

*Resiliency In Action Training & Publications*  
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# **RESILIENCY...**

**“...can be defined as the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social and academic competence despite exposure to severe stress...**

**Or simply the stress of today’s world.”**

From Resiliency In Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators  
by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein

**“...is about bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts.”**

--“Sean” (15-year old high school student)

**“...is an innate self-righting and transcending ability within all children, youth, adults, organizations, and communities.”**

From “The Philosophy of Resiliency In Action, Inc.

--Nan Henderson, Bonnie Benard, Nancy Sharp-Light

## What are "protective factors" ?

"Many adolescents who seem to be at high risk nevertheless do not succumb to risk behavior, or get less involved in it than their peers or seem to abandon it more rapidly than others do.

"A likely answer [as to why this is true] is that there was indeed exposure to and experience of risk, *but that it was countered by exposure to and experience of protection.*"

"Protective factors...moderate, buffer, insulate against and thereby do mitigate the impact of risk on adolescent behavior development."

--RICHARD JESSOR, PH.D., INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE,  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

## *The Resiliency Chart*

Name of someone (aged 5 – 20) that you are concerned about \_\_\_\_\_

## **PERSONAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS**

### **Individual Protective Factors that Facilitate Resiliency**

- " Relationships -- Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships**
- " Service -- Gives of self in service to others or a cause**
- " Life Skills -- Uses life skills, including good decision-making, assertiveness, and impulse control**
- " Humor -- Has a good sense of humor**
- " Inner Direction -- Bases choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)**
- " Perceptiveness -- Insightful understanding of people and situations**
- " Independence -- "Adaptive" distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy**
- " Positive View of Personal Future -- Expects a positive future (Optimism)**
- " Flexibility -- Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations**
- " Love of Learning -- Capacity for & connection to learning**
- " Self-motivation -- Internal initiative, inner motivation**
- " Competence -- Is "good at something"/personal competence**
- " Self-Worth -- Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence**
- " Spirituality -- Personal faith in something greater**
- " Perseverance -- Keeps on despite difficulty; doesn't give up**
- " Creativity -- Expresses self through artistic endeavor**

Adapted from the book, *Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators* by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein, published by Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA (2003, revised ed.).

## THE RESEARCH OF EMMY WERNER AND RUTH SMITH

1. They began studying all the children born on Kauai in 1955--700 babies.
2. 1/3 of these children were considered "high risk" due to multiple risk factors at birth.
3. Of these "high risk" children, 70 seemed "invulnerable" to the risk--developed no problems.

### Two main reasons for this "invulnerability" were identified:

- " They were born with outgoing, social dispositions.
  - " They therefore were able to recruit several sources of support for themselves.
4. The other 2/3 of the "high risk" group did develop problems, but the majority were doing well by their mid-30s by their own and others' reports, psychological tests, and community records (5/6 of the original "high risk" group, 166 of 200, had therefore "bounced back").

### How did this process of "bouncing back" happen?

- " They told researchers that someone along the way reached out with the messages: "You matter" and "It doesn't matter what you have done in the past". Sources of this support, other than family members, were most often neighbors, teachers, and informal youth workers.
- " The person was more important than the program.
- " The programs that assisted most provided support similar to an extended family.
- " The group that bounced back from having problems also some kind of competence.

"Our findings and those by other American and European investigators with a life-span perspective suggest that these buffers [protective factors] make a more profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or stressful life events. They appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical, and historical boundaries. Most of all, they offer us a more optimistic outlook than the perspective that can be gleaned from the literature on the negative consequences of perinatal trauma, caregiving deficits, and chronic poverty. They provide us with a corrective lens--an awareness of the self-righting tendencies that move children toward normal adult development under all but the most persistent adverse circumstances."

--Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith, *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*, 1992

## **ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS**

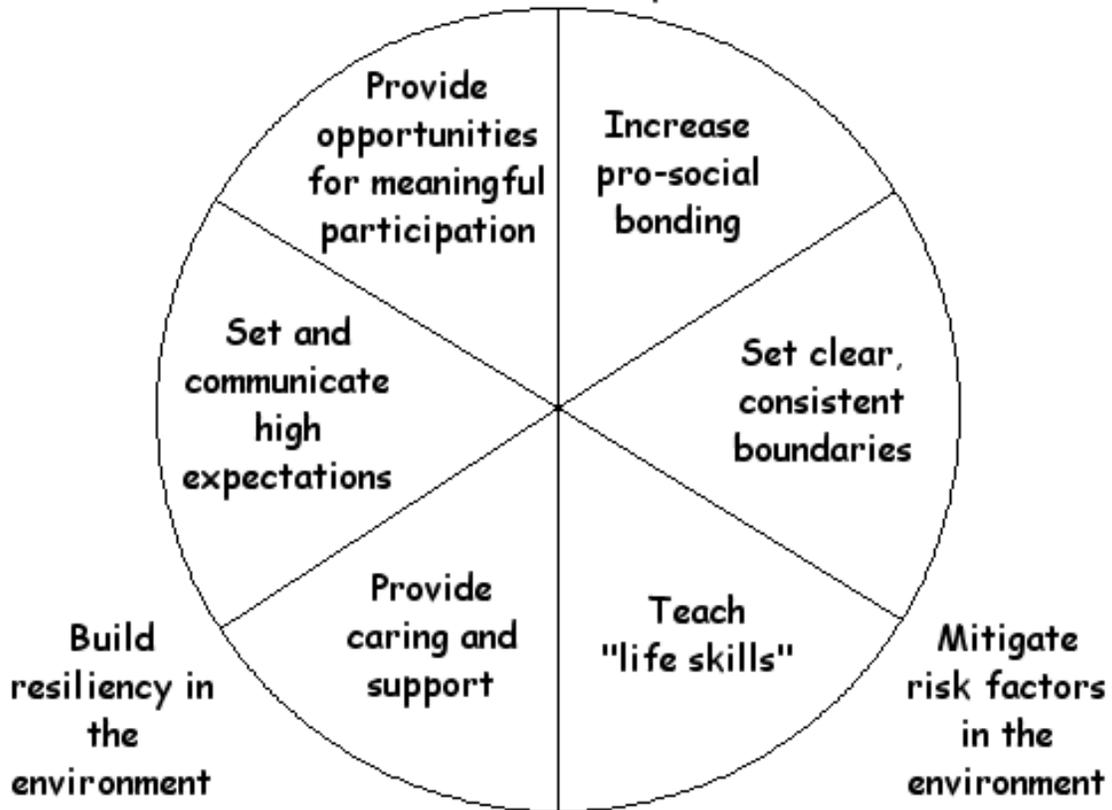
### **Protective Factors in Families, Schools, Communities, and Peer Groups that Foster Resiliency**

- " Promotes close bonds**
- " Values and encourages education**
- " Uses high warmth/low criticism style of interaction**
- " Sets and enforces clear boundaries (rules, norms, and laws)**
- " Encourages supportive relationships with many caring others**
- " Promotes sharing of responsibilities, service to others, "required helpfulness"**
- " Provides access to resources for meeting basic needs of housing, employment, health care, etc.**
- " Expresses high, and realistic, expectations for success**
- " Encourages goal-setting and mastery**
- " Encourages pro-social development of values (such as altruism) and life skills (such as cooperation)**
- " Provides leadership, decision-making, and other opportunities for meaningful participation**
- " Appreciates, develops, and offers opportunity to share the unique talents/gifts of each individual**

(Richardson et al.,1990, Benard, 1991, Werner & Smith, 1992, Hawkins et al.,1992, Wolin & Wolin, 1993)

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# The Resiliency Wheel



# **THE FOUR MOST IMPORTANT STEPS TO FOSTERING RESILIENCY: APPT**

## **1. ATTITUDE -- The Resiliency Attitude**

**“You matter to me...”**

**“I am not going to judge you based on your past...”**

**“I believe in your capacity to overcome...”**

**“What is right with you is more powerful than anything that is wrong with you....”**

## **2. PERSPECTIVE OF STRENGTHS -- Work from a Strengths Perspective**

**Use “The Resiliency Chart” T-chart, formally and informally**

**Ask: What is on the strengths side of the chart that can be used to intervene with problems**

**Teach people about their strengths: name them, share how they are being used, suggest how they can be used in the future**

## **3. Create a PROTECTIVE WEB --Use the Resiliency Wheel (as a web around each person, family, organization, community—or yourself)**

## **4. TAKE TIME -- Persist: Don’t Give Up!**

**“Mind these three: TTT; hear their chime: Things Take Time!”**

**–Emmy Werner,Ph.D.**

## Recommended Reading and Viewing: Fostering Resiliency

- Benson, Peter, Galbraith, Judy, & Espeland, Pamela. *What Kids Need to Succeed*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit. 1994.
- Benson, Peter. *All Kids are Our Kids*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. 1997.
- Benard, Bonnie. *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*. WestE. San Francisco, CA. 2004.
- Botvin, Gilbert J. *Life Skills Training: Promoting Health and Personal Development*. Cornell University Medical Center, New York: Smithfield Press, Inc. 1990.
- Desetta, Al & Wolin, Sybil, (eds). *The Struggle to be Strong: True Stories by Teens*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit. 2000. (with Leader's Guide)
- The Freedom Writers (with Erin Gruwell). *The Freedom Writers Diary*. New York: Doubleday. 1999.
- Henderson, Nan & Milstein, Mike. *Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 2003.
- Henderson, Nan, Sharp-Light, Nancy, & Benard, Bonnie, (eds). *Mentoring for Resiliency: Setting Up Programs to Move Youth from "Stressed to Success."* Ojai, CA: \*Resiliency In Action, Inc. 2000.
- Henderson, Nan (ed.) (with Sharp-Light, Nancy, & Benard, Bonnie), (eds). *Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths—in Youth, Families, and Communities*. Ojai, CA: \*Resiliency In Action, Inc. 2007.
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- Kretzman, John & McKnight, John. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications. 1993.
- Meier, Deborah. *The Power of Their Ideas*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1995.
- Mueller, Wayne. *How, Then, Shall We Live ?* New York: Bantam. 1996.
- O'Connell Higgins, Gina. *Resilient Adults: Overcoming a Cruel Past*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1994.
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- Saleebey, Dennis. *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman. 1997.
- Thomsen, Kate. *Building Resilient Students: Integrating Resiliency Into What You Already Know and Do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth*. New York: Adams, Bannister, and Cox. 1982,1989.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Werner, Emmy & Smith, Ruth. *Journey from Childhood to Midlife: Risk, Resiliency, & Recovery*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Wolin, Steven & Sybil. *The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity*. New York: Villard, 1993.
- Wolin, Steven & Sybil. *Survivor's Pride: Building Resilience in Youth...(video)*. Vernona,,WI: Attainment Co., Inc.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR "DISCOVERING AND CELEBRATING YOUR PERSONAL RESILIENCY"**

*The following activities can be worked into presentations to any audience, including students.*

*[Note: Individuals need at least a basic understanding of the definition of resiliency and protective factors to do the following activities. Use handout of "Personal Resiliency Builders" for activities.]*

- 1. WHAT'S IN MY WALLET** Have participants pair up with one person they do not know, and sit knee to knee. Instruct them to show their partner one thing they have in their purse or wallet that is connected in some way to their personal resiliency, and explain how it connects.
- 2. NAMING OTHERS' RESILIENCY** Have participants move to groups of four (pairs connect with other pairs who have done "What's In My Wallet" or this activity can stand alone with groups where everyone knows each other, such as a staff or class). Each person must introduce his/her partner by identifying at least one personal resiliency builder he or she has identified in his/her partner (from the list on the HANDOUT on Personal Resiliency Builders) and share how they have observed this resiliency builder in the partner.
- 3. WHO AND WHAT MADE ME RESILIENT?** In groups of four, have participants share answers to these questions:  
Who and What made me Resilient? How did they do it?  
Who and What keeps me Resilient now? How?
- 4. TOP RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Ask each participant to look down the list of personal resiliency builders, identifying the top three they use when they are facing stress or crisis. (Make the point that all of us lean towards a few of these based on our personality type and life experiences.)  
Tell the participants to raise their hands as you call out each of the resiliency builders. Using an Overhead of the list of Personal Resiliency Builders, note the number for each.
- 5. USING RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Have participants move to groups of eight, and take turns introducing themselves to one another by sharing their top three resiliency builders and a time they used one of them.
- 6. ADDING TO OUR RESILIENCY BUILDERS** Have participants, in groups of eight, share one personal resiliency builder (again referring to the Handout on Personal Resiliency Builders) that they are working on, or think they should work on, and ideas about how to go about it.
- 7. RESILIENCY BLIZZARD** Have participants work as a large group, or stay in groups of eight: Instruct each person in the group to write down on a scrap of paper a sentence conveys a message they would like to receive more often that would help them feel more resilient. When they are finished, have participants throw their papers in the middle of the group. Each person should then pick a paper not their own and read it aloud to their group (without comment). Groups should then discuss any common theme they heard.
- 8. REFLECTING UPON RESILIENCY** At the conclusion of these activities (or at the end of a resiliency presentation) ask:
  1. Do you feel more resilient than you did at the beginning of these activities?
  2. If so, how does this resiliency feel inside of you?
  3. How did it happen?
  4. Do you feel more able to successfully cope with a problem or make a change?
  5. What does this mean for the work you do? For your life?
- 9. DRAWING RESILIENCY** Have participants use crayons and paper that you provide to draw their representation of what resiliency looks like/feels like inside of them.  
Have them share these drawings in their groups of eight.  
Display these drawings in a location where all training participants can view them.



resiliency - resilience e\*sil i\*ence (r[ e]\*z[i^]l [i^]\*ens), resiliency e\*sil i\*en\*cy (r[ e]\*z[i^]l [i^]\*en\*s[y^]), n. 1. The act of springing back, rebounding, or resiling; as, the resilience of a ball or of sound. [1913 Webster] 2. The power or inherent - The Collaborative International Dictionary of English. resiliency - noun Date: circa 1836 resilience - New Collegiate Dictionary. resiliency - re-sil-i-en-cy (r z i y n s) n. Resilience. \* \* \* - Universalium. resiliency - noun resilience - Wiktionary. From Latin resili (to spring back). IPA(key): /i z i y n s/. resilience (countable and uncountable, plural resiliences). The mental ability to recover quickly from depression, illness or misfortune. The physical property of material that can resume its shape after being stretched or deformed; elasticity. The positive ability of a system or company to adapt itself to the consequences of a catastrophic failure caused by power outage, a fire, a bomb or similar (particularly IT systems, archives). Resiliency definition is - the ability of something to return to its original size and shape after being compressed or deformed : resilience. How to use resiliency in a sentence. - These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'resiliency.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. Send us feedback. See More. First Known Use of resiliency. 1712, in the meaning defined at sense 1. Keep scrolling for more.