

CHARACTERISTICS AND ENHANCEMENT OF RESILIENCY  
IN YOUNG PEOPLE

by

Bonnie Isaacson

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Investigation Advisor

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
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**The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751**

**ABSTRACT**

Isaacson	Bonnie	J.	
(Writer) (Last Name)	(First)	(Initial)	
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The number of stressful situations and negative environments young people have experienced have been escalating in recent years. The potential to become overwhelmed in their daily activities is greatly increased for today's youth. How do young people cope and thrive in today's society? A literature review was prepared on the topic of resiliency. The researcher examined what are the characteristics and qualities that contribute to childhood resiliency? Exploration of literature revealed the most common characteristics found in resilient persons were protective factors: individual, family, community, and school support. Individual characteristics found to promote and enhance resiliency were: persistence, having a positive relationship with at least one adult person, intelligence,

high self-esteem, having a sense of personal control, the ability to apply meaning to negative events, and having future goals. A critical analysis of the literature further examined the ways in which parents, teachers, and other adult caregivers can help to enhance these characteristics in the young people in their lives in order to promote resiliency leading to healthy productive lives as adults.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Stephanie Frogge tells the story of the Wesley family (fictional names) and the experiences they endured beginning thirty years ago. Their first traumatic event happened when Evan was robbed at gunpoint. This made the Wesleys acutely aware of the responsibilities they had to their four small children, so they hired a lawyer to draft their wills. While Evan was at the lawyer's office discussing the family's assets, the Wesley's house burned to the ground, destroying everything they owned. Six years later, Evan needed to undergo open-heart surgery. During surgery, their oldest son was involved in a serious car wreck, which required six weeks of hospital care. Five years after that, a drunk driver hit Cara and Evan. The crash left Cara with a lifetime of intermittent pain and other complications. A mere three years later, a repeat drunk driving offender killed the Wesley's youngest child and his college roommate. Over the next seven years, three of Cara and Evan's four parents passed away. Following the loss of their parents, Evan underwent femoral bypass surgery twice. At the time of the second surgery, their daughter was diagnosed with cancer and their grandchild was diagnosed with leukemia.

Frogge suggests that if you visit the Wesleys today, you might expect to find a shattered, dysfunctional family. At minimum you would expect to see depression, grief, and pain as a result of these tragedies. Instead, what you would find is a healthy, happy, close-knit family deeply affected by the tragedies that have shaped their lives, but a family far from destroyed (Frogge, 2000).

The story of the Wesley family overcoming tragedy after tragedy and still persevering is only one of many stories of survival. These stories are not limited to adult

situations only. There are numerous stories of children who have overcome tremendous adversity. There are many children in our world today who live in extreme negative conditions, have suffered abuse, neglect, and emotional trauma, and yet, despite these negative odds, have not only survived, but also thrived in adulthood. Why do these children succeed despite the odds? What qualities do these children possess? What are the characteristics that are common to resilient children?

These are important questions to attempt to answer due to the vast increase of at-risk children in the nation's school system today. The incidence of young people with emotional disorders and violent tendencies has risen drastically in the past decades and is still on the increase. We see the violence manifested in crime and juvenile delinquency, not to mention the rise in school violence that has been witnessed in the past few years. Kumpfer & Alvarado (1998) reported that according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, an estimated 2.09 million juveniles were arrested in 1996, accounting for 19 percent of all arrests, 60 percent higher than the 1987 level. If it can be determined that resiliency is a characteristic that can be developed and nurtured, how does society go about doing this? Information found by this study is important for teachers, counselors, family therapists, and family members to know as we help at-risk young people grow into adulthood and become productive members of society.

There are many theories that attempt to explain why acts of crime and violence committed by or against youth today are on the rise. One such theory is risk. Indeed, risk is a factor in predicting undesirable outcomes. Children from homes with marital conflict between parents, poverty, or child abuse are at risk for having more psychological difficulties and behavior problems than children who are not in these groups. Risks

predispose individuals and groups of people to specific undesirable or negative outcomes. However, these risks do not establish that children with those aspects in their lives will have negative outcomes. It is only an indication that they are vulnerable to negative outcomes (Hetherington & Blechman, 1996).

An important question at hand is how to prevent these incidences of crime and violence from occurring, and, how to lower the risk factors. It is imperative to consider individual and family patterns to determine what interventions will be beneficial. By parents, teachers, and counselors working toward instilling qualities of resiliency and coping skills in young people, can the rise of crime and violence committed by or against young people be lessened or prevented? In what ways can we help vulnerable youth to develop resiliency? Is it possible to “make” a person resilient? If so, how does one go about it?

#### Statement of the Problem

The questions researched were: (a) why do children at risk succeed despite the odds? (b) is resiliency a personality trait or can it be taught? (c) what qualities do those children possess who are identified as resilient by their parents, teachers, and counselors? (d) what are the characteristics that are common to resilient children? (e) what are the coping skills utilized by resilient persons? (f) what is this notion of “resiliency”?

The purpose of this paper is to review the findings on characteristics of resiliency and coping skills. In addition, the daily stressors at-risk youth encounter will be explored. There has been a rise in incidences of juvenile delinquency and the potential for an increase of at-risk children in today’s society. For this reason, government, schools, counselors and families must consider the support and intervention necessary to prevent

self-destructive behavior. These groups and individuals need to become better educated in teaching and modeling coping techniques to young people in order to help them become more resilient and better able to cope with stressful situations. This is valuable information for adults to have in order to assist the young people in their lives to become productive, caring, well-balanced individuals in society. This will, in turn, only help to enhance the quality of life for all human beings.

Research suggests that there are three identifiable characteristics of resiliency that may aid persons who are managing stressful or traumatic situations: (a) the ability to create a context of meaning, (b) a sense of intimacy and connectedness to the world, and, (c) their level of mental and emotional flexibility (Frogge, 2000).

### Definition of Terms

#### Resiliency

In order to clarify the topic of resiliency one needs to have a clear definition of the terms “resiliency” and “at-risk”. Resiliency implies an ability not only to cope with traumatic difficulties but also to respond with flexibility under the pressures of everyday life. People who are resilient have the ability to move beyond being survivors to being thrivers. This ability to survive and even to transcend adversity is what is often referred to as resiliency. The word “resiliency” comes from the physical sciences. It means basically, “to bounce back”. This is a clear description of what resilient people are like. They are able to “bounce back” when they are handed the hard realities of life (Ramsey & Blieszner, 1999).

Joseph (1994) described resilience as “the individual’s ability to adjust and adapt to the changes, demands, and disappointments that come up in the course of life” (Joseph,

1994, pg. xi). A resilient person is one who is able to succeed in the face of adversity and change.

Resilient children have been described as able to manipulate and shape their environment, to deal with life pressures successfully, and to comply with its demands. They are able to adapt quickly to new situations, perceive clearly what is occurring, communicate freely, act flexibly, and view themselves in a positive way. Compared to vulnerable children, they are able to tolerate frustration, handle anxiety, and ask for help when they need it (Rhodes & Brown, 1991). Hetherington and Blechman (1996) claimed that resilient individuals demonstrated more than adequate adaptation when facing difficulty, they did not simply avoid risk and negative outcomes.

Resiliency has also been defined as “the capacity to bounce back or recover from a disappointment, obstacle, or setback” (Dugan & Coles, 1989, p. 3). Werner and Smith’s (1982) definition of resiliency is “the capacity to cope effectively with the internal stress of their vulnerabilities and external stresses (such as illness, major losses, and dissolution of the family)” and Rutter (1979) views resilience as seen in “those individuals who overcome adversity, who survive stress, and who rise above disadvantage” (cited in Dugan & Coles, 1989, p. 112). Resiliency or self-righting, according to Gallagher and Ramey (1987), is the capacity to recover spontaneously from setback and/or to compensate for personal deficiencies. Psychologists anticipate that healthy children will indeed recover from critical life events, compensate for deficits, and strengthen their development process through educational experiences. Rhodes and Brown’s definition of resilient children is “those who, because of stressful life events, are at risk of developing later psychological dysfunctions, but do not” (1991, p. 1). For example, not all high

school dropouts fail to find jobs and earn a good living, every teenage parent does not quit school and live on welfare, and not all juvenile delinquents become adult criminal offenders. Some researchers have turned to the juvenile justice system to try to answer the question of why some adjudicated delinquents manage to overcome their criminal records without becoming adult criminals. What events, responses, and/or coping techniques caused their turnaround?

Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) described resiliency as the ability to spring back from adversity or “those factors and processes that interrupt the trajectory from risk to problem behavior or psychopathology and thereby result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of challenging and threatening circumstances” ([http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/social\\_skills/risk\\_and\\_resilience1.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/social_skills/risk_and_resilience1.html)).

Even though definitions of resiliency may vary, most researchers agree that resilient individuals share similar outcomes. These similarities include higher intelligence, lower novelty seeking, lower affiliation with delinquent peers, and an absence of substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. Researchers have examined and found similar individual characteristics of children who are termed as resilient. Those characteristics are: higher levels of autonomy, independence, empathy, task orientation, curiosity, good problem-solving skills, and good peer relationships (Jew, Green, & Kroger, 1999).

### Risk

“Risk” implies that harm may come to a person or family because of particular stressors. These stressors require a large amount of energy and attention in order for the individual to be able to function. Studies of families and children have found that certain

attributes or conditions, (such as extreme poverty, or inadequate resource availability), put groups or individuals at risk. Those at highest risk are usually confronted with multiple stressors, which build to the point of debilitation. For example, homelessness may include poverty, illness, unemployment, and illiteracy (Swick & Graves, 1993).

Many children growing up in an environment where poverty and violence are prevalent are at risk for a variety of challenges. Some of these challenges include, lower academic achievement, greater emotional or behavioral problems, and trouble with the law. Dutra, Forehand, Armistead, Brody, Morse, Morse, and Clark (2000) have examined the role of family variables in child resiliency of inner-city children whose mothers were HIV infected. Results of this study suggested that parenting and family variables may promote resiliency for children living in high-risk environments. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) (cited in Dutra et al., 2000) suggested that children become more highly competent when structure and support are provided by a competent adult. Furthermore, family variables and parenting variables may work together to influence child resilience (Dutra et al., 2000).

The researcher expected to find in the review of the literature that resiliency is a combination of a variety of effects in one's life. The researcher presumed to find that resiliency is a culmination of one's personality and individual characteristics, the environment the individual lives in, their family and other systems of support, and the individual's ability to utilize the resources available to them in order to overcome obstacles and adversity. The researcher expected to find that resiliency is more than the genetic makeup found within an individual-- that it involves so many aspects of an individual's life including those persons who live with the individual and how they

interact with each other. The researcher expected to find that resilient characteristics could be developed by persons who care enough to ensure that this development occurs in the young people who are a part of their lives.

The goal of the researcher was to evaluate the findings in literature to determine if the individual qualities or characteristics that were common to individuals identified as resilient were innate or if it was possible that they could be developed in an individual. If the researcher found that resiliency could indeed be developed, the researcher's intent was then to create a working list of suggestions and ideas that parents, teachers, and counselors could be aware of and utilize to enhance the development of resiliency and coping skills in the children who are a part of their lives.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Protective Factors Found in Persons Identified as Resilient

There are several factors in young people's lives that could put them at risk for becoming inundated by life stressors', however, many do not become overwhelmed. Just what are the characteristics and factors that seem to be the link to resiliency?

At the time Rhodes and Brown (1991) did their research, there was little understanding of how at-risk children remain resilient in the face of environmental challenges. Predicting resiliency becomes somewhat easier when one has the knowledge of a child's family, personal, and environmental factors. What is not so easy to predict is how and why some children are able to succeed and overcome the odds when they are not fortunate enough to have those factors in their lives.

A review of the literature indicates that children who thrive despite being at-risk are said to be resilient (Joseph, 1994). Resiliency can be somewhat predicted when one knows the personal and environmental factors in a child's life. Individual coping styles and family characteristics assist children in handling the daily stressors and hassles in their lives.

The majority of children do well in life despite adversity and obstacles (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Researchers have discovered several factors that seem to be common in individuals who are resilient. Certain protective factors can help to prevent negative outcomes and promote resiliency. These protective factors can be found within communities, schools, families and within the child.

Resilience involves the interaction between risks and assets. Individuals, families, neighborhoods, and social settings all contain risk and assets. Individuals can be termed as being resilient only when they have been subjected to risk. From a behavioral point of view, resilience is evident when one has recovered from, coped with, or overcome adversity. Persons who are resilient have utilized flexibility, problem-solving skills, and help-seeking behaviors in response to their stressors. Resilience is defined as a good outcome (McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, & Futrell, 1999).

Smith and Carlson (1997) (cited in Levy & Wall, 2000) claimed that resilience is characterized in three ways: (a) coping efforts to restore or maintain internal or external equilibrium under significant threat, (b) recovery in the face of trauma, and, (c) the presence of protective factors that moderate the relationship between stress, risk, coping, and competence. Resiliency implies that while an individual may be affected by harmful circumstances in their lives, they continue to grow and even to thrive despite those adversities or situations. Levy and Wall (2000) reported that Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, and Pardo's (1992) study found that up to eighty percent of children exposed to stressors which were very powerful did not suffer developmental damage. Some of these children were found to grow even stronger despite their challenges.

The literature on resiliency includes three factors that heavily influence whether a youth will overcome, or be overcome by, stressors that put him/her at risk. The three primary factors are: (a) family experiences, (b) personal characteristics, and (c) environmental circumstances (Rhodes & Brown, 1991). It comes as no surprise that children from two-parent families with stable relationships, good communication skills, good role modeling, and family support have the best foundation from which to live and

grow. However, studies of family dynamics have found that even those children who are from divorced families can experience little or no disturbance in their personal stability (Rhodes & Brown, 1991).

Many protective factors have been identified. Rather than looking at one single factor, one needs to consider the inter-relationship between several protective factors, such as family, school, and community. Disorganized and unsupportive school environments compound risks in students that come from discordant and stressful family and community environments. Schools can enhance self-efficacy and self-esteem and provide new opportunities for students that may act as protective factors ([http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth)).

Other research findings indicate that there are several variables that are related to coping and resiliency: (a) the child's personality, (b) family characteristics such as parental strengths and vulnerabilities, and (c) the surrounding community and social supports and strains. Dugan and Coles (1989) claimed that the family had direct influence on resiliency and was of crucial importance in affecting personality and stress resistance.

Hetherington and Blechman (1996) claimed there were protective factors that reduced risk, for example, warm parenting. Another factor was that perhaps the individual at risk had not been fully exposed to extreme difficulties. Finally, individuals may have developed coping skills to counteract the risk, thus the concept of resiliency. Resilient individuals were not those persons who avoided risk or catastrophe, but rather those persons who were found to possess strengths, resources, and interpersonal skills that enabled them to respond to challenge.

Jane Gilgun (as cited in McCubbin et al., 1999) interviewed persons who had committed violent crimes and others who had not. The persons she termed as resilient had multiple risks for poor outcomes, such as childhood maltreatment, suffered a parental death, or lived with a parent with chemical dependency, but had overcome these risks. Gilgun noted factors that helped this group of persons to overcome risk were problem-solving skills and help-seeking behavior. Persons who experienced multiple risks over time but whom she termed as resilient used coping resources within themselves or the environment, coped with and adapted to risks at the time of the occurrence, and had helpful and affirming adult relationships to help deal with everyday stress (McCubbin et al., 1999).

Haggerty and Sherrod (1994) (as cited in McCubbin et al., 1999) suggested that resilience has to do with psychological and physiological characteristics, the degree of earlier success in dealing with difficult situations, the timing and sequence of experiences, and many other factors (including peer response, family and community support) that lie outside of the individual's control. Additionally, resilience may vary across domains at the same point in one's life. A person may do well in school or at work, but have difficulties with interpersonal relationships.

#### Individual Characteristics as Protective Factors

Children who are resilient have individual characteristics such as being socially competent, autonomous, persistent, patient, able to bounce back, good natured, optimistic, intelligent, and able to elicit positive attention and support. They have good problem solving skills, a sense of purpose and personal control, high self-esteem, future goals, and focus on their talents rather than on their weaknesses. Families of resilient

children show warmth, affection, and emotional support and children and caretakers form mutual attachments. Families and communities provide nurturance, as well as monitor and supervise children, to instill social values

([http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/social\\_skills/risk\\_and\\_resilience1.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/social_skills/risk_and_resilience1.html)).

The news about survivors is good (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). While suffering hardships in the early years of life and having to endure pain, many persons have fostered a breeding ground for strength and courage. Resilient persons have the ability to bounce back, to withstand hardships, and to repair their broken selves. Children whose parents are disturbed or incompetent learn to watch out for themselves, and by doing so, grow strong. These young survivors learn to locate allies outside of the family, build their self-esteem through school activities, and find pleasure in fantasy games. This ability to withstand and rise above adversity develops personal skills which can last a lifetime.

There are many research findings that describe factors that protect at-risk children from additional difficulties. Some of factors that contribute to the enhancement of resiliency among young people are: cognitive competence; temperamental characteristics such as being “easy” or “good-natured” and affectionate; the ability to establish positive relationships with others; the ability to recognize and access resources; orientation toward mastering stressful situations rather than retreating from them; experiencing a sense of self-efficacy and confidence; and the ability to recover from temporary setbacks (Levy & Wall, 2000).

Wolin and Wolin (1993) claimed there are seven aspects to the resilient self. They are: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and morality. Resilient persons ask tough questions and give honest answers. They draw boundaries

between themselves and troubled parents. They have ties to other people who fulfill their own needs while also giving back to others. They take charge of problems and exert control. They impose order and purpose on the chaos of their experiences and painful feelings. They find comic in the tragedy. They have a conscience that desires for a good personal life to all humans. Few people have all seven aspects of the resilient self. Oftentimes one needs to battle the inner competition between resiliency and vulnerability. For most persons, determination wins out.

There are other factors that appear to be related to resiliency. Those factors are age, social support, locus of control, competence, self-esteem, temperament, social maturity, need for achievement, and past coping ability. Jew, Green, and Kroger (1999) listed Mrazek and Mrasek's (1987) skills and abilities that resilient people use in stressful situations to help them better cope. Those 12 skills and abilities are: (a) rapid response to danger, (b) precocious maturity, (c) disassociation of affect, (d) information seeking, (e) utilizing relationships for survival, (f) positive projection into the future, (g) decisive risk-taking, (h) the conviction of being loved, (i) ability to identify with some aspect of the aggressor's competence, (j) cognitive restructuring of painful events, (k) altruism, and, (l) optimism and hope. The assumption is that resiliency is a result of beliefs interacting with stressors in the environment to produce an individual's coping skills. Included in these beliefs are one's abilities and perception of self, relationships, and goodness in the world. Influencing the development of this belief system are such things as personality, environment, and developmental stage. In their study of resiliency in 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders, Jew, Green, and Kroger (1999) concluded that persons scoring higher on resiliency scores are likely to demonstrate better academic skills, have a higher internal

locus of control, and have higher self-perceived confidence in schoolwork, jobs, athletic ability, and friendships.

Applying meaning helps resilient persons to explain and understand what happens to them. After suffering a senseless trauma, many adults may become involved in legislation, support groups, raising public awareness, and other avenues in order to apply meaning to their situation. Speaking in general, persons are at an advantage in coping with their trauma if they have strong family ties, good friends, and ties with a larger community. Persons who have a flexible approach to life are also at an advantage when dealing with trauma. If a person can accept that change is normal in life, rather than stability, and that change can be interesting and lead to growth, she/he will possess a strength and hardiness necessary in dealing with traumatic situations (Frogge, 2000).

Barnard (1994) identified several factors that were observed in families as well as factors that seemed inherent to individuals who were resilient. Some of these factors were: (a) capacity and skill for developing intimate relationships. Friends seem to be necessary to one's overall good health. (b) achievement orientation in and outside of school. Resilient persons have a sense of being focused and having a purpose in life—they have goals for the future. (c) the capacity to construct productive meanings for events in their world and enhance their understanding of these events. Resilient children have an understanding that they are not the cause of others problems and decide what is and is not within their control. (d) having the ability to disengage from one setting, engage in another, and then, reengage again. This seems to be more easily accomplished by younger children in families rather than by the oldest child who is oftentimes more frozen to a sense of duty to the family. (e) having an internal locus of control and being

internally oriented. There is an awareness of resilient children that one's own actions can determine positive or negative reinforcement, rather than believing that one's fate is in the hands of others. (f) possessing and maintaining family rituals. Partaking in regular family events seems to promote resiliency in children and make them immune to stressful events.

Werner (1987) (cited in Cecil & Roberts, 1992) listed 9 abilities associated with resiliency: (a) gaining people's attention in a positive way, (b) planning ahead and solving problems, (c) developing a talent or hobby, (d) having a feeling of autonomy, (e) persisting in the face of failure, (f) maintaining a positive vision of life, (g) relating to a caring "other" person, (h) developing a sense of humor, and (i) developing a sense of control over one's life.

In his study of the literature, Barnard (1994) found that Russian psychologist Vygotsky suggested that wise parents and teachers provide their assistance to children just beyond the child's point of current capability. Wolin and Wolin (1993) said that children of disturbed or incompetent parents learn to watch out for themselves and also, in the process, become strong. Young survivors learn how to find help outside of the family, build self-esteem by doing well in school, and oftentimes find pleasure in fantasy games. Wolin and Wolin claimed there were seven aspects to the survivor self. They are insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and morality. Few persons will have all seven strengths and will vary according to the individual's personality type.

Having at least average intelligence, being able to concentrate on a task, problem-solve, reason, and provide solutions are necessary for resilience. Coping skills and an

attitude of fighting rather than giving up was necessary for burn victims. These persons were also encouraged to discuss their feelings and experience grieving, while avoiding self-blame or guilt or the feeling that their suffering was deserved. Motivation and self-determination are key roles when challenged by someone who said they could not do something they wanted to do (Holaday & McPhearson, 1997).

Researchers have studied the negative effects of shame from test feedback and the factors that contribute to shame resiliency. Having important future goals seemed to influence whether a person might be resilient from shame. Students were more likely to be resilient if they possessed high intrinsic motivation, if they were highly certain of their sense of academic competence, and that receiving good grades in their courses was important in achieving future academic goals. Resilient students were able to make the connection between course grades and future goals. They put more effort into studying for their exams, and scored higher on subsequent exams. This resiliency involved being able to “bounce back” after suffering a setback in scores by increasing motivated behavior. Resilient students were able to maintain a sense of self-competence, evaluate their situation, strengthen their goal commitment, increase motivated behavior, and as a result, attain increased achievement (Turner & Schallert, 2001).

Actively coping with any kind of stress is better for an individual than enduring the suffering or simply reacting to the situation. Research done on burn victims showed that when faced with a difficult problem, it was far better for the person to fight than to give up. Factors contributing to resiliency in this group of people were the ability to stay on a task until it was completed, to grapple against obstacles, and keep on trying even after failure. Self-determination and motivation played a key role in burn victims’

recovery, especially when told by others they could not overcome their obstacles.

Religion and spirituality may help individuals find faith and meaning to go on with their lives. Resilient persons have the capacity for fun, enjoyment, and interest in new experiences, creativity, and play.

McCubbin et al. (1999) suggested in their analysis of infertile couples that resilience is a process of navigating through a set of challenges that get in the way of a specific goal, rather than something measured in terms of success. Staying fixed on the goal is as important as the strategies that are utilized to deal with the many obstacles that occur along the way of achieving the goal. Important elements of this navigation process are gathering support, redefining identity, and being resourceful by seeking the help of others. McCubbin et al. suggested that resilience is not an individual attribute but a capability that one turns to when faced with physiological, psychological and social challenges.

#### Families as Protective Factors

People engage with one another through communication. Parents communicate with their children in order to teach, guide, control, help, comfort, become close, entertain, plan for the future, and to take care of the necessities in life. Parents who are competent are careful about what they say to their children in order to meet their children's needs. They are clear, responsive, encouraging, open, and caring. In troubled families, children are many times silenced or they choose to rebel. If parents are ineffective communicators the result can be chaos, confusion, and disorganization. Resilient children are able to exert control, make order out of the confusion, and place

boundaries between themselves and their parents' unhealthy form of communication (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

The development of insight and asking and giving honest answers to searching questions, begins when one has a sense that their family life is strange or untrustworthy. Resilient children are alerted to danger when they notice subtle changes in the way their parent's walk, dress, breath or their tone of voice. As adolescents grow intellectually they become more fully aware of family troubles. This insight can protect children and adolescents from harm. Sensing that trouble may be forthcoming allows the attentive child to reduce anxiety by being predictable, remove themselves from the line of fire, place the problem where it rightly belongs rather than on themselves, and deflect negative reflections about oneself. Children who are resilient see themselves as different from their parents, remain guilt free because they see the situation as their parents illness and not their own fault, filter and evaluate information that disturbed parents pass on to them, and view their self image and the world around them in a more pleasing way than their negative parents project (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

Children from single parent families fare best when they live with the same-sex parent, when they maintain frequent, positive contact with both parents, or, if they have a positive relationship with at least one parent. Many children are a part of single-parent families and this is most prevalent in inner city, black communities. Children from black single-parent families may cope better than white children who have single parents. Rhodes and Brown's (1991) research findings indicated the reason for this is that white children from single-parent homes usually have gone through the trauma of a divorce, whereas, single parent black mothers were probably never married. This situation tends to

provide more extended family relationships and kinship support systems, which in turn help the children to cope (Rhodes & Brown, 1991).

Wolin and Wolin (1993) noted that resilient survivors often remember a nurturing relationship with a parent figure who offered praise, attention, sympathy and the companionship that they were missing at home. In many cases they heard of survivors who said they were able to endure and remained determined because of a “life-saving” figure who came to their rescue.

Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum, and Cunningham (1992) suggested that individual coping styles and family characteristics might be factors that assist children in handling the daily stresses and hassles of life. Their results shed light on the important roles of situation, personality, and family as variables in a child’s resiliency. Their study of stress and coping in 5 and 6 year-olds provided evidence that certain family characteristics were predictive of young children’s development and psychosocial adjustment. The most noted characteristics were family and friend support, and family flexibility. In fact, family flexibility may be the primary influencing factor on child development and psychosocial adjustment. Their findings suggested that even though parents perceive the family as having strains and distress, having family flexibility and consistent support were crucial factors in child development and adjustment. Family flexibility and support were viewed as buffers against family strain and problems. How the family responds to stressful events in young children’s lives, such as with support, confidence, and flexibility, may be more important than the stressors themselves. Their findings further suggested that family, personal and situational variables all play a role in the resiliency (or vulnerability) of young children. Interestingly, their results further show

that even though family variables are important in the development of adjustment of young children, individual coping styles were the strongest overall predictor, even overriding many family influences.

Holaday and McPhearson (1997) stated that individuals who are considered resilient are persons who can quickly return to a previous state after a traumatic situation and who do not appear moved by negative life events. The person appears to adjust to the adversity and move on to life as it was. The authors claimed that the factors that tend to stimulate and sustain a resilient attitude make up three major categories: social support, cognitive skills, and psychological resources. Social support includes such influences as culture and community, school, personal, and family support. Cognitive skills include intelligence, coping style, and assignment of meaning. Psychological resources include an internal locus of control, empathy and curiosity, and a tendency to seek novel experiences.

Personal support is found when there is at least one person outside of the immediate family who shows a consistent and unconditional positive regard and faith in the person's ability to overcome adversity. Families show support by acknowledging the negative event and show willingness to talk about what happened without focusing on the trauma and showing shame. Parents who have stable marriages, set rules and regulations at home, and show respect for the children as individuals help to promote resiliency. Other family factors contributing to resiliency were having responsibility caring for another living thing such as a pet, younger sibling, or disabled parent or grandparent (Holaday & McPhearson, 1997).

Mithaug (1991) pointed out that successful people get what they want in life because they develop their talents, adapt intelligently to their environment and they persist at removing obstacles that get in the way of their goals. They refuse to lose and view temporary obstacles as opportunity. They focus on what is important without getting confused with what they should or shouldn't do. Persistent children have faith in themselves and don't give up when faced with adversity. They adapt to and shape their environment to results. They adjust their plans and behaviors to achieve desired goals on time. They are able to endure for long periods of time. They figure out what they need to do and what they need to know as they go along—they have good problem-solving skills. Because of past performance they have the confidence to try over and over again.

Certain personal characteristics can have negative as well as positive affects on individuals. Studies of child abuse victims have shown that certain personal characteristics will increase the probability that the child will be abused. Those characteristics are an unattractive face or troublesome disposition. It may also be the case that abused children lack certain characteristics. They tend to be unpopular with their peers, their families seem to relocate several times, and the children seem to be victims wherever they go (Harris, 1998).

Assigning meaning to painful experiences assists in the struggle for survival. Having a sense of purpose, persistence, hopefulness, a positive look at the future, making sense of and learning from negative experiences all help assist individuals in their ability to cope. Having a religious affiliation or spirituality may help individuals find needed faith and meaning to go on with their lives (Holaday & McPhearson, 1997).

While studying successes of women, LaPage-Lees (1997) connected personality type to responses to the environment and resiliency. In her studies, women who were disadvantaged as children but had become successful adults had the characteristics of maturity and independence from a very young age. Many persons in her study had to grow up fast and accept responsibility at a young age, such as caring for a younger sibling. They grew up as “good girls,” were perfectionists, persistent, and confident when faced with rejection.

Dugan and Coles (1989) studied young boys living in the inner city. They reported that resilient young boys were observed to be active, inquisitive, assertive, and independent. They cautioned that while these characteristics were at times less than desirable in the classroom, they contributed to the child’s ability to survive on the street. The young boys were adept at seeking out, identifying, engaging, and utilizing the support systems that were in existence, even in the negative environment.

Young people exhibit specific behaviors when coping with death and especially the death of a brother or sister. Some of the activities that they use are: immersing themselves in schoolwork or school-related activities, retaining an article of clothing, toy, or other object, saying prayers and drawing on religious faith, and experiencing support of family, friends and the community (Rosen, 1986).

Family interactions contribute to adolescent coping and resiliency. Parents can provide emotional or material support in order to help problem solving. Parental styles of handling their own difficulties may serve as positive role models for their children. A family that has a positive attitude toward the world exudes cooperation and flexibility toward the child. Additionally, peers and friends contribute to coping success in

adolescents. Friendships and socialization offer the adolescent the opportunity to try new things, and fulfill different needs outside of the family. These events offer the adolescent an opportunity to discuss conflicts and resolve problems in a different light (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

Children can learn good problem-solving skills from their family. Wolin and Wolin (1993) list four qualities of families who are competent in problem solving. These families: define the difficulty, accept that problems are a normal part of life and not a sign of weakness, come together to find a solution, and assign a leadership role to parents while allowing other family members to express their views. Families who come together around a common purpose, work together to solve problems, show respect for one another, and serve as good role models help to promote resiliency in their children.

In an effort to prevent drug use among young people, researchers have turned to risk and resiliency as factors. The family has been argued to be the single most important protective factor and in particular, having a warm and supportive relationship with at least one parent or an adult caretaker. Other protective factors in preventing drug use among young people include parental expectation that the child will not drink or use drugs, having to assume family responsibilities or chores, parental discipline and monitoring of the child's behavior, and religiosity. Research shows that the lack of protective factors, such as satisfying family relationships, low parental permissiveness, and involvement in religion, to be highly predictive of substance abuse (Moon, Jackson, & Hecht, 2000).

Levy and Wall (2000) claim several factors contribute to childhood resiliency during stressful situations. Having a stable relationship with at least one parent or another

significant person and an open supportive family climate that includes positive coping on the part of parents, contributes to resiliency in children. Parents who model resiliency can help children to understand and process stress and trauma. Family closeness and cohesiveness, including adequate rule setting, increases the likelihood that children will be better able to adapt to stressful situations. Other contributors to resiliency in children include mothers who show low rates of criticism, have low levels of depression, and provide extensive social support networks. Having social networks help children to believe that they are cared for and loved. These social networks include friends, neighbors, and teachers who provide structure and caring environments. Some community institutions that provide stability and continuity to children and help to enhance resiliency include schools, churches, and community centers.

#### Schools as Protective Factors

In their work with burn victims, Holaday and McPhearson (1997) found that individuals who do well under negative circumstances are those who are supported and accepted as worthy human beings by the community they live in. Schools provide support by caring teachers and administrators who promote high self-esteem, model high expectations, and encourage success.

Resiliency may be seen as a developmental process whereby individuals learn to make use of the resources and assets that are available to them. They are also able to learn to cope in an effective way with the difficulties and environmental stressors around them each day. This developmental process of building resilience has been seen as involving the early development of psychological defenses, which later develop into positive relationship patterns, experiences, and competence in social settings. Much of

the research shows that receiving positive emotional and social skills learning from the family or kinship unit has the potential for healthy social development in children. Additionally, friends, communities, and institutions can enhance children's social development in a positive way (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000).

Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) found in their research that resiliency might be seen as a fundamental process whereby the individual uses available assets and resources, both internal and external, to cope with adversities and stresses in the environment. Receiving key emotional and social resources from the kinship unit enhances resiliency development. Schools are also an empowering form of providing social support.

Cecil and Roberts (1992) found that academically successful adults who had once been severely disabled readers attributed their eventual success to their determination to succeed and to their strong will. Praise and encouragement from caring adults were also significant factors in their success. Rutter's 1984 study (cited in Cecil & Roberts, 1992) found similar results when following institutionalized young women into adulthood. The survivors, who became ordinary, well-functioning adults, had good relationships with teachers, positive experiences in school, and social success.

Studies of resilient children support the conclusion that some children can and do develop healthy and happy personalities even under undesirable circumstances. This development is enhanced through the support of caring adults who believe and encourage children to develop resilient behavior. Resiliency can be developed when positive characteristics are actively developed and reinforced in children. Teachers can help to foster resilient behavior when they introduce literature to children whose characters are overcoming their own form of adversity. Follow-up discussions can teach children that

there is more than one solution to a problem and that they can be in control of their own fate (Cecil & Roberts, 1992).

Cecil and Roberts (1992) claimed that these positive characteristics could be developed in children. These traits must be modeled by a teacher who shows that she/he believes that life is good and worthwhile. Teachers can use literature with characters who are overcoming their own adversities, and provide follow up discussions on solutions to problems. Retelling stories or role-playing can allow at-risk children to play the role of survivor, thus empowering them to become survivors in their own situations and grow in their own resiliency.

#### Communities as Protective Factors

Social assets such as high IQ, social skills, attractiveness, caring parents, safe neighborhoods, and good socioeconomic backgrounds are positive counterparts to risk. However, not all persons with these assets turn out well, nor do all impoverished families from violent neighborhoods have negative outcomes. Persons with many assets have to make use of them in order to be successful, and persons with few assets rely on the few that they do have to achieve success. These assets when used constructively are referred to as protective factors. Children who experience secure attachments in the home are more likely to respond positively to others and receive positive responses which in turn aids in the development of trust in relationships. This in turn assists in the development of coping styles which are necessary for dealing with risk situations (McCubbin et al., 1999).

Adolescent interpersonal resources (family, friends, social support) along with their intrapersonal factors, such as age, gender, intelligence, and temperament are crucial

in determining good coping skills and resiliency. When adolescents sense that support is available to them and that their psychological needs are being met, they cope with stressful situations in a more active, flexible, and positive way (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Critical Analysis of Literature

The number of personal and family problems in American society today is in abundance. But this does not need to be a negative, end-of-story situation. For nearly every story of violence, sadness, personal destruction, and demise, there is also an abundance of stories of children, adults, and families who have overcome adversity, despair, and desolation and who have thrived.

The examination of the literature by this researcher revealed several similar characteristics of resilient persons that were overwhelmingly consistent across the literature. There were several protective factors that emerged throughout the literature. In order of most occurrence these factors are: individual characteristics, family support, community support, and school support.

#### Individual Characteristics of Resiliency

Individual characteristics that occurred with the most frequency and in order of highest occurrence were: positive relationship with parent or other adult caregiver, persistency, intelligence, high self-esteem, social competence, ability to solicit support, ability to apply meaning to negative events, personal control, and having future goals.

Other individual characteristics discovered which were common but did not surface as frequently were: ability to bounce back, good-natured personality, focus on talents, not weaknesses, autonomy, responsibility, patience, optimism, good problem-solving skills, sense of purpose in life, creativity, morality, inquisitiveness, coping skills, empathy and religiosity (Jew et al., 1999; Holaday & McPhearson, 1997).

When one thinks about individual characteristics that help to promote resiliency one tends to question how can these characteristics be enhanced in individuals. The most astounding finding in the review of the literature on resiliency is that having a positive relationship with a parent, adult care-giver, teacher, or at least one adult person who showed the child that they cared, can have such a powerful impact on how children perceive themselves and how they respond to the stressful or negative situations they encounter. It is crucial that children form a lasting bond with a person with whom they feel safe, loved, cared for, important, and unconditionally accepted despite their perceived inadequacies, or failures.

It is crucial that a child's basic needs be met in order for them to be able to concentrate on relationships at home and at school without the worry of stressors in their life. Some of these stressors which can distract their attention are hunger, fear of abuse or neglect, proper clothing and personal hygiene, responsibility of having to look after siblings or parents not able to care for themselves, death or illness of a close family member or friend, and having to fend for themselves at the end of the school day. When a child has an adult in their life that is looking after them so they do not need to worry about these stressors and others, the child is able to better function as they should be allowed to.

Children who do not have the luxury of caring adults in their lives who attend to their basic needs rely on or develop coping mechanisms in order for them to be able to function throughout the day. These children have a sense of being able to respond to the everyday pressures of life without caving in to them. They respond to situations as they occur so as not to have stressors pile up and become overwhelming. These children have

learned whom they can trust and where to turn for help and ask when it is needed. These children have a sense of what is important to them in life and have future goals and dreams. They have the perseverance to continue on despite adversity and achieve those goals and dreams. They have found some type of connection with other people, or in the world itself, and have created a deeper meaning for their situation. They have a desire for a better life, know that they need to work hard to make that a reality, and are resourceful in the process.

Children who exhibit resilient characteristics have at least a fairly high intelligence level and a high self-esteem. They know that they are capable of dealing with negative situations as they arrive and turn to their resources for assistance when necessary. They have confidence in their ability to handle the stressors in their life and may rely on past experience to handle a particular situation. They use their problem-solving skills to deal with the matter at hand, knowing what has worked for them in the past. They have a sense of personal control, knowing that they have handled the situation in the past and that they will be able to handle the situation at hand without having negative consequences (Rhodes & Brown, 1991).

Resilient children have personal qualities that may help them to react to certain situations more positively. In general, they have a good-natured personality, are optimistic, and patient. They have the ability to “ride out the storm” knowing that they will be able to handle what is coming at them and may even appreciate the chance to overcome a stressful situation, learn from it, and grow stronger because of it. By applying meaning to their situation, resilient children are able to use it as a learning tool and grow from the experience (Levy & Wall, 2000).

### Family Characteristics of Resiliency

Family characteristics that occurred with the most frequency were: stable relationship between parents and children, parental monitoring and supervision of children, good communication skills of family members, family support, and good role modeling. Other family characteristics found were mutual attachments between parents and children, showing warmth and affection, nurturing their children, instilling social values, having family rituals, and exhibiting respect for individuals in the family.

Having a stable relationship with their young children is one avenue by which parents can help to foster resilient characteristics in their children. Children who feel safe and secure in their parents' love and approval will be better able to attend to the other issues of growing up that they deal with daily. Parents can show love and approval of their children by making them feel that they are an important part of the family and that the family works and plays together as a unit. Feeling valued, safe, and loved will help the child develop a sense of appreciation for his/her status in the family. Parents can promote feelings of love and security by monitoring their children's activities and whereabouts, knowing who their friends are, and providing them with limits and responsibilities. When children have to tend to a pet, household chores, or occasionally looking after a younger sibling they learn responsibility that can help to produce maturity and empathy (Holaday & McPhearson, 1997).

Parents help to increase a child's self-esteem, which in turn promotes resiliency, when they show their children warmth and affection and make a child feel loved and valued. Parents are good role models when they show respect for family members and

other persons. Children learn to respect their own family members and other people in their lives when this is modeled in their own family.

Providing support in the family teaches a child where to turn when they need help with a situation they are not comfortable handling on their own. Instilling social values in a child gives them a sense of belonging and the importance of learning to live with and get along with others. By developing feelings of empathy, children are able to show concern for other people and have feelings for them when in need (Carson et al., 1992; Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

#### Schools, Communities and Resiliency

Characteristics of schools and communities illustrated in the literature as enhancing resiliency in young persons were; social support, high expectations on the part of teachers and adults, and teachers who encouraged success.

Teachers spend nearly as much time with children as children spend with their parents and families. It is critical that teachers and the school system provide a learning experience for children that will enhance their resiliency and coping skills. Unfortunately, many children come from dysfunctional homes where their educational experiences are less than desirable and where education is not valued. Teachers can be extremely positive role models for young children who are not receiving proper guidance and modeling in the home. At times, teachers become gods and goddesses in the eyes of young children who are yearning to be loved and accepted (Cecil & Roberts, 1992). When teachers spend just a couple of minutes of their day making their students feel special and cared for, they may be making the world of difference in the lives of some of the needy children in their classrooms. By showing encouragement and caring some teachers could be making the

difference between a child being successful for the rest of their life, or the child choosing to take a more negative path in life. Most teachers are in the field of education because they do care about children and the nurturing and education of them. It is not an unreasonable expectation for teachers to show their students that they do care about them and their success in life. For some students, this may be the only form of nurturing and caring they will see for that day.

Communities and religious organizations can help to enhance resiliency in young persons by showing support and concern for the well being of young people (McCubbin et al., 1999). Communities can show that they value young people by providing a place for them to go where they can socialize with other persons of their age group. By doing so, the community will be sending a message to the young people who reside there that they are valued and that the community does care about them. Too many times there is nowhere for young people to gather or where they can be entertained. This can lead to negative consequences such as young people getting into some type of trouble or choosing inappropriate activities in order to pass the time.

One way that communities or churches can show that they appreciate their young people and value them is to have a young person be a representative on their councils or boards. The young person could provide ideas and feedback to the committee on what the perceived needs of the young people in the community or church might be. The young person could be involved in planning community activities or celebrations, or involved in a special fundraising project. It would be an opportunity for young people to get a first hand view of how organizations are run and give them a sense of responsibility and appreciation for the complexities of the makeup of organizations.

When communities and religious organizations show young people that they do care about them and their actions, young people will feel a sense of support and connectedness, which can help to decrease acts of violence or juvenile delinquency in the community. The community may learn to appreciate its young people more and the young people will have a better feeling of being a part of a large group. It can be a win-win situation for all members.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Implications and Future Research

In the review of the literature, common themes were evident on resiliency and its development. There is an abundance of research that supports family relationships, community support, and school support as playing an important role in the development and enhancement of resilient characteristics in young people. Since research has found this to be overwhelmingly true, one needs to look at specific activities, training, and education, that is necessary for teachers, community leaders, religious organizational leaders, and prominent adults in young peoples lives in order to be prepared and knowledgeable in the area of resiliency enhancement.

When one thinks of resources and activities that individuals, school, communities, and religious organizations can do to enhance protective factors in young people, the list becomes quite long. Many specific organizations, learning tools, and activities are in place around the community, in schools, and in homes to enhance the development of resilient characteristics in young people. These have been shown to be very effective in aiding young people to develop confidence and self-esteem, and have helped families learn to communicate better. Perhaps even more can be done to enhance characteristics of resiliency in young persons.

#### Individual Response

Young people who are at risk for becoming overwhelmed by the stressful situations in their life can learn ways to handle those negative situations when they feel they may lose control. Deep breathing exercises, visual imagery, and relaxation techniques can be taught to young people to incorporate into their day when they feel

they need to control the stress in their lives. Adults can encourage and model the use of physical exercise and proper diet for overall good health (Cauatela & Groden, 1978).

Individual counseling can be helpful to those persons who have developed negative thought patterns. Teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and others can encourage young people to become more assertive when appropriate. These same leaders can help to increase a young person's self-esteem by positive interactions with the child.

### Parental Response

Early intervention is important in preventing risk factors from escalating. Resiliency-building interventions should be introduced prior to the onset of problems in order for them to be the most effective (Moon et al., 2000). Professionals need to be aware of just how much intervention should take place with children and how to best work with families and other social systems to help build protective factors in children. It takes effort on the part of many agencies to assist children in "stress-proofing" their lives. Workshops and seminars that are aimed at enhancing parent-child relationships, parenting skills, building family strengths, and individual coping skills, need the cooperation of health, education, and human service providers as well as support from local, state, and national levels (Carson et al., 1992).

The importance of warm and responsive child-parent relationships can protect a child from negative consequences. Children benefit from structure and supervision. Research suggests that a combination of supportive parenting and firm parent control is associated with social competence as well as academic competence in children (Dutra et al., 2000).

Too many times parents rely on the school system to teach their children communication and social skills that should begin in the home. These same parents rely on teachers and religious organizations to “fix” the problems that are occurring in their family and home life. Educating these parents is one step toward strengthening family relationships and enhancing communication styles, which in turn can help to foster resiliency in young children.

Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) was designed by Dr. Thomas Gordon in the middle 1970’s to bring parents and their children together and to show parents how to help their children become mature, healthy, happy, and loving individuals. The P.E.T. system, still in use today, works with children of all ages, from the very young, through adolescence. Some of the topics covered in the training include: using active listening skills, how to talk so kids will listen, using “I” messages, changing unacceptable behavior by changing the environment, parental power, and conflict resolution. Parents who have completed the course claimed to see less fighting, warmer feelings between parents and children, closer relationships, rules that are established and followed, more responsible children, and respect grow between parents and their children (Gordon, 1975). There are several school and community efforts in which parents can take part to help instill qualities of resiliency in their children.

### Programs That Work

Head Start began in 1965 as a social action program aimed at enhancing early development of children. The intervention goal of this program was to improve IQ scores, school performance, and ultimately improve the quality of life for children in poverty in the United States. A fundamental idea of Head Start is that parents and

communities are involved in the intervention effort. The seven goals of the program are: (a) improve the child's physical health and physical abilities, (b) help improve emotional and social development of children, (c) improve children's mental processes, (d) establish patterns of expectations for success, (e) increase the child's ability to relate positively to family members and others, (f) develop in the child and his/her family a responsible attitude toward society, and (g) increase a sense of dignity and self-worth. Head Start has effectively improved the lives of low-income children and their families.

A community effort aimed at assisting in positive development of young people is Big Brothers Big Sisters. Big Brothers Big Sisters, founded in 1904, is a program of positive youth development whereby a relationship is developed between a young person and an older person. Volunteer caring adults meet regularly over a period of time with a young person to share activities, opportunities, and conversations. The idea is that many children, primarily from single-parent families, need an adult friend or mentor to give them support during their growing up years. When young people develop a relationship with an older person, it helps to give them a sense of belonging and can boost their self-confidence. Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations provide an adult friend to children in whom they can talk about their good and bad situations, go places and do things with, and provide hope and support for young persons who may not receive this anywhere else. Teachers and parents have reported that kids who are in Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring relationships show an improvement in grades, have more positive attitudes toward school, were better able to express their feelings, develop higher levels of self-confidence, and improve relationships with teachers, other adults, and peers. There are

over 5000 communities in the United States that have Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliations.

Kinship is a nonprofit organization available in many communities. Its' goal is to help improve a child's life by promoting stability, support, and friendship by spending one hour per week with an adult. Kinship also strives to strengthen peer relationships, improve school performance, and increase family compatibility. Kinship is designed for children ages 5 and up and benefits any child needing a friend or an adult role model. A child can be referred to Kinship directors by a parent, teacher, social worker, pastor or other person.

### School Response

Some schools and communities are turning to retired persons as tutors in the classrooms and as mentors to young persons who may not have a positive adult role model in their lives. Retired adults in communities may spend time in the school to tutor children on a one-to-one basis, assisting, for example, in reading and math skills. Retired persons may also act as aides on the playground or in the lunchroom. Children who may not have a positive adult role model in their life have an opportunity to relate to, and interact with, an adult in a positive setting. Retired persons who may feel that they want to spend their time in a meaningful and productive way, and who enjoy working with children, benefit from volunteering. This is a rewarding situation for both the child and the adult.

School-based prevention programs will be successful if they involve the following ingredients: (a) focus on life skills, (b) provide multiple channels of communication,

(c) have a distinct place in the curriculum, (d) become permanent and progressive by grade, (e) integrate the school, family, and community, (f) promote school success and social bonding, and, (g) focus on cultural and social norms. Hands-on programs are more effective as opportunities to learn assertiveness and communication skills than those who are not. Communication should be in several forms such as written, oral, visual, or electronic. By placing information in the curriculum, it will have a permanent spot so as to be used rather than overlooked, and reinforcement will occur if it is grade progressive. By focusing on cultural and social norms and social bonding, students will have a feeling of being a part of something overall and school will be a place of challenge, growth, and social inclusion ([http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/add\\_adhd/ael\\_behavior.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/add_adhd/ael_behavior.html)).

Schools can help to promote the development of proper social behavior and beliefs to children in several ways. By maximizing opportunities for bonding, teachers, parents, students, and communities get to know each other. This might involve limiting class size, extending the school day to include time for parent visits, and adding community service to graduation requirements. Deficiencies in academic, social, and emotional competence and self-esteem could be recognized by performing assessments of adaptive, social, and emotional functioning, as well as cognitive functioning. Creating a consistent system of expectations, reinforcement, and recognition creates an environment that is consistent, fair, cooperative, collaborative, and caring ([http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/add\\_adhd/ael\\_behavior.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/add_adhd/ael_behavior.html)).

Schools and churches have both turned to the notion of “40 Assets” in the development of communication skills between parents and children and positive development of self-esteem and confidence in young people. In 1989, Search Institute

developed the framework of developmental assets, 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development and to help protect youth from high-risk behavior and help enhance school success and other forms of thriving. Search Institute has measured developmental assets in more than 1 million 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders across the United States. These assets clearly show how important families, schools, churches, neighborhoods and others are in shaping young people.

The 40 developmental assets cover eight developmental categories and focus on positive experiences and wisdom that young people receive from the people and institutions in their lives. These assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior—protecting them from many different behavior problems and promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. The eight categories are: (a) support, (b) empowerment, (c) boundaries and expectations, (d) constructive use of time, (e) commitment to learning, (f) positive values, (g) social competencies, and, (h) positive identity.

Since 1993, Search Institute has worked with communities to expand on the vision of what is needed to promote healthy development of young people. 40 assets equips individuals, organizations, and other leaders to come together to promote developing competence, caring, and responsible children and adolescents.

### Community Response

Some communities have utilized the Prevention and Aftercare Programs that work with parents/families to enable them to reduce the risk of recidivism for juvenile delinquents. This program provides counseling and educational resources as well as hands-on training for the family. These programs support and empower the parental role by encouraging rewards and consequences and stressing that youth will always be

responsible for their choices. Juveniles who are at risk of being placed out of the home or who have already been placed out of the home should be referred to the Aftercare/Prevention Program.

### Resources and Additional Information

There is an abundance of information available for parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and others to use to assist the young people in their lives to develop better coping skills and resiliency when faced with stressful situations. Schools, local libraries, the Internet, church leaders, community service agencies, and county human services departments are only a few of the resources available to provide free or low cost assistance. The Appendix lists only a very small number of activity groups and organizations one can turn to for assistance.

### Further Research

Further research could include examining the role of the church and religious beliefs as factors in the development of resiliency and in enhancing coping skills. Other literature research could include the study of siblings and their coping skills and resiliency. Are siblings who are raised in the same environment, and by the same adults, able to similarly cope when placed in stressful situations? Finally, further literature review could include resiliency over the generations. Are today's pressures more demanding and severe than those of generations ago, or just different? Do coping styles pass on from parents to children? Is resiliency an inherited quality? These are only a few of the questions one can ask and seek answers to as we continue to discover the best techniques and skills that our young people in the world can utilize to become happy, healthy, and caring adults in today's society. After all, this is beneficial to all of mankind.

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## APPENDIX

**Selected Community Resources for School Guidance Counselors**General Websites:

- ASCA: [www.schoolcounselor.org/](http://www.schoolcounselor.org/)
- WSCA: <http://www.uspower.net/~wsca/>
- Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/>
- Wisconsin DPI: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/>
- State of WI Information Server: <http://www.wisconsin.gov/state/home>
- Federal Resources for Educational Excellence: <http://www.ed.gov/free/>
- Youth Options: [www.tec.wi.us](http://www.tec.wi.us)
- Job Corps: [www.jobcorps.org](http://www.jobcorps.org)
- United Way: [www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org)
- National Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources: [www.uhs.wisc.edu/wch](http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wch)
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters: [www.bbbsa.org](http://www.bbbsa.org)
- Boy Scouts: [www.bsa.org](http://www.bsa.org)
- Girl Scouts: [www.gsusa.org/](http://www.gsusa.org/)
- Head Start: [www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org)
- 4H: <http://www.4-h.org/>
- Lions Club: <http://www.lionsclubs.org/>
- Optimist Club: <http://www.optimist.org/>
- Freemasons Club: <http://www.gomasonry.com/>
- Kiwanis Club: <http://www.kiwanis.org/>
- Shriners Club: <http://www.shriners.com/>
- Junior Achievement: <http://www.ja.org/>
- WI DVR: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dvr/>

Phone Numbers:

- Legal help in WI: 1-800-362-9082
- Poison Control: 1-800-815-8855
- Children's Service Society: 1-800-665-1234
- WI Shares: 1-888-713-KIDS
- First Call for Help: 1-800-254-2350

Schools and Universities:

- University of WI-Oshkosh Project Success: [www.uwosh.edu/organizations/success](http://www.uwosh.edu/organizations/success)
- Wisconsin Technical Schools: [www.tec.wi.us](http://www.tec.wi.us)
- Wisconsin Private Colleges: [www.privatecolleges-wisc.org/](http://www.privatecolleges-wisc.org/)
- University of Wisconsin Systems: [www.uwsa.edu/](http://www.uwsa.edu/)
- Eau Claire: [www.uwec.edu](http://www.uwec.edu)
- Green Bay: [www.uwgb.edu](http://www.uwgb.edu)
- La Crosse: [www.uwlax.edu](http://www.uwlax.edu)
- Madison: [www.wisc.edu](http://www.wisc.edu)
- Milwaukee: [www.uwm.edu](http://www.uwm.edu)

- Oshkosh: [www.uwosh.edu](http://www.uwosh.edu)
- Parkside: [www.uwp.edu](http://www.uwp.edu)
- Platteville: [www.uwplatt.edu](http://www.uwplatt.edu)
- River Falls: [www.uwrf.edu](http://www.uwrf.edu)
- Stevens Point: [www.uwsp.edu](http://www.uwsp.edu)
- Stout: [www.uwstout.edu](http://www.uwstout.edu)
- Superior: [www.uwsuper.edu](http://www.uwsuper.edu)
- Whitewater: [www.uww.edu](http://www.uww.edu)

Camps:

- Rainbow's End, Ann Juliot & Kelly Carlson, (715) 847-2109/2334
- Camp Hope, Becky Loy, Stevens Point, WI (715) 341-0076
- Badger Challenge, Fort McCoy, WI, sponsored by WI National Guard
- Phantom Lake YMCA Camp, Mukwonago, WI
- Camp Woodbrooke, Quaker leadership camp in southwest WI
- Circle R Ranch, western horse riding camp located in MN
- Eagle Lake Camps, Christian camp in CO, NC, MN, Norway and Kenya
- [www.campsearch.com](http://www.campsearch.com)
- [www.summercamps.com](http://www.summercamps.com)

Other Resources to know in your area:

- Clinics, Hospitals
- Counseling Services Agencies
- AODA resources
- Women's health centers for family planning, birth control, pregnancy
- Shelters
- Food Pantries
- Parks and Recreation organizations
- Crisis centers-suicide, abuse, runaway
- Local CESA
- Kinship
- Foster Families
- Omni
- Police/Sheriff
- Ambulance/Emergency care workers
- WIC/Nutrition Program
- Social Service Department
- Child Support Agency
- Job Centers
- YMCA
- Churches/Religious Organizations
- Volunteer Organizations
- Senior Centers