Keys to Family Resilience

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The Social Ecology of Resilience
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Resilience

Strengths in the context of adversity

The ability to withstand and rebound from stressful life challenges, strengthened and more resourceful

Varied Cultural Images of Resilience ~

~ a Japanese view
   "A willow that bends in the storm but does not break"

~ Korean concept of Han:
   "Suffering that is deep but not without hope"

~ Mistaken U.S. view of resilience:
   "Just bounce back!"
"Brad, we've got to talk."
Strengthening Resilience: Relational Lifelines

Facilitate coping, healing, and positive growth
Through family, community, cultural, and spiritual connections

“We’re encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue.”
Perhaps they are not stars in the sky  
But rather openings  
Where our loved ones shine down  
To let us know they are happy  
And to light our way  

…..Native American
Family Resilience

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

Family Resilience Meta-Framework for Practice

- Shift Focus from Family Deficits, Limitations to Strengths, Resources, Potential
- **Developmental, Systemic Perspective**
  - Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Influences
  - Family Challenged by Adversity -- timeline: events
  - Family Response: Facilitates Adaptation of all Members, Relationships
- **Relational View of Human Resilience**
  - Use genogram: identify kin, social, community, & spiritual resources
  - Recruit models, mentors
  - Build life-lines, teams, networks
Chicago Center for Family Health
Resilience-Oriented Program Applications
Identify & Build resources to:
– Recover from Crisis, Trauma, Loss
  • Family Bereavement; War, Conflict zones; Community Disaster; Refugee experiences
– Cope with, master Multi-Stress Conditions
  • e.g. Chronic illness, Disabilities; Poverty
– Navigate Disruptive Life Changes
  • Migration; Job loss; Separation / Divorce
– Overcome Barriers to Success
  • At-risk youth: Family - School Partners

KEYS TO FAMILY RESILIENCE
Belief Systems
1. Making Meaning of Crisis & Challenge
2. Positive Outlook: Hope
3. Transcendence & Spirituality
Organizational Resources
4. Flexibility / Stability
5. Connectedness; Leadership
6. Kin, Social, & Economic Resources
Communication Processes
7. Clear, consistent messages
8. Emotional Sharing; Humor / Joy/ respite
9. Collaborative Problem-solving / Proaction

Belief Systems
The Heart and Soul of Resilience

Seeing is believing
Western view
We must believe in something
To be able to see it
Native American view
We do not see things as they are --
We see them as we are.
The Talmud
1. Meaning -Making

- View Resilience as Relationally-based
  - “Lifelines” vs. “rugged individual”

- Contextualize Distress, De-pathologize
  - Decrease blame, shame, guilt

- Gain Sense of Coherence
  - View shared challenges as:
    - Meaningful, Comprehensible, Manageable

- Appraise Situation; Options
  - Explanatory, causal: Why me / Us?
  - Future expectations / catastrophic fears:
    What can we do? Active Coping

2. Positive Outlook

- Instill Hope; “Oxygen for the Spirit”
  - En-Courage Confidence – “Can- Do” spirit

- Affirm Strengths, Abilities;
  - Build on Potential

- Active Initiative & Perseverance
  - Seize Opportunities

- Master the Possible
  Accept what can't be changed
  Live with uncertainty
Master the Art of the Possible:

Do all you can
With what you have
In the time you have
In the place you are

3. Transcendence and Spirituality

- Larger Values, Purpose
- Spirituality: Faith, Practices, Community
- Inspiration: Envision New Possibilities
  - Aspirations; Role Models, Life dreams
  - Invention; Innovative Solutions
  - Creative Expression-- writing, art, music
- Transformation: Learning, Change, & Growth
  - Redirect life priorities; deepen bonds
  - Compassion: Social Action to Benefit Others

- Bio-psycho-social-spiritual Perspective

  - Spirituality is a dimension of human experience
  - Involves streams of influence flowing through all aspects of life
  - From Family & Cultural Heritage to
  - Personal Beliefs, Practices, Connection
  - Approaches to Suffering, Healing, Resilience
**Spiritual Resources**
- Transcendent, personal beliefs & practices
- Active investment in core values
- Fosters meaning, wholeness, harmony
- Connection with all others, nature, universe
- The heart & soul of religion (Pargament)
- Religious and Non-religious can find spiritual nourishment & expression in:
  - Humanist values, compassion
  - Contemplative practices, rituals
  - Couple, family, community bonds
  - Connection with Nature; Creative Arts
  - Service to others; Social Action

**Structural Resources**
Relational Shock Absorbers

4. Flexibility -- "Bounce Forward"
   & Provide Stability - Reorganize Routines, Reliability
   Leadership - Nurture, Protect, Guide
   Couples: Mutual Respect

5. Connectedness -- Mutual Support
   Commitment, collaboration

6. Kin, Community Resources

**Communication Processes**
- 7. Clear, consistent messages
  Information: Truth seeking / speaking
- 8. Share Feelings; Respect Differences:
  Joys, Sorrows, Regrets, Pride
  Find Humor, Fun; Pleasure, Respite
  Refuel Energies & Spirit
- 9. Collaborative Problem-Solving
  Decision-making, manage conflict
  Be Proactive: Plan B

**Social & Economic Resources: Lifelines**
- Mobilize Kin & Social Support
  Recruit Mentors
  Build Vital Community Networks
- Build Financial Security
- Overcome Odds / Change the Odds
  Healthcare, workplace changes for families to thrive in the face of challenges.
Families are Sanctuaries of Life and Love

Resilience of the human spirit:
The capacity to bring out the best in the worst of times

Let nothing dim the light that shines from within ~ Maya Angelou
Family Resilience Meta-Framework for Practice / Prevention

• Relational View of Human Resilience
• Stresses impact family; Family coping influences adaptation of all Members, relationships, and family unit
• Contextual View of Distress, Wellbeing, & Adaptation: Larger systems: workplace, healthcare, schools; social structures, access to resources
• Use of Genogram: Identify strengths, resources, models, mentors
• Timeline: Crisis events, Pile-up of stresses
• Varied Challenges and Pathways in Resilience:
  • No single model fits all families, their values, challenges, situation (resources / constraints)
• Prevention: By strengthening resilience, families and children become more resourceful in meeting future challenges.

Facilitating Family Resilience : Practice Guidelines

• Core Conviction in Strengths, Potential of all Families, alongside Vulnerabilities, Limitations
• Language, Framing to Depathologize, Humanize
• Contextualize Distress; Decrease Shame, Blame
• Compassion for Suffering, Disappointments, Losses
• Focus on Strengths, Interests, Abilities, Gifts
• View Crisis as Opportunity for Learning & Positive Change
• Shift Focus from Problems to Possibilities for Mastery, Healing, & Growth
• Integrate Challenges and Resilience into the Fabric of Personal & Relational Lives.

Guidelines to Facilitate Healing from Complicated, Traumatic Loss

• Start by grounding in their family, community, cultural, & spiritual connections.
• Invite them to share their loss experience.
• Offer compassionate witnessing of recent (& ongoing) losses, hardships, or injustices suffered.
• Draw out, affirm strengths in coping efforts;
• Link with kin, community resources
• Re-member persons & relationships lost;
  • Continuing Bonds: Spiritual connection, Stories, Deeds
• Future orientation: renew, revise hopes, dreams,
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