

Children and youth exposed to domestic violence

A responsive system grounded in resilience

Linda Chamberlain
Jordan Sizelove
Devorah Levine
Kristin Bodiford

Introductions

Please share
one word
that describes resilience to you

Children's Exposure

- **Visual** - as "eyewitness"
- **Audio** - hearing the violence
- **Tool of Perpetrator** - used in event
- **Aftermath** - the impact of violence

"Seeing my mom get beat is worse than being beat myself." (Teen)

Impact

- Adverse health outcomes
- School health and performance
- Greater rates of antisocial behavior, substance abuse, suicide attempt, mental illness
- Linked to other forms of community violence

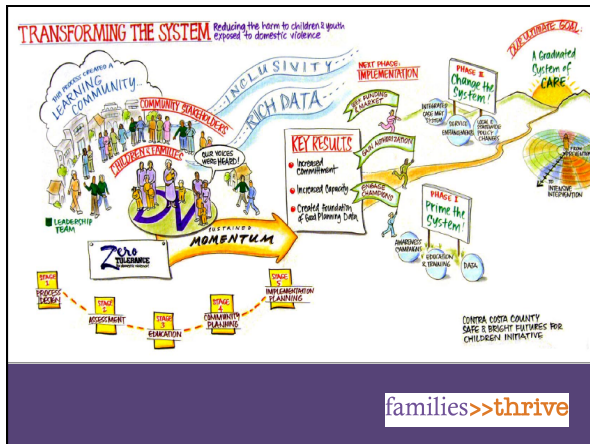
Voices of Youth

- “Violence effects kids’ behavior because they think it’s ok to pick on women and those smaller than them.” (Teen)
- “Most of the times kids know domestic violence is wrong, but they are traumatized by seeing their mom get beat up. I hit my younger bothers and stole cars because I was so angry.” (Teen)

Shifting Our View

- Increase capacity
- Build partnerships
- Small tests for change
- Strengths based framework

No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew.” Einstein

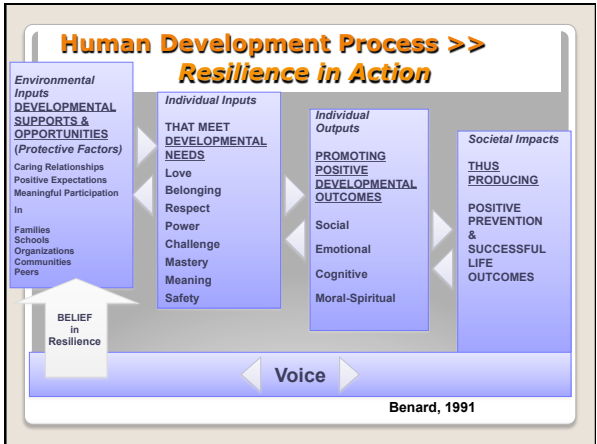
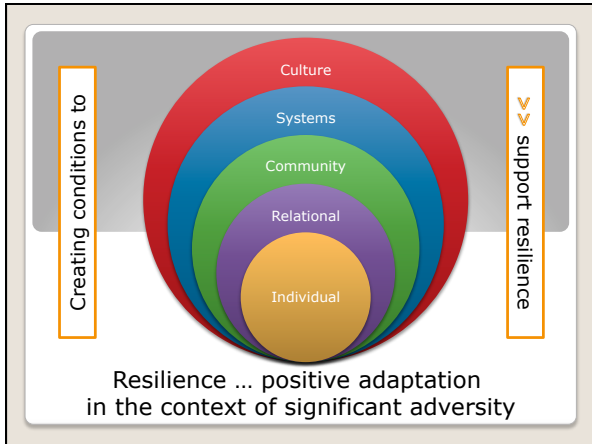




Strengths-based view....

- Does not ignore problems/difficulties or the critical need to ameliorate/prevent the harm caused.
- Key assumptions are:
 - individuals, families, and communities are defined not by their difficulty, but rather by their multiple strengths,
 - the amelioration of current difficulties or the prevention of future difficulties begins with the identification and marshaling of these strengths.

Kenneth Maton



**Beliefs >>
Support Resilience**

Resilience begins with beliefs

- Resilience begins with a change in consciousness,
- beginning with an act of belief,
- often in the face of accumulated evidence to the contrary.

Gervase Bushe 2002 (Adapted)

Voice

- Who gets to decide?
- Who has a say?
- Whose voice is included?
- Whose voice is left out?



Choppin' it Up – Talking about relationships and resilience

www.choppinitup.org

Choppin' it Up

This is a story of one community's commitment to create change.



Engaging the strengths of their youth.



Emerging Leaders

Youth and Community Dialogue

- What impact does abuse in relationships have on you?
- What does healthy mean to you? What does a healthy relationship look like?
- How do you navigate to health?
- What do you need to support you?

Key questions from a resilience perspective

Listening to stories of resilience

- Powerful hidden resilience
- Multiplicity of identities, voices and stories
- Subordinate stories
- Creative resources and strengths

Complexity

(www.choppinitup.org to hear stories of strength and resilience.)



YOU CAN DO IT!

Our own experiences with resilience



**MEN
TOR**

Beliefs >> Influence Language

The beliefs we hold influence language

- Language we use
- Stories we tell
- How often we tell them
- Voices that are included
- Voices that are left out

Language and Images >> Generate Action

Language and images lead to action

- Positive images of our self and others
- Images of the future from action and strengths in the present
- We get to choose which images propel us to resilience and thriving.

Cooperrider, D., Sorensen, P., Whitney, D., & Yaeger, T. (2001).

Transformation

This is not about changing youth. It is about unearthing what already exists, transforming narratives about youth to highlight their strengths, their hopes, and their dreams.

(Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010)

Statistics

Let's talk about statistics. Apparently I'm supposed to be pregnant, a drop out, disrespectful and have no morals.

I'm actually in school. I have a 3.5 grade point average. I have goals and morals.



I plan on going to school and majoring in pre law and criminal justice.

NEUROPLASTICITY AND THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN: RISK AND RESILIENCY

Linda Chamberlain PhD MPH
Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project

The Amazing Brain: Risk and Resiliency

Neuroplasticity= the ability of the human brain to adapt and change in response to experience and environment.

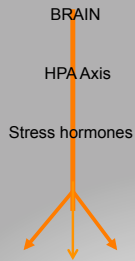


What is Trauma?

“Overwhelming demands placed on the physiological system that result in a profound felt sense of vulnerability and/or loss of control.” (Robert Macy)

Bassuk, Konnath & Volk, 2006

TRAUMA



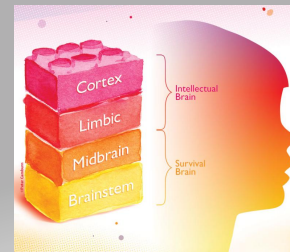
Brain always prioritizes survival



Cascade of physical, mental, cognitive and behavioral effects ↓

Sequential Development of a Child's Brain

- Abstract Thought
- Problem solving
- Affiliation
- Attachment
- Emotional Reactivity
- Motor Regulation
- Sleep
- Digestion
- Blood Pressure
- Heart Rate
- Respiration
- Body Temperature

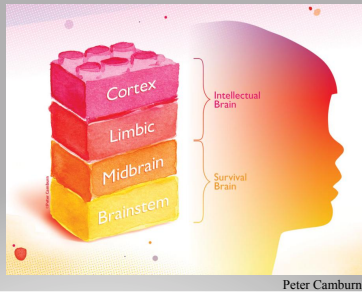


↑ NEUROPLASTICITY

Peter Camburn

Sequential Vulnerability

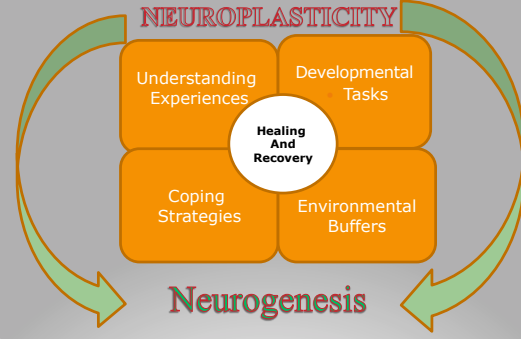
Poor social skills
Reading decrement
Speech problems
Attention problems
Separation anxiety
Aggressive behaviors
Hypervigilance
Failure to thrive
Stomach problems
Sleep problems
LOW stress tolerance



Peter Camburn

What other effects does violence have on children?

NEUROPLASTICITY



Adapted from diagram on promoting social & emotional well-being
To facilitate healing/recovery by Commissioner Bryan Samuels, ACYF

What Children Exposed to DV Need

RESILIENCY

Feel physically and emotionally safe

Strong bond to non-battering parent

Express feelings & frustrations in non-destructive ways

Have their strengths praised and called upon

NEUROPLASTICITY

Survival first!

Social connections build brain connections

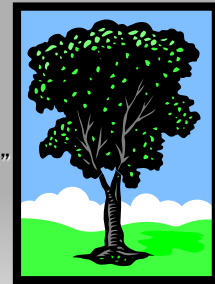
Skill-building for impulse control & self-soothing

Promote self-esteem and competency to explore & experience the world

Bancroft, 2004

What We Can Do

- Developmentally appropriate experiences to heal the brain
- Babies learn best through social interactions
 - Increase child-adult time
 - Reduce exposure to media violence and "media parenting"
- Active, experiential learning, enrichment programs
 - Head Start
 - Home visitation



Magic Trees of the Mind™
by Dr. Marian Diamond

Resilience >> Responsive Systems

If we view health care or social services as a resource for people to draw upon - to navigate their lives and expressions of resilience we can then look at:

Measures of how responsive a system is.

Increased access and cultural relevance.

Easier and more relevant for people to navigate in ways they find meaningful to their self-definition of 'healthy'.



Discussion

- How can we look at beliefs, language, stories, and images?
- How can we include more voices?
- How can we build upon or integrate protective factors?
- How can we build partnerships and collaboration?
- How can we change systems policies and practices?

www.familiesthrive.org
info@familiesthrive.org