mistakes.
6. Teach children to solve problems and make decisions.

7. Discipline in ways that promote discipline and self worth.

8. Help children develop responsibility, compassion and a social conscience.
Classrooms That Nurture the Mindset of Resilient Students:

Create and perpetuate an intentional culture.
Capitalize on the best ideas.
Manifest a coherent philosophy of learning and teaching for teachers and students.
Make a substantial development to professional development.
Adopt a vision beyond the local environment.
Create connections within and beyond the local environment.

Classrooms That Nurture the Mindset of Resilient Students:

Commit to appreciating how the present effects the future and take action with this in mind.
Track outcome overtime at all levels to make informed decisions and policies.
Encourage mentorship in all stakeholders.
Create opportunities for connections for all stakeholders.

Classrooms That Nurture the Mindset of Resilient Students:

Create learning experiences that drive intrinsic motivation and self-discipline to replace the status quo in which children are manipulated and controlled by extrinsic forces.
Provide competition in the absence of winning.
Provide extrinsic reinforcement for effort not control.
Classrooms That Nurture the Mindset of Resilient Students:

- COMPETENCE in academic, social and vocational areas
- CONFIDENCE or a positive identity
- CONNECTIONS or healthy relations
- CHARACTER or positive values, integrity, and values
- CARING and compassion

Lerner et al., 2000

Classrooms That Nurture the Mindset of Resilient Students:

- Foster opportunities for intrinsic control.
- Minimize external consequences to control.
- Enhance self-discipline.
- Set limits in autonomous ways.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop and strengthen basic cognitive processes.

Todd Fulfills His Goal
“This person loves me.”
Effective educators focus on the self-esteem and the social-emotional lives of children.

Effective educators recognize that they have a lifelong impact upon student’s capacity to be resilient.

Effective educators understand the mindset of resilient children.
Effective educators are not mislead by the overt behaviors of children.

Coping Behaviors of Children

- Quitting and avoiding
- Cheating
- Rationalizing
- Clowning and immature behavior
- Controlling
- Aggressiveness and bullying
- Passive/aggressive behavior
- Complaining of boredom
- Rushing

Effective educators are knowledgeable about frameworks for understanding the components of self-esteem, motivation, and resilience.
Effective educators appreciate the importance of identifying, reinforcing and displaying each child's island of competence.

Effective educators develop and implement strategies for reinforcing self-esteem, motivation, hope and resilience in children.

To be a charismatic adult and nurture hope and resilience, we must understand and reinforce the components of a resilient mindset in children and teens.
In Their Own Words

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 pathways that lead to resilience are complex.

There is a great need to map the interaction of person and environment factors.
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.

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

Emmy Werner

Adopt a learning to swim mindset!
A Learning to Swim Mindset

It Must Never Come to This!

No so-called parents
I hate your f*cking guts

Rob
You lied and said that
you would spend time
with me...

Kathleen
Same with you

Or This!

DEAR GOD,
I wish I could be
better in school.
Can you help me.
Goldstein’s Axiom

Through intelligent and ethical educational practices develop self-discipline and build educational proficiency in all children without stealing away their dignity and hope.

Questions in Need of Answers

Is there a need for a conceptual process like resilience? YES
Is resilience an evidence based concept? YES
Is there sufficient research to suggest resilience is a powerful antidote for the myriad of adversities children face today? MAYBE
Is there sufficient research to suggest that resilience theory guide the practices of education, mental health and parenting? MAYBE
Can resilience be measured? YES
Can resilience be taught? MAYBE

“The secret of education lies in respecting the student”