Cultivating Resiliency in Youth

Misty M. Ginicola, Ph.D., LPC
Southern Connecticut State University
Yale University
Walk in Balance Counseling
Outline

• Resiliency & Coping Skills
• Social-Emotional Skills
• Child Factors
• Responsive Practices
What is Resiliency?

- Ability to thrive even in stressful conditions
- The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties
- Essential to healthy development
- Protects youth from risk factors in their environment
Why is Resiliency Important?

- Connected to academic and social success – including healthy relationships
  - Critical School Competencies (Academic & Social Skills)
  - Concept of Self, Self-Esteem & Self-Efficacy
  - Connectedness
  - Coping Ability
  - Control (Sense of Control)
What are Coping Skills?

- Thinking and behaviors that promote resiliency
- Mental
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Coping Toolbox/ Toolbelt
What Are Social-Emotional Skills?
Why Are Social-Emotional Skills Important?

• Are linked to
  • Academic achievement
  • Success in school, career and life
  • Resiliency & protection from being a victim
  • Social relationships
  • Self care
CHILD FACTORS
Gender Differences

- **Males**
  - Pay Up Front!
  - More Emotional as Infants
  - Higher Activity Levels
- **Females**
  - Pay Later!!
  - More Likely to Internalize
  - Lower Self Esteem after age 10
Children’s Temperament: All Children are NOT the same

- Easy (Sunflower)
  - Generally happy
  - Quick to adjust
  - Moderate in emotional reactions
  - Quicker to respond to interventions
  - Often quicker to develop social-emotional skills
  - 40% of children
Children’s Temperament: All Children are NOT the same

- Active (Dandelion)
  - Generally happy
  - Hard to control
  - BUSY & ACTIVE
  - Independent
  - Often quicker to develop physical skills
  - 35% of children
Children’s Temperament: All Children are NOT the same

- Slow to Warm (Orchid)
  - Need to time to adjust to new environments
  - Clingy with primary caregiver
  - “Bruise” easily and withdraw from situations quickly
  - Prefer quieter activities
  - More anxious in general
  - 15% of children
Children’s Temperament: All Children are NOT the same

- Difficult (Holly)
  - SENSITIVE AND PRICKLY
  - Easily upset
  - Irregular in their habits (sleeping/eating)
  - React irritably to changes in routine
  - Emotionally intense
  - Difficult to console
  - With responsive parenting, these children at age 5 are the BEST at SE skills
- 10% of children
Sensitivity

• Called Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)
• Increased neurological sensitivity and attention to detail
HSP

- Overwhelmed by strong sensory input
- Aware of subtleties
- Very affected by the environment and people’s moods
- Sensitive to certain medications and caffeine
- Being very hungry creates a strong reaction, disrupting mood or concentration
- Rich, complex inner life
- Deep empathy and understanding of emotions
- Uncomfortable by strong stimuli (like crowds and loud noises)
- Need time alone to decompress
- Get annoyed and frustrated by overstimulation
RESPONSIVE PRACTICES
Zone of Proximal Development

Proximal Development

- Things the learner cannot do.
- Zone of Proximal Development: Things the learner can do with help.
- Things the learner can do on his own.
Understand the Function/Reason for Negative Behaviors

- Needing attention
- Being overwhelmed
- Feeling inadequate
- Having fear
- Feeling hurt
- Wanting to feel control
- Not having enough coping skills
Label the Emotion & Encourage Communication

- Active listening
  - Don’t say “You’re ok, You’re fine, Just stop.”
  - Say, “I’m sorry, I hear you, It’s ok to be sad, how can I help?”
- Talk about emotions, increase vocabulary and normalize them
- Teach and use I statements
- Teach Skillful Noncompliance
Apply Necessary & Logical Consequences

- Rather than punishment, talk about what natural consequences are.
- Help children think through how the behavior impacts others.
Teach Children Soothing

- Be Calm
- Breathing
  - Cleansing Breaths
  - Four Square Breaths
  - Visualizations
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Calm Down Corner/Kit
Use Humor

• Powerful Tool
• Coping Skill
• Needs timing
• Appropriate context
Know Your Child and Build Self Esteem

- What is interesting to her or him?
- What captures his or her attention?
- What are her or his favorite things to do?
- Encourage their natural abilities and affinities
- Let children make choices and process consequences

- Positive attention to behavior and trying (but don’t over-praise)
- Positive attention to unique characteristics and attributes
- Be a positive mirror and care for yourself
- Give responsibilities and encourage leadership
- Help them set goals
Celebrate & Be Gentle

• Celebrate and play!
• Celebrate each other
• Celebrate your ability to stay calm
• Celebrate when something works
• Celebrate independence and resilience

• Acknowledge when a mistake is made and allow children to correct it
• Be gentle when you make mistakes
• Acknowledge when you are at the end of your rope and need help
Teach & Practice Self Care

- Physical
  - Sleep, nutrition, exercise
- Personal
  - Having a vision and dreams
  - Learning who you are
- Psychological
  - Positive self-talk and beliefs
  - Giving & receiving help
- Emotional
  - Self-love and compassion
- Professional
  - Setting boundaries and saying no
- Social
  - Connected
- Spiritual
  - Self-reflection, nature, community, yoga, religion, etc.
Some Guidelines as Takeaways

1. Increase positivity
2. Live to learn
3. Practice empathy, kindness & compassion
4. Take care of yourself
5. Practice humor
Any Questions?

Dr. Misty Ginicola
ginicolam2@southernct.edu