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

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#### 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 encouraging 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

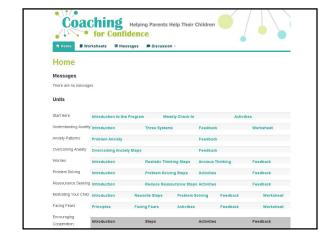
Things that may be off the radar with some parents but are very important

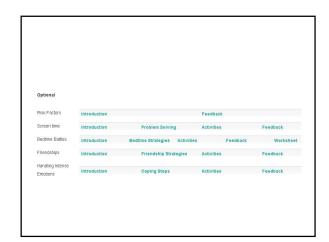
- Encouraging age appropriate independence
- Encouraging problem solving
- Encouraging friendships with other children
- Ability to delay gratification
- Screen time

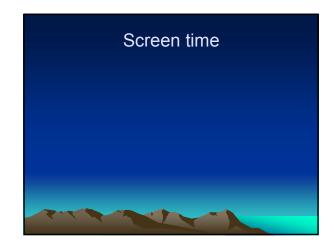
## Role of the school in promoting resilience

- 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







### 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

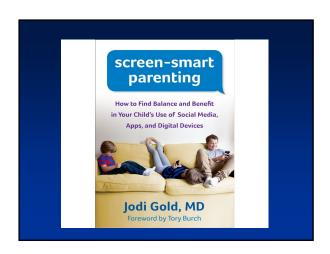
It is one thing to make recommendations but parents may run into problems. Can you help them with problem-solving?

- 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





## 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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