

Building the Characteristics of Psychological Resilience: Tools for Responders to Prepare for Disasters

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Faculty

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The Goal

- **The goal for the day is to provide the audience with the theoretical understanding of how to build resilience and to engage all participants in the practical applications of resilience building as it relates to disaster behavioral health preparedness and response**

Objectives

- **Define the characteristics of resilience**
- **Identify the types of activities that can assist in the development of each of the 10 characteristics of resilience**

Objectives

- **Demonstrate one activity from a designated characteristic that exemplifies resilience building**

I Am . . .

- **Where were you born?**
- **Where were you raised?**
- **What one word would your friends use to describe you?**
- **What one word would your colleagues use to describe you?**

I Am . . .

- **What one word would you use to describe yourself?**
- **Why do you do the work that you do?**
- **What makes you smile?**

Psychological Resilience

- **Resilience refers to one's capacity to adapt to stressful situations or crises**
 - **More resilient people are able to adapt to adversity without lasting difficulties**
 - **Less resilient people have a harder time with stress and life changes**

Psychological Resilience

- **Some people are born with more traits than others**
- **But psychological resilience can be developed**

Resilience

- **Resilience is the most important defense people have against stress**
- **Resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary, and that people regularly demonstrate this ability**
- **Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone**

Resilience

- **Resilience is tremendously influenced by a person's environment**
- **Resilience changes over time depending on how much a person nurtures internal resources or coping strategies**

Resilience

- **Some people are more resilient in work life, while others exhibit more resilience in their personal relationships**
- **People can build resilience and promote the foundations of resilience in any aspect of life they choose**

Personal and Professional

- Resilience lies in the personal and professional domains
 - The Personal Domain-personality traits
 - What you were born with
 - What you learned
 - What you have taught yourself
 - Includes family / social supports

Personal and Professional

- The Professional Domain
 - Individual and group skills and activities that you and your peers conduct to assist in performing at your best and avoiding distress
 - Individual skills increase a sense of competence and confidence

Personal and Professional

- Peers provide opportunity to learn from each other, to problem solve together and to support each other as equals

The List of Ten

1. Positive attitude / confidence / optimism
2. Self-awareness
3. Internal control / self-control
4. Competence / problem solving
5. Social support

The List of Ten

6. Self-efficacy / self-confidence
7. Exercise
8. Flexibility / humor
9. Spirituality / transcendence
10. Perseverance / patience

What Do You Believe?

- What is the most important context for responding to a disaster?
- What are our hopes?
- What are our expectations?

Agents of Change

- Information
- Self-awareness
- Identification
- Measurement

Information

- What do survivors need to know?

Self-Awareness

- Survivor's reactions

Identification

- Current characteristics
- Syntonic
- Dystonic

Measurement

- Current capabilities
- Level of development

Stress Prone

- Stress prone exercise
 - This survey is based on the traits of someone who believes that any change in life situation is associated with unknown and dangerous outcomes
 - Their response to any change is likely to manifest stress

Stress Resistant

- **Stress resistant exercise**
 - This survey is composed of statements based on the hardy, survivor and risk-taking personality traits
 - All of these share common aspects that resist rather than attract or promote stress

Change Agents

- **List at least three more agents of change:**
 - That which will prompt, inspire, force or encourage survivors to change their perceptions, responses and ultimately, their behaviors

The List of Ten

1. **Positive attitude / confidence / optimism**
2. **Self-awareness**
3. **Internal control / self-control**
4. **Competence / problem solving**
5. **Social support**

The List of Ten

6. **Self-efficacy / self-confidence**
7. **Exercise**
8. **Flexibility / humor**
9. **Spirituality / transcendence**
10. **Perseverance / patience**

Positive Attitude: Optimism

- **Remain inquisitive and open minded**
 - Know that you can be effective despite being fearful
- **Give yourself positive messages to increase your confidence**
- **Remind yourself that you are strong and can grow stronger and more wise as you handle life's challenges**

Thinking Styles

- **All or nothing**
- **Overgeneralization**
- **“Must,” “should,” or “never”**
- **Catastrophizing**
- **Emotional reasoning**
- **Overestimation of risk**
- **Self blame**

Self-Awareness

- **Develop self-awareness**
- **Understand what you're feeling and why**

Thought Stopping

Internal Control

- **Develop internal control, self-control, emotion regulation**
 - **However you refer to it, it is the ability to get your emotions in check**
- **Know that you are in control of your life**

Internal Control

- **You can't control your circumstances, but you can control how you respond to those circumstances, and that makes all the difference in the course your life takes**

Emotion Regulation

- **Perception affects our responses**
- **What you think directly affects what you feel**
- **How you think can change the way you feel**
- **How you express your emotions can affect whether or not you control them**

Competence

- **Building our knowledge and skills builds competence and a sense of confidence that we can in fact, recover, repair, and rebuild our lives**
- **Primary to competence is the ability to problem solve**
- **Reaching out for or accepting help is also of primary importance**

Social Support

- Those with strong networks of social support tend to stay healthier and happier throughout life, and tend to cope well with stress

Self Efficacy / Self-Confidence

- The belief in your own ability to help yourself
 - Turning traumatic helplessness into learned helpfulness

Creating a Narrative

1. What problem(s) did responding to the disaster bring to your life?
Begin your response:
 - “Working that disaster brought _____ to my life . . .”
 - e.g.: homelessness

Creating a Narrative

2. How has this problem affected your family life or other relationships?
Begin your response:
 - “This problem, _____ , has affected my life by . . .”

Creating a Narrative

3. What have you done to cope with or address this problem? Begin your response:
 - “To cope with this problem, I have . . .”

Exercise

- Exercise has been correlated with stronger levels of resilience
 - This may be due to the effects of endorphins on one's mood, or the physical health benefits to those who exercise, or both

Flexibility and Humor

- The ability to be flexible is a great skill to obtain and facilitates resilience growth
- Getting help when it is needed is crucial to building resilience
- It's about learning from mistakes
- It's about the ability to laugh about oneself and lighten up with others

Flexibility and Humor

- Those with a sense of humor about life tend to experience life as less stressful, are able to bond with others during difficult times
- If you can take a step back from difficult situations long enough to maintain your sense of humor, you will be more resilient too

Spirituality

- Spirituality and transcendence can help trauma survivors
 - Studies have shown that those who are more spiritual tend to be more resilient as well
 - The ability to make meaning out of trauma assists in recovery

Perseverance and Patience

- Don't give up on your situation; don't stop working toward getting through it
- Trust the process
- Be patient with yourself as well as others

Healthy Coping

- Practice breathing
- Practice muscle relaxation
- Repeat positive coping statements
- Using breathing and coping statements together
- Visualize a comforting scene / person

Healthy Coping

- Practice thought stopping
- Listen to music
- Take time to relax
- Talk to another person
- Move-engage in physical activity
- Stay in the present
- Engage in simple, repetitive activity

Healthy Coping

- Focus on something
- Express yourself
- Read a book

Get the FACTS About Resilience

- Foster hope
- Act with purpose
- Connect with others
- Take care of yourself
- Search for meaning

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