

How You Can Promote Resilience: Translating Research Insights Into Parent-Focused Prevention

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Questions Addressed Tonight

Why is resilience promotion essential?

Do prevention efforts work?

What elements of our resilience program can parents reinforce and promote?

What are some recommended strategies?



A Bit More About Me

- A husband
- A father
- Former Chair of Parent Council,
Middlebury Public School in Mississauga



Why Promote Resilience?

Overall, young people today are under way too much stress in general

Anxiety, depression, and anger are far too prevalent

Local evidence suggests that this is the case in York Region



STRESS- High School Students (very much/always a part of life)

Having too many things to do at once	73%
Not enough time to get things done	58%
Being worried/uncertain about future	57%
Not enough time for sleep	49%
Having to keep feelings inside/hidden	47%
Find school subjects too demanding	43%
Feeling like you have to be perfect	41%



York University Students

634 students, 2009 American College Health Association Survey

WITHIN THE PAST YEAR:

43% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function

46% of men, 59% of women with overwhelming anxiety

45% of men, 52% of women with overwhelming anger

BEING STRESSED, ANXIOUS, ANGRY IS
NORMATIVE



Resilience As Learned

But some good news -- Resilience is a competency that can be learned

Students, their schools, their families and their communities can develop resilience

Or we can talk about resilience as a destination:



A green rectangular road sign with rounded corners and a white border, mounted on two wooden posts. The word "Resilience" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the sign. The background of the image is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The entire image is framed by a solid blue border.

Resilience

Our Definition of Resilience


Resilience becomes relevant when adversity is experienced

Resilience has two components:

- (1) Ability to bounce back and overcome adversity
- (2) Ability to adapt to new circumstances (e.g., life transitions such as starting high school, university, new job, etc.)

Resilience Domains

Ideally, resilience is promoted in 3 domains:

- Emotional Resilience (mood regulation)
 - Academic (coping with failures & mistakes)
 - Interpersonal (relational resilience)
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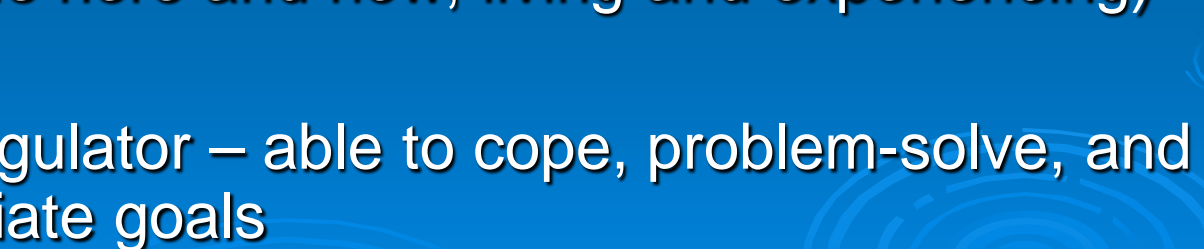
Does Resilience Promotion Work?

- Yes -- strong evidence of the effectiveness of preventive school-based interventions
- Meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011; *Child Development*) -- 213 school-based interventions with over 270,000 participants
- Showed that various interventions produced substantial gains in social and emotional learning, but also actual school achievement

Parent-Focused Prevention

- Parent-focused prevention programs also work
- Review paper by Sandler et al., 2011
(Annual Review of Psychology)
- Parenting programs seem to work by enhancing youth adaptation to stress and beliefs about themselves and their relationships with others; also promote parenting efficacy


Our 5 Resilience-Building Themes

- (1) Adopt the growth mindset
 - (2) Have hope and emphasize the possible
 - (3) Be a self-compassionate self-advocate
 - (4) Be mindfully aware of emotions, stress, thoughts
(focus on the here and now, living and experiencing)
 - (5) Be a self-regulator – able to cope, problem-solve, and
set appropriate goals
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Carol Dweck: The Growth Mindset

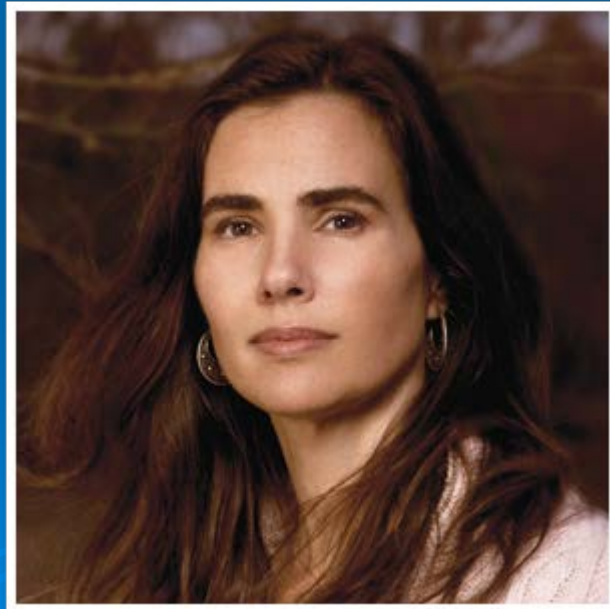


The Growth Mindset

- Based on earlier research comparing students with a mastery orientation versus a helplessness orientation
 - Growth mindset can be applied to beliefs about achievement and intelligence, relationships, and perceptions of the ability to control emotions
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Kristin Neff: Self-Compassion

Developed self-compassion to help herself
(a young mother high in self-criticism due to
inability to cope with son's autism)



KEY MESSAGES IN OUR PROJECT

- (1) It is difficult at times for everyone
- (2) Strive for excellence, not perfection
- (3) Be authentic and don't hide despair
- (4) Ask for help if you need it, and don't stigmatize yourself or others (the person who asks for help is strong, not weak)
- (5) Everybody matters, everybody counts (and this includes parents of course)

Most Important Message: Nothing Beats Persistence

“If you want something bad enough, never give up”

-- Randy Pausch, “The Last Lecture”

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence”

-- Calvin Coolidge



Being Interpersonally Resilient: The Promotion of “Mattering”

- The notion of mattering seems to strongly resonate with everyone. Mattering – the sense of feeling important and significant to others
- Low mattering linked with anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, less resilience
- Unfortunately 3 out of 10 children and adolescents feel like they don't matter and they are really good at hiding this (up to 5 out of 10 feel like they don't matter in their community)

TIPS FOR PROMOTING THE SENSE OF MATTERING

- (1) Spend time together and have fun together, not goal-directed
- (2) Listen to them and talk with them (pay attention to them – not the cell phone)
- (3) Encourage them (express belief in them)
- (4) Say no and set limits when needed but provide reasons
- (5) Directly express and show that they matter to you and keep doing this when they are older

LIMIT THE SENSE OF NOT MATTERING

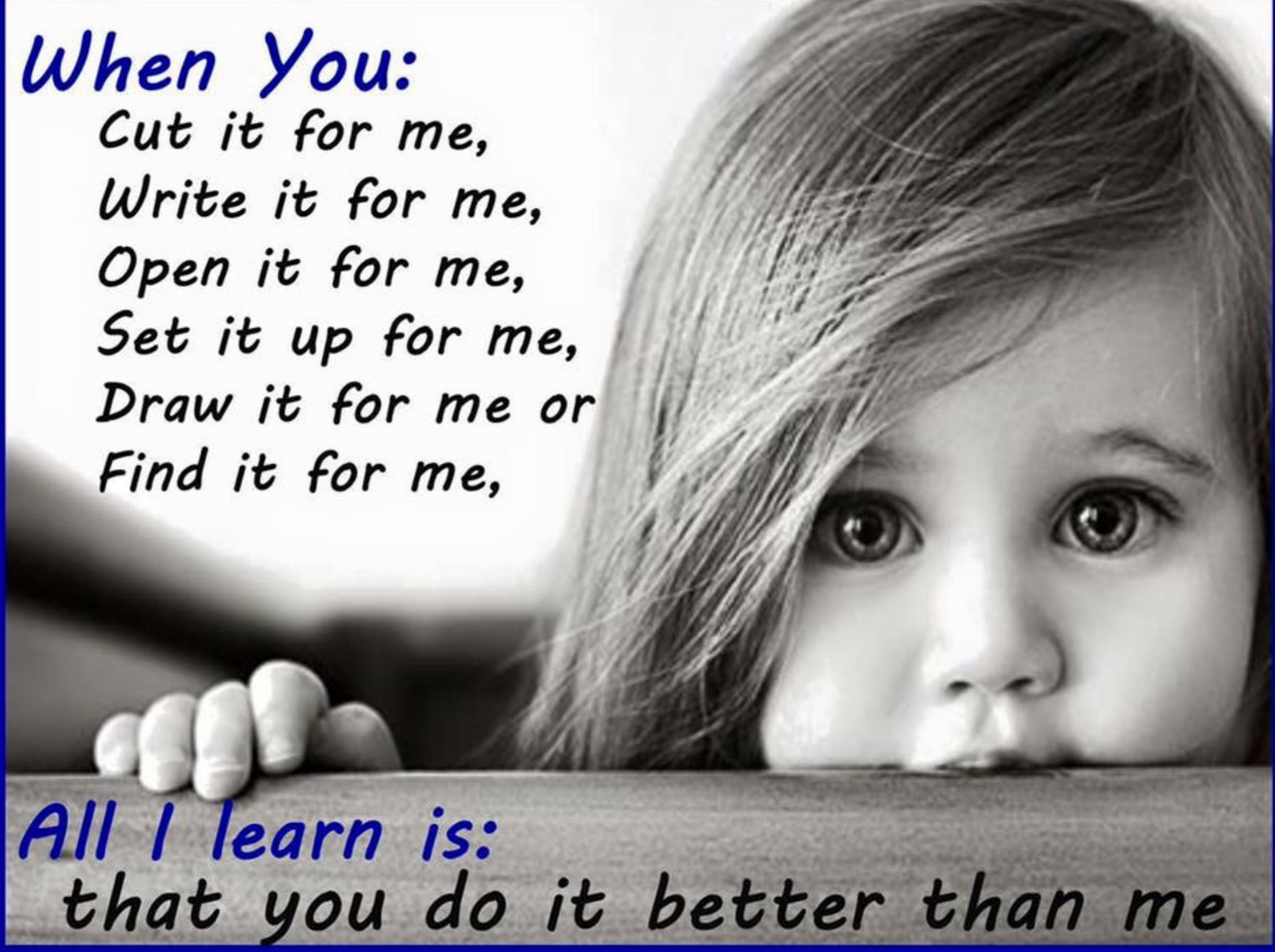
- (1) Don't criticize (especially fixed attributes)
- (2) Be careful not to use harsh or sarcastic tone of voice
- (3) Don't be arbitrary
- (4) No social comparisons
- (5) Don't hover (hovering is not mattering because it does not build a strong sense of self-determination and independence)

When You:

*Cut it for me,
Write it for me,
Open it for me,
Set it up for me,
Draw it for me or
Find it for me,*

All I learn is:

that you do it better than me

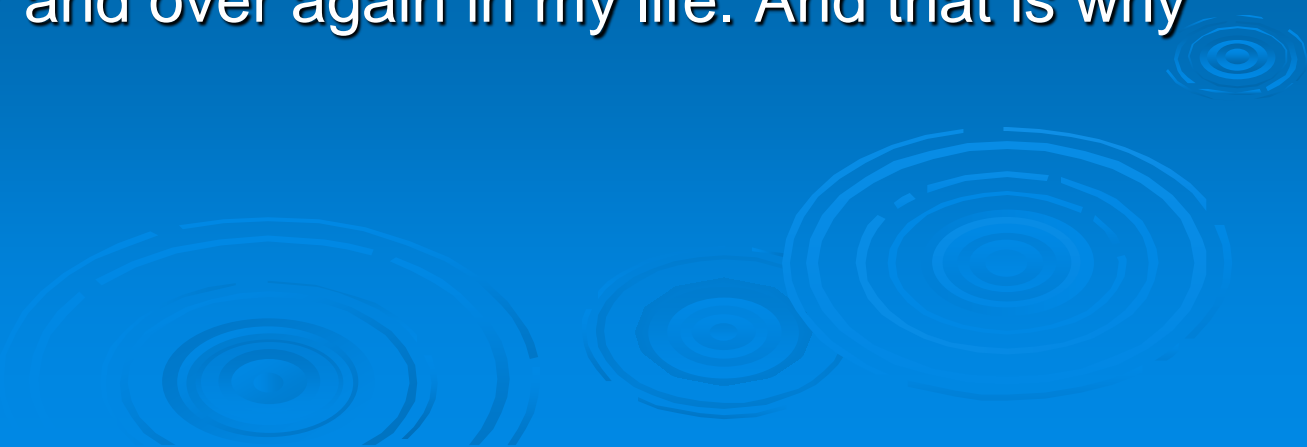


Resilience Narratives

- Tell amazing stories of resilience, overcoming adversity

Nelson Mandela -- “The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall”

Michael Jorda -- “I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”



Rick Hansen: The Man in Motion



Successful People Who Initially Failed

Thomas Edison's teacher told him he was "too stupid" to learn anything

Edison had over 1000 patents, inventions such as light bulb, microphone, movie camera

Oprah Winfrey was fired from her first job at a TV station in Baltimore

Authors of Great Books That Were Rejected

Stephanie Meyer's "Twilight" was turned down by 14 publishers

J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" was rejected by 12 publishers

Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" was turned down so many times that she finally self-published 250 copies

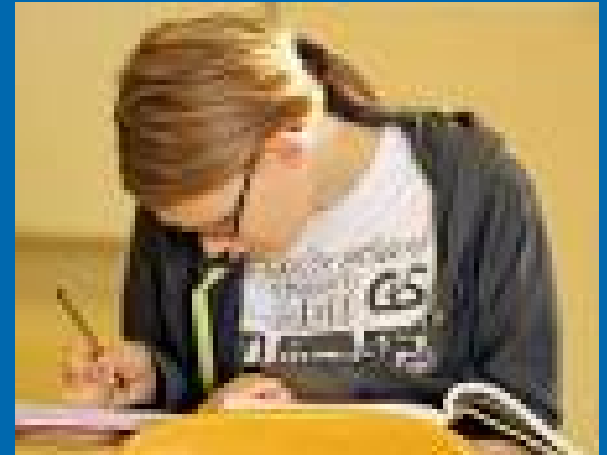
Homeless to Harvard

Liz Murray story, homeless youth, parents with drug addiction, gains admission to Harvard, graduates in 2009




Homeless to Harvard

Dawn Loggins story;
A version of Good Will
Hunting; homeless
custodian gains admission
to Harvard, 2012 after being
abandoned by her parents



Resilience Promoting Responses

- **MODEL AND ENCOURAGE SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND SELF-COMPASSION**
(MESSAGE – EVERYONE IS HUMAN)
 - **FOCUS ON PROCESS NOT OUTCOME**
(MESSAGE – EVERYONE IS A LIFELONG LEARNER)
 - **PROMOTE EXTERNAL FOCUS--VOLUNTEER**
(MESSAGE – YOU CAN MATTER BY MATTERING TO OTHERS)
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Resilience Promoting Responses

- **EMPHASIZE EXCELLENCE STRIVING**
(MESSAGE: ROAD TO PERFECTION IS DEAD END)
- **TALK ABOUT MISTAKES INCLUDING YOUR OWN**
(MESSAGE: NO ONE IS PERFECT)
- **MODEL CALM REACTIONS TO MISTAKE/SETBACK**
(MESSAGE: LET'S SEE WHAT CAN BE LEARNED)
- **AVOID CRITICIZING CHILD FOR MISTAKE/FAILURES**
(MESSAGE: TIME TO FIND A DIFFERENT WAY OF GOING ABOUT IT)

WHAT CAN I SAY TO MYSELF?

INSTEAD OF...

TRY THINKING...

-I'M NOT GOOD AT THIS

-WHAT AM I MISSING?

-I'M AWESOME AT THIS

-I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK

-I GIVE UP!

-I'LL USE SOME OF THE STRATEGIES I'VE LEARNED

-THIS IS TOO HARD

-THIS MAY TAKE SOME TIME AND EFFORT

-I CAN'T MAKE THIS ANY BETTER

-I CAN ALWAYS IMPROVE; I'LL KEEP TRYING

-I CAN'T DO MATH

-I'M GOING TO TRAIN MY BRAIN IN MATH

-I MADE A MISTAKE

-MISTAKES HELP ME IMPROVE

Resilience: Step by Step



THANKS!

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