Children and youth exposed to domestic violence

A responsive system grounded in resilience

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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
We get to choose

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

Resilience ... positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity

Human Development Process >> Resilience in Action

Benard, 1991
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

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

Emerging Leaders

Engaging the strengths of their youth.
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

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

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

Our own experiences with resilience
**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.


**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

**TRAMA**

BRAIN

HPA Axis

Stress hormones

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

Peter Cannum
Sequential Vulnerability

Peter Camburn

What other effects does violence have on children?

What Children Exposed to DV Need

What We Can Do

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

• 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

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

Bancroft, 2004

Magic Trees of the Mind®
by Dr. Marian Diamond

Understanding Experiences
Developmental Tasks
Coping Strategies
Environmental Buffers

Neurogenesis

Healing And Recovery
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?

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