

## Supporting resilience: Parenting (and school) strategies to encourage mental wellness

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## What is resilience?

## Resilience

Two components:

- (1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and
- (2) the achievement of positive adaptation despite the adversity

## Resilience research

While early research focused on the characteristics of the child, later research has suggested that an understanding of resilience requires study of a variety of factors including:

- (a) characteristics of the child,
- (b) aspects of their families,
- (c) characteristics of the wider social environment.

## Ordinary magic: Resilience is normal

- Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon arising from ordinary human adaptive processes.

## Developmental cascades

- Positive factors in development (e.g. problem solving, self regulation, curiosity) build later strengths
- Early problems in the child's development may increase problems in the future
- The earlier you provide support the better
- But – it is never too late to build strengths

## What factors promote resilience?

(Sapienza & Masten, 2011)

- Positive relationships with caring adults.
- Effective care giving and parenting.
- Intelligence and problem-solving skills.
- Self-regulation skills.
- Perceived efficacy and control.
- Achievement motivation.
- Positive friends or romantic partners.
- Faith, hope, spirituality.
- Belief that life has meaning.
- Effective teachers and schools.

## What systems are most influential for these factors ?

The places where children spend most of their time

- Parents

The places you can reach parents and children

- Early childhood education
- Schools

## What systems are most influential for these factors ?

Health care system

- Public health nursing
- Routine health care visits – family doctor or pediatrician

## What things have changed for children and families in last 50 years (in urban communities)?

- Smaller family size
- Fewer children per street
- Children attend more diverse schools
- Child care before and after school
- For some families more resources

## What things have changed for children and families in last 50 years?

- TV, computer and games competing for children's time

## Key principles

- Parents are the captains of the team – they don't always take on this role – authoritative parenting
- If parents take a leadership role and get good support from community resources children will be happier and develop more resilience.
- Parents want to hear about effective strategies for accomplishing family goals.
- The earlier the better.

## Concepts

- Supporting parents on issues of concern one issue at a time
- Intervening early to have an early impact on development (developmental cascades)
- Easier to develop an early pattern of healthy behavior than to change a problem pattern when it has developed

## My work with parents of young children– what are parents concerned about?

- What can I do to give my child the best start in life?
- How can I encourage school success?
- My child is a picky eater. How do I encourage healthy eating?
- My child does not listen to me.
- How do I help my child deal with conflict and frustration, include not getting his/her way?

## Parent concerns

Things that may be off the radar with some parents but are very important

- Encouraging age appropriate independence
- Encouraging problem solving
- Encouraging friendships with other children
- Ability to delay gratification
- Screen time

## Role of the school in promoting resilience

- children spend a large proportion of their waking hours in school
- develop academic skills, life skills, and forming lifelong relationships.
- possibility for ongoing contact with parents.

## Web-based program for parents of anxious children

	Introduction to the Program	Weekly Check-In	Activities
Start Here			
Understanding Anxiety	Introduction	Three Systems	Feedback Worksheet
Anxiety Patterns	Problem Anxiety		Feedback
Overcoming Anxiety	Overcoming Anxiety Steps		Feedback
Worries	Introduction	Realistic Thinking Steps	Anxious Thinking Feedback
Problem Solving	Introduction	Problem Solving Steps	Activities Feedback
Reassurance Seeking	Introduction	Reduce Reassurance Steps	Activities Feedback
Motivating Your Child	Introduction	Rewards Steps	Problem Solving Feedback Worksheet
Facing Fears	Principles	Facing Fears	Activities Feedback Worksheet
Encouraging Cooperation	Introduction	Steps	Activities Feedback

Optional

Risk Factors	Introduction		Feedback		
Screen time	Introduction	Problem Solving	Activities	Feedback	
Bedtime Battles	Introduction	Bedtime Strategies	Activities	Feedback	Worksheet
Friendships	Introduction	Friendship Strategies	Activities	Feedback	
Handling Intense Emotions	Introduction	Coping Steps	Activities	Feedback	

## Screen time

## Seductiveness of screen time!!

- Powerful as a child minder
- Children learn very quickly using resources that are in the home – viewing pictures, starting videos
- Children will advocate for more
- Parents are often very engaged in screen time – TV on in the background, checking email, showing videos, television as recreation

## Impact of increased screen time

- Dramatically decreased physical activity
- More passive activities, not as much engagement with the environment, problem solving – decreased mastery
- Increased problems with weight for children and adults, association with heart disease
- Less time for reading for pleasure
- What about contact with friends? Screen time as a substitute for time with friends and family? Reduced empathy?

## Dissemination: Screen time as an example

- Getting information (and discussion) to parents early and repeatedly
  - Prenatal visits
  - Postnatal visits
  - Nurse and physician visits
  - Early childhood education
  - Regularly throughout school

## Managing screen time

Recommendations from national pediatrics associations

- 1 to 2 hours on weekdays max
- 2 hours a day or so on weekends max

## Managing screen time

It is one thing to make recommendations but parents may run into problems. Can you help them with problem-solving?

1. Be in charge – parents are the captains of the team!
2. Have rules, set limits
3. Set a good example

## Describing common problems and solutions

- I'm bored
- I just want to finish this
- But it's the weekend, but other kids can do it, but my friend is over
- I don't want to go to bed because I am not tired
- Eating with screens on
- Its my game, my phone, my laptop

## Material for parents: Managing screen time

**GIVE YOUR CHILD**  
**The Gift of Health**

### screen-smart parenting

How to Find Balance and Benefit  
 in Your Child's Use of Social Media,  
 Apps, and Digital Devices



**Jodi Gold, MD**  
 Foreword by Tory Burch

## Friendships

- Think of your three closest friends.
- How old were you when you met them?
- Where did you meet them?

## What can parents and schools do to promote friendships?

- Have an awareness of the importance – watch for children who have problems with this.
- Play dates – challenge in arranging this
- Schools – observe interactions during free play times
- If children are struggling provide extra support

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## Problem solving fits very well with many school activities

- All children benefit from learning an explicit approach to problem solving
- It can be adapted for various ages right down to Kindergarten age

## Children who Learn to Solve Problems:

- Realize that they have options
- Develop confidence in themselves
- Become more capable people
- Learn to develop emotional self-control

## Steps to Solving Problems

- **Step 1: What is the problem?**
- **Step 2: How big a problem is it?**
- **Step 3: What could you do?**
- **Step 4: What would you like to try doing?**
- **Step 5: How well did the solution work?**



## Self regulation

- Learning to accept and deal with emotional distress
- Learning to delay gratification – not having everything you want right away
- Good for there to be some things you want and will work to achieve
- Learning to cooperate with others
- Age appropriate independence

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