



Promoting Resiliency

What is Resiliency? *Resiliency* is the ability to cope with challenges or stress in ways that are effective and result in an increased ability to respond well to future adversity (Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, 2009). Resiliency is multi-dimensional. It may include individual factors as well as environmental factors. What works for one child may not work for another. It depends on the child's development and also on the situational context (Ward et al. 2007).

Resiliency is not a fixed quality. A child may exhibit resiliency in one situation at one time and then **not** exhibit resiliency in the same situation at a different time. Different resiliency factors may assist a child in the same situation but at different times. Resiliency is dynamic and not absolute. It can be taught, modeled and learned. Development of resiliency is a process that occurs over a lifetime.

Resilience is dynamic and can be seen differently based on context and culture (Benard, 2004). As people face challenges in their lives, resiliency allows them to successfully adapt to these challenges and develop positive well-being (Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, 2009).

Research has shown that this is possible as seen in children and youth who face many challenges in their families and communities and manage to live positive lives (Benard, 2004). It is important to remember that resilience is a process – it continues over a lifetime as new skills, knowledge, and challenges emerge.

A person's resilience is greatly influenced by protective factors, which can be internal, such as temperament and social skills, or external, such as caring relationships with adults (O'Connell, 2006). In fact, the most important protective factor for a child to build resilience is having a positive relationship with at least one caring adult (Masten & Coatsworth, as cited in O'Connell, 2006).

Resilience allows us to bounce back from challenging experiences and to become even stronger in the process, moving from merely surviving to thriving. The ability to access both internal and external protective factors, in order to successfully to manage challenges throughout life, offers an opportunity to learn and grow to meet an unforeseeable potential.

- How do you build resiliency in your children?
- What are ways to celebrate resiliency at your child's school?

"There are everyday simple things that you can do [to teach us how to build on our children's capacities]- whether you are getting your kids ready for school, dealing with a battle between them, taking them to the market, or just having a conversation" (Galinsky, 2010, p.10).



References:

Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region. (2009). *Strength-based approaches: improving the lives of our children and youth*. Kitchener, ON: Author.

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we've learned*. WestEd: USA.

Galinsky, E. (2010). *Mind in the Making: The seven essential life skills every child needs* (1st ed.). New York, NY: HarperCollins Books