Resiliency 101

Narrated by
Phil Woodall,
middle school principal
Tucson, Arizona.
(narration available audio version only)

A presentation produced by the
National Education Association Health Information Network
with support from and in collaboration with the
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services.

NEA HIN

CMHS
The Center for Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Introduction. Resiliency 101.

RESILIENCE

hunger
disability abuse illness poverty
neglect crisis racism violence
alcoholism addiction
divorce crime
disaster
imprisonment discrimination

How is it that some people – despite significant adversity or having come from less than ideal backgrounds – nevertheless succeed?

How is it that some people – despite significant adversity or having come from less than ideal backgrounds – nevertheless succeed?

"We're all 'at-risk' in this day and age. As educators, that leads us to feeling stressed, discouraged, possibly even burned out.

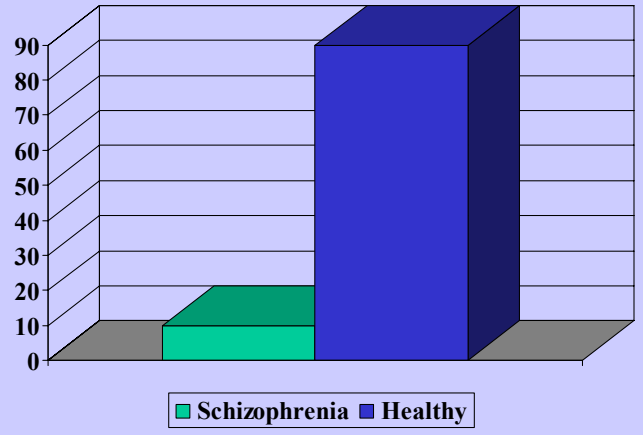
By focusing on resiliency, we can turn that lens around. We can work with protective factors – strengths, assets in students and ourselves.

Phil Woodall, Principal

We can focus on what does work, instead of getting stuck on, and frustrated by, what doesn't work."

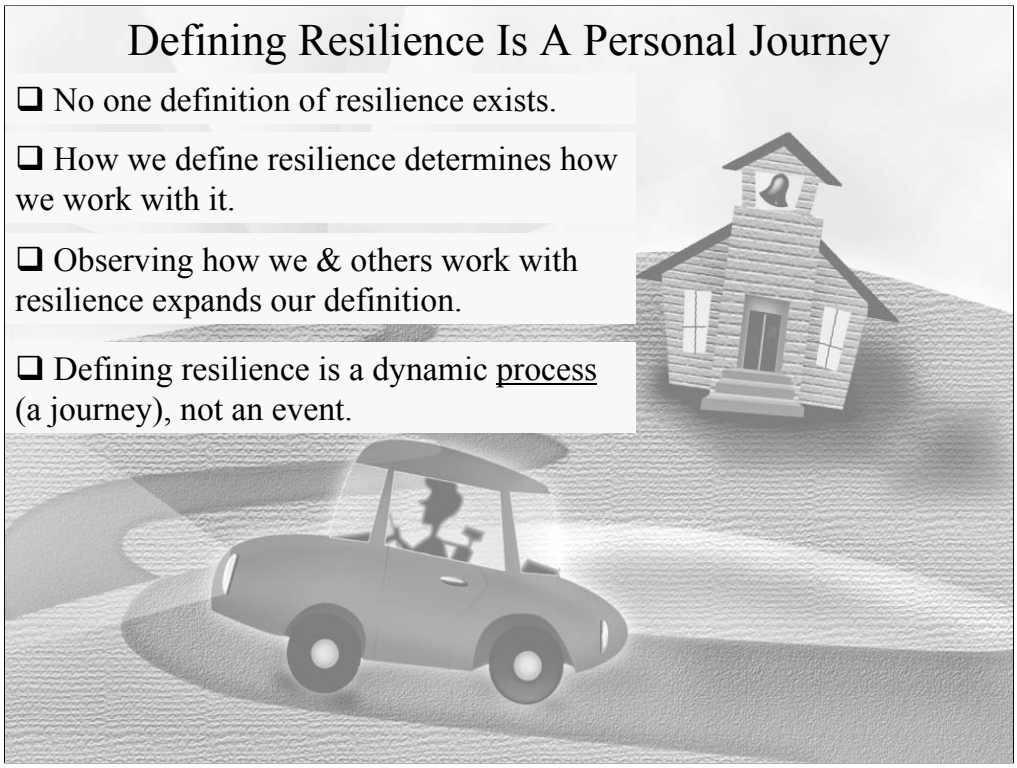
[read slide]

Origin of Resilience Research

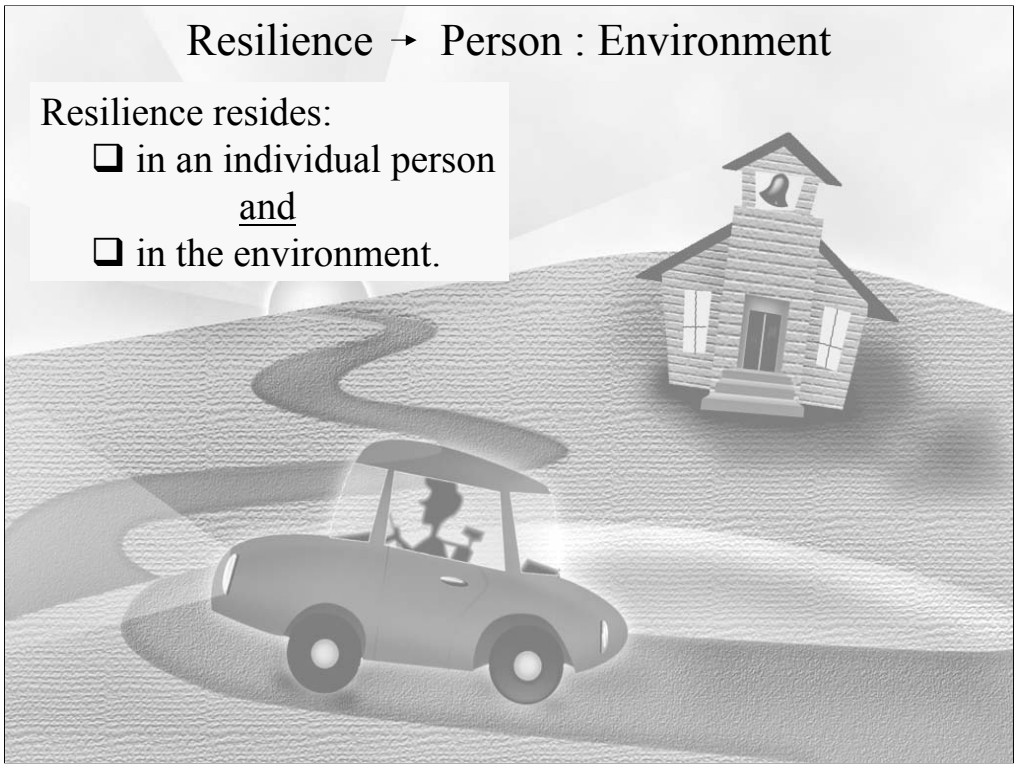


- Why did schizophrenia show up in only 10%?
- What protected 90% who grew up to live healthy/successful lives?

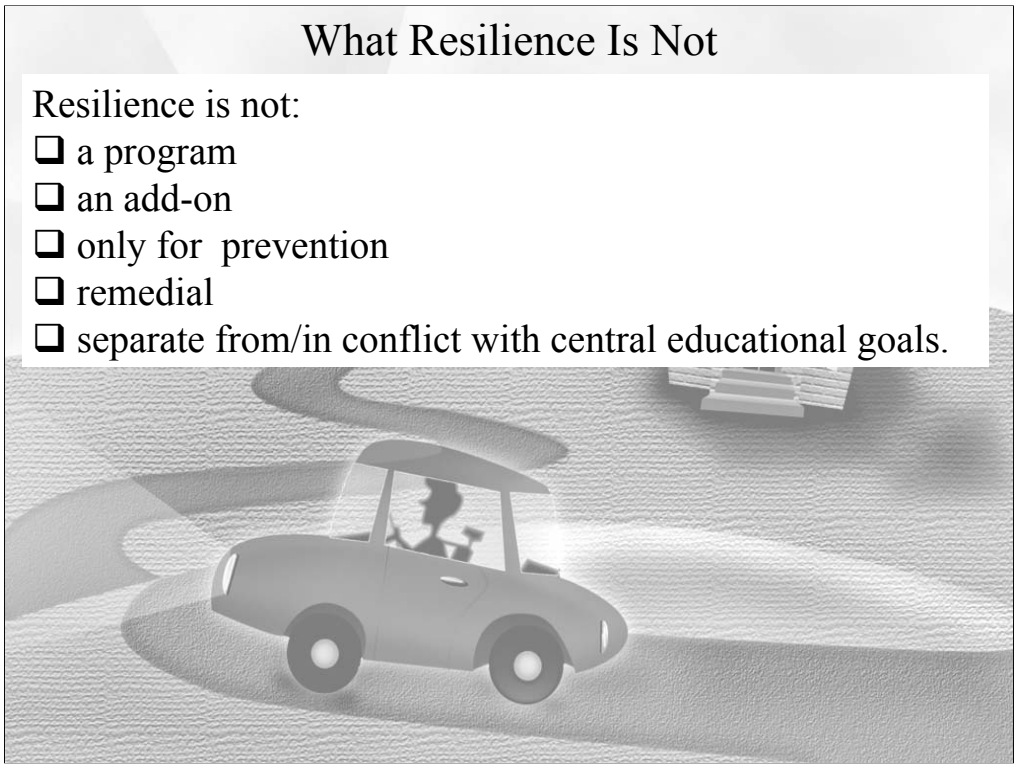
The origin of resiliency research can be traced to a study by Dr. Norman Garmezy, who looked at the incidence of schizophrenia among adults who had a parent with schizophrenia. As a resiliency researcher, he wondered, [read slide].


Defining Resilience Is A Personal Journey
❑ No one definition of resilience exists.
❑ How we define resilience determines how we work with it.
❑ Observing how we & others work with resilience expands our definition.
❑ Defining resilience is a dynamic process (a journey), not an event.

[read slide]

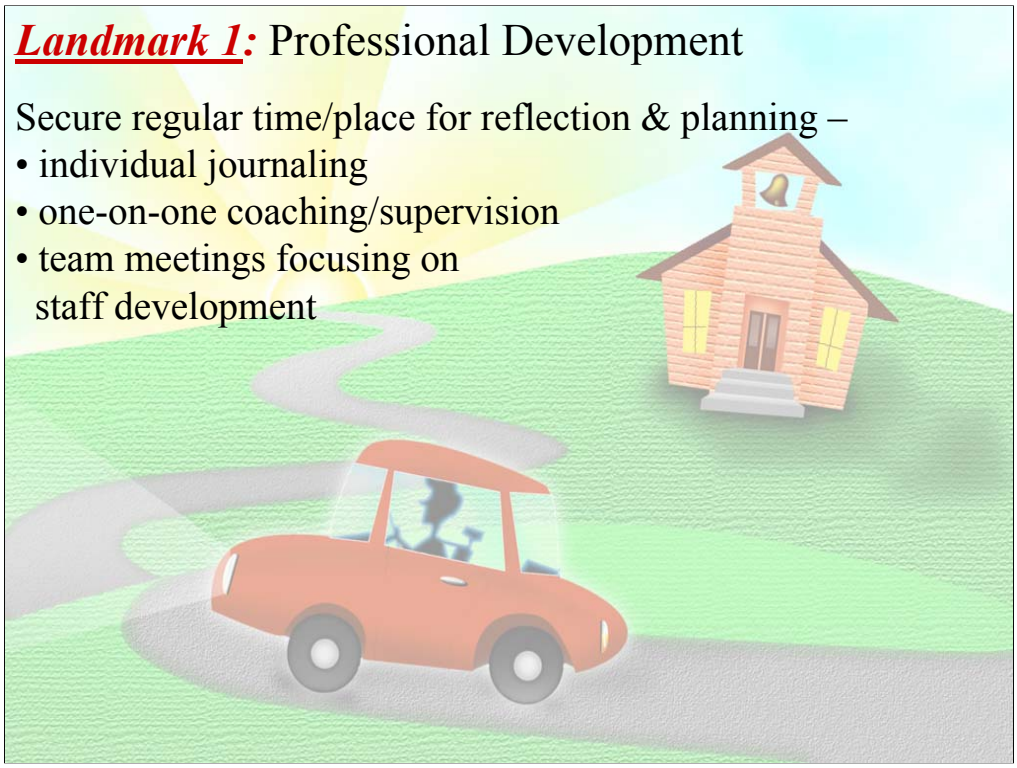


Resilience is not a trait that resides exclusively within individuals. Resilience is also a trait that can be used to describe relationships between individuals. Thus, resilience resides in individual people AND in their social environments.


What Resilience Is Not
Resilience is not:
❑ a program
❑ an add-on
❑ only for prevention
❑ remedial
❑ separate from/in conflict with central educational goals.

[read slide]

Real-Life Example: La Cima Middle School is a Title I middle school, serving about 750 students in grades 7-8 from a culturally and economically diverse community (Tucson, AZ). These outcomes are the results of the investment that Mr. Woodall and his staff made in resilience-oriented professional development and resilience-influenced practices over five years. By the end of the first 5 years of applying resiliency thinking at La Cima, students achieved the highest test scores among any Title I middle school in their district. Out-of-school suspensions were reduced from 175 in year 1 to 17 in year 5 – a 90% decrease and the lowest out-of-school suspension rate in the district. Overall discipline referrals decreased dramatically. There was zero (0) attrition among staff (not including those who left motivated by personal circumstances – e.g., to accompany a spouse who was transferred).



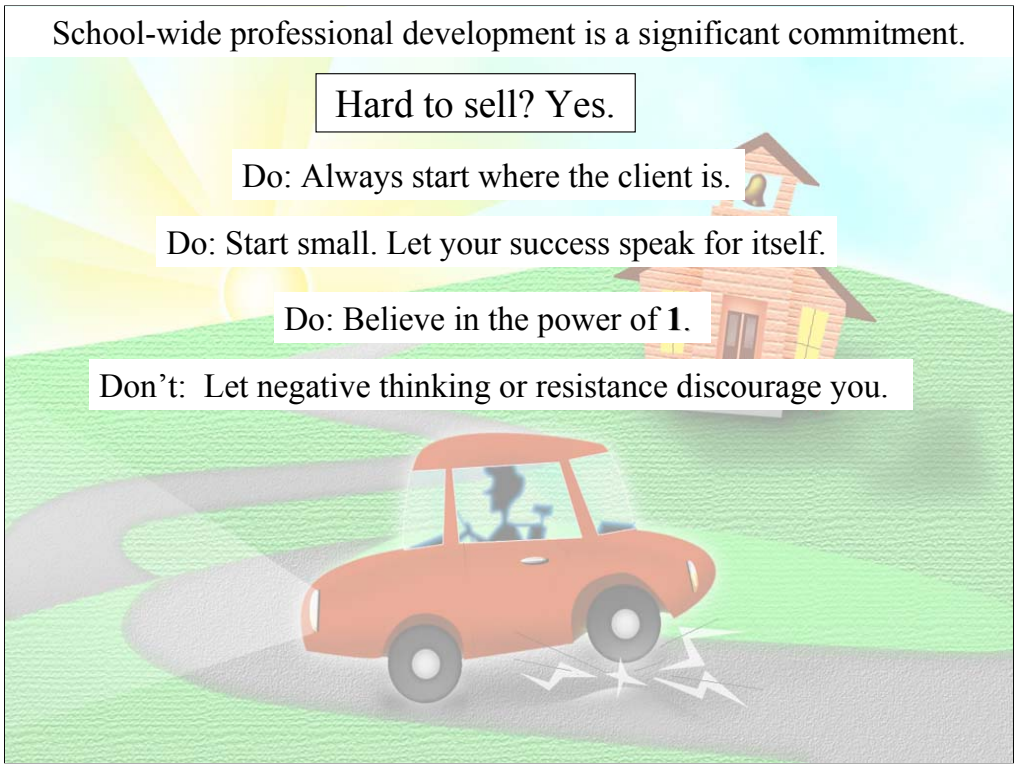
Let's being this journey, starting from wherever you are right now in terms of your own resiliency thinking, to help you find your own voice as a resiliency-focused educator.

Landmark 1: Think about securing a regular time and place, by yourself and with interested colleagues, that allows you to do some reflection and planning, such as:

•Individual journaling, process notes [daily]

•One-on-one coaching/supervision [weekly/monthly]

•Team meetings focusing on staff development [weekly/monthly].



When resilience is incorporated on a school-wide basis, Landmark 1 represents a significant commitment on the part of administration and staff to do professional development around resilience. Such an investment can be a really tough sell. Here are some tips:

•Always start where the client is.

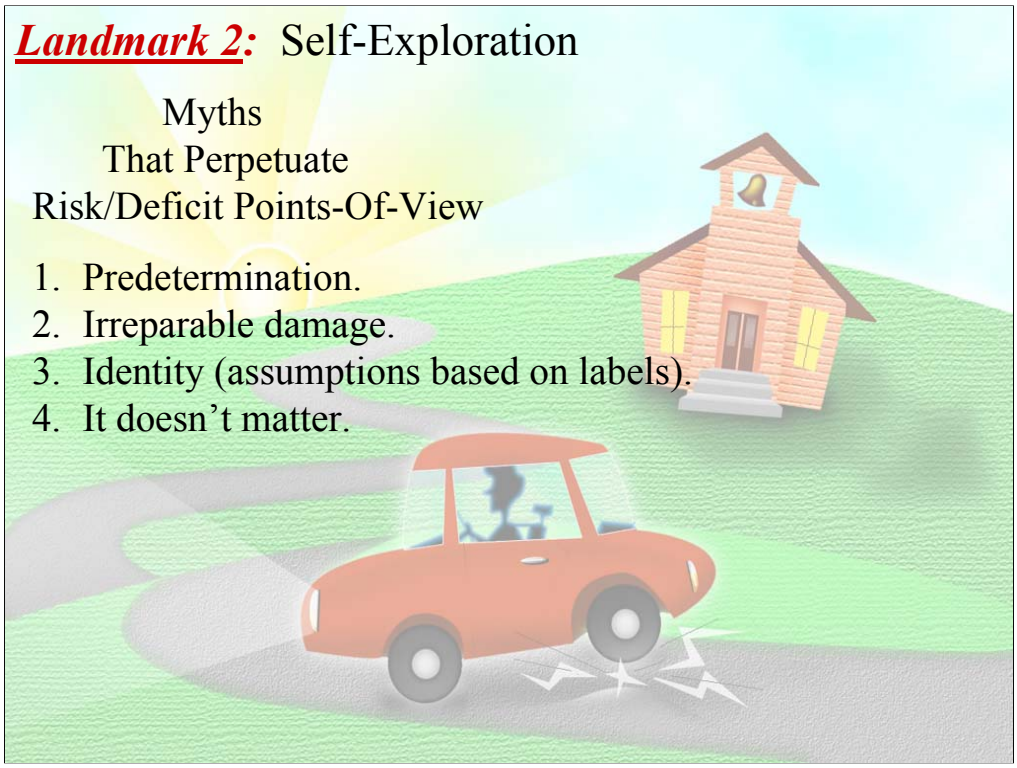
•Often the best way to achieve school- and district-wide buy-in is to start small and let your success and that of your students speak for itself.

•Do: believe in the power of 1.

•Don't let negative thinking or your experience of the resistance you may encounter from others discourage you.

•Do: Remember our results:

- •test scores up dramatically,
- •discipline referrals down significantly
- •the lowest out-of-school suspensions in our district
- •staff attrition reduced to virtually zero (0).

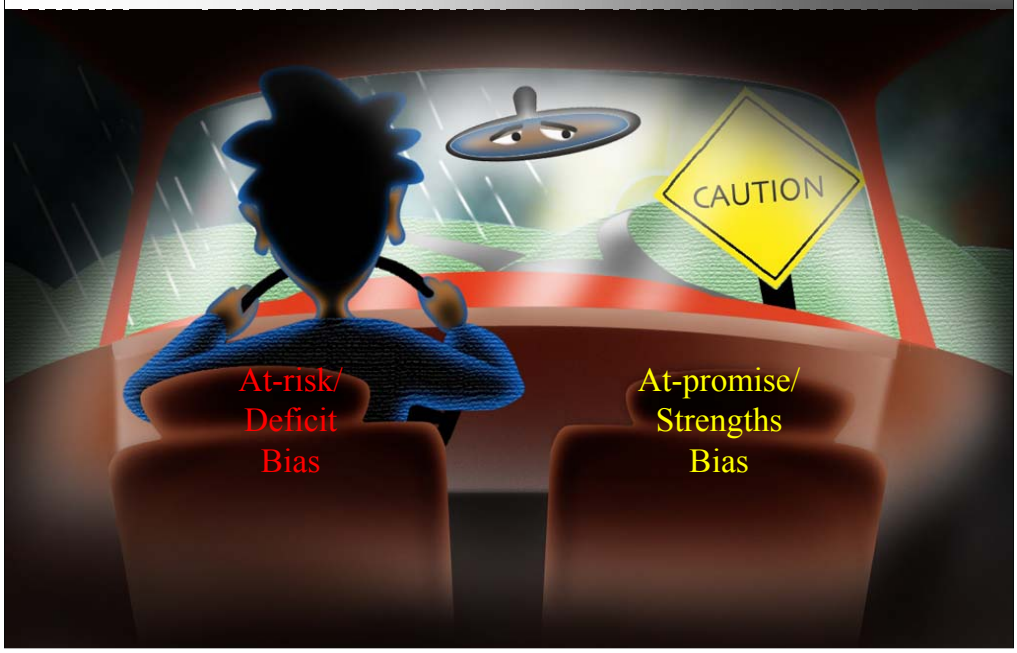


Landmark 2: Within your own heart and mind, explore whether there's buy-in to some of the myths that typically perpetuate risk/deficit points-of-view.

1. Predetermination: People cannot escape their fate.
2. Irreparable damage: Some poor souls are permanently stuck, forever broken. There's nothing that can be done.
3. Identity: Assumptions based on labels – At-risk kids don't go to college. "Low performing" schools are just dumping grounds for kids with problems.
4. It doesn't matter: Nothing I do will really make that much of a difference.

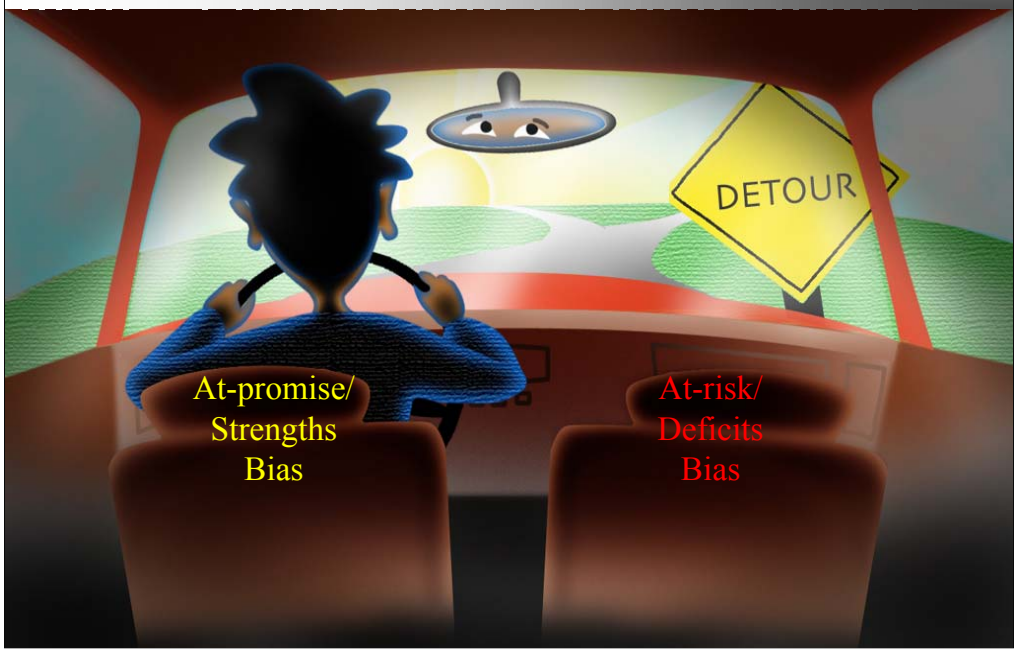
Landmark 2 invites you to engage in a bit of honest self-exploration because it is within your authentic self where resilience education really begins. Doing an inventory of your assumptions and challenging those assumptions that render a risk/deficit bias is essential because having the right tools to do your work makes a huge difference. The right tools contribute to success and make what we do in our work more enjoyable and rewarding.

Landmark 3: Visualization



Landmark 3: Visualize an automobile that takes you on your journey each day as a teacher, administrator, whatever your role in school might be. Is a risk/deficit bias in the driver's seat? If so, how might your journey be influenced?

Landmark 3: Visualization



Landmark 3 (continued): Now, visualize a different scenario. That same automobile takes you on your journey each day with a resiliency bias in the driver's seat. How might that influence your journey?

Henderson & Milstein's Six Strategies for Promoting Resilience

1) Opportunities for meaningful participation.
2) Setting/communicating high expectations.
3) Caring and supportive relationships.
4) Promoting prosocial bonding.
5) Setting clear/consistent boundaries.
6) Teaching "life skills."

Based on research, here's a 6-point strategy for promoting resilience in schools. [read slide]

Connection as a Protective Factor

"It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

– Irish proverb

Teaching and learning and healthy development happen within the context of relationships.

[read slide]

"Experiences of connection build vitality that sustains psychological development. From the lack of connection experiences, the reverse occurs….We cannot develop a sense of worth unless the people important to us convey that they recognize and acknowledge our experience….When we turn away from a student or colleague without conveying to them that we recognize what they're experiencing/feeling, we inevitably leave that person diminished to some degree" (Miller and Stiver, 1997).

High expectations convey confidence in people's present abilities and capacity and their potential for the future. Over time, an emphasis on competition, evaluation in relation to peers, and differentially rewarding high achievers diminish motivation and emotional well-being. However, by communicating realistic, high expectations we motivate students and colleagues. Successful leaders increase motivation by 1) recognizing potential, 2) holding onto high expectations and 3) focusing on strengths.

Clear/Consistent Boundaries
as a Protective Factor

- Encourage student involvement in:
  - ✓ defining expectations
  - ✓ enforcing rules.
- Emphasize "do's" over "don'ts."
- Catch them being good.
- Communicate expectations clearly.
- Consistency = Fairness = Effectiveness.
- Acknowledging students' power to choose behavior can help avoid power/control struggles.

Clear and Consistent Boundaries as a Protective Factor

Encourage student involvement in defining what the expectations are for their behavior and in enforcing rules.

"Allowing students to be joint architects in matters affecting them promotes feelings of control and autonomy. Teachers and administrators can [then] concentrate on instruction rather than control" (Johnson and Johnson, 1996).

Frame expectations in positive ways –
- emphasize "do's" over "don'ts"
- catch them being good – reward good behavior by proactively recognizing it in 1-on-1 and larger social groups

Communicate expectations clearly – proactively use visual, auditory reminders.

Consistency equals fairness. Fairness equals effectiveness – i.e., safe and orderly schools.

Openly acknowledging and conveying to students that they have the power to make choices and decisions about their behavior can help you avoid getting caught or stuck in struggles over control.

What Resilience Educators Do

1) Gain trust.
2) Hold high expectations for achievement.
   - Set realistic goals.
   - Assess/understand process –
     – how they got from point A to point B.
3) Provide caring and support, with accountability.

Write to:
resilience@neahin.org

In summary, resilience educators

1) Gain trust
2) Hold high expectations for achievement
   - set realistic goals
   - Include assessment and understanding of students' process – how they got from point A to point B

3) Provide caring and support, along with accountability.

Once learned and practiced over time, use of resiliency-oriented perspectives and putting resilience principles to work become 2nd nature.

We invite you to share with us your own experience with resiliency-oriented education by writing to resilience@neahin.org.

Resources

• Brown, J.H., D'Emidio-Caston, M., & Benard, B. (2001). *Resilience Education*. Corwin Press, Inc.

• Davis, N.J. (1999). *Resilience: Status of the Research and Research-Based Programs (working paper – 5/28/99)*. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration.

• Henderson, N. & Milstein, M. (1996). *Resilience in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators*. Corwin Press, Inc.

• Johnson & Johnson (1996). Teaching students to be peacemakers. *Research/Practice*, 4(3), 10-19.

• Miller, J.B. & Stiver, I.P. (1997). *The Healing Connection: How Women Form Relationships in Therapy and in Life*. Beacon Press.

This presentation was created with support from/in collaboration with the
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services
by

Angela M. Oddone (MSW)
Mental Wellness Program Coordinator
Email: mentalhealth@neahin.org

Here is a list of some of recommended resources that were noted this presentation. Be sure to also take a look at the accompanying list of recommended resources for this training package, as well as the discussion points and questions. It's been a pleasure to share this presentation with you. Thanks for listening!