

Fostering Resiliency During Times of Distress and Loss

Kara Sharp LPC, Julie Piper LPC



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What is Resilience?

- **Psychological resilience** is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly.
- Resilience exists when the person uses "mental processes and behaviors in promoting personal assets and protecting self from the potential negative effects of stressors".
- In simpler terms, [psychological](#) resilience exists in people who develop psychological and behavioral capabilities that allow them to remain calm during crises/chaos and to move on from the incident without long-term negative consequences.

Robertson, Ivan T.; Cooper, Cary L.; Sarkar, Mustafa; Curran, Thomas (2015-04-25). "Resilience training in the workplace from 2003 to 2014: A systematic review"(PDF). *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. **88** (3): 533-562. doi:10.1111/joop.12120. ISSN 0963-1798



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Characteristics of a Crisis

- Highly stressful
- High potential for a negative outcome
- Often does not have an immediate solution
- There is an intense desire to solve the situation immediately
- Creates intense emotions
- Attempts to resolve the crisis or emotions resulting from the crisis immediately can produce more problems.

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Crisis Survival Skills

- Crisis Survival Skills are designed to help in situations when:
 - There is intense emotional pain that cannot be helped quickly
 - Acting will only make things worse
 - Needs must be met even if feeling overwhelmed
 - The problems causing the crisis cannot be solved immediately
 - Also known as Distress Tolerance Skills

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Self Soothing

- **Self soothing** is a way in which we treat ourselves to feelings of betterment, so that we can move forward, past any negativity or pain.
- Self soothing is best done using the five senses
- Vision
 - Look at the stars
 - Go to the park and look at nature
- Hearing
 - Listen to music or nature sounds
- Smell
 - Bake cookies or bread
 - Use essential oils
- Taste
 - Eat something you like
 - Suck on a hard candy
- Touch
 - Wrap up in a comfortable blanket
 - Pet your dog or cat

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Distraction - ACCEPTS

- Activities
 - Exercise, watching a movie, cleaning, go for a drive
- Contributing
 - Reach out to a friend, help someone, contribute to the community
- Comparisons
 - Remember a time when you did not feel this way
- Emotions
 - Do things that elicit different emotions - watch a comedy or read something uplifting
- Pushing Away
 - Use thought stopping
- Thoughts
 - Change your thoughts - do a puzzle
- Sensations
 - Take a hot shower, hold ice

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Half Smile

- Relax your face from the top of your head down to your jaw
- Let both corners of your lips go slightly up, just so you can feel them.
- Try to adopt a serene expression



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Willing Hands

- Place your hands on your lap
- Turn your hands outward, palms up and fingers relaxed



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Radical Acceptance

- While pain is part of life, radical acceptance allows us to keep that pain from becoming suffering. By accepting the facts of reality without responding by throwing a tantrum or with willful negligence. In other words, *it is what it is*.
- Pain becomes suffering when we fight reality.
- Acceptance does not equal agreement. Acceptance is acknowledgement.
- Allow yourself to feel feelings of pain and acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain.



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Increasing Resilience

Coping with difficult circumstances and increasing positive emotions

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Reducing Emotional Vulnerability

- All people are more prone to emotional reactivity when:
 - They are under physical or environmental stress
 - They are in situations in which they are out of control
 - They are living in a state of deprivation (basic needs are not being met)

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Building a Life Worth Living

- Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Short-Term and Long-Term
- Building a Sense of Mastery
- “Coping Ahead” with Difficult Situations
- Building a Resilient Biology



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Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Short Term

- Do pleasant things that are possible *NOW* (lots of ideas to come!)
- Pleasant events increase positive emotions and decrease discomfort
- Pleasurable events are possible even in deprivation and are worth the effort
- It is important to be mindful of these events as they are occurring
- Be **unmindful** of worries, such as when it will end, whether we deserve it, and how we may be expected to do more

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Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Long Term

- Making necessary changes so that pleasant or valued events will occur more often
- Much easier to cope with a loss or negative event when it is balanced with positive experiences in life
- Identifying values and priorities and taking action to fulfill those areas (relationships, achievements, behaving respectfully, spirituality, contributing to community, integrity)
- Takes time, patience and persistence

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Build Mastery

- Engage in activities that build a sense of self-confidence, self-control and competence
- Building a sense of confidence and competence helps a person become more resistant to depression and other negative emotions
- Doing something “a little bit hard” or challenging - generating a sense of accomplishment
- Over time, this leads to a more positive self-concept, higher self-esteem, and greater level of happiness

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Cope Ahead

- Figuring out which situations are likely to cause trouble or pain, and then planning how to cope with expected difficulties while ALSO imagining coping *well*.
- We can learn new skills by imagining and rehearsing skillful behavior in our minds (research shows this ranges from sports to interpersonal relationships)
- Helps us plan ahead when dealing with emotionally difficult situations, and increases likelihood that we will automatically respond with skillful behavior

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Taking Care of Your Mind by Taking Care of Your Body

- An out-of-balance body increases vulnerability to negative emotions
- Taking care of your body increases emotional resilience
- The PLEASE Skill:
 - Treat **P**hysical Illness
 - Balance **E**ating
 - Avoid Mood-**A**ltering Substances
 - Balance **S**leep
 - Get **E**xercise

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If You Need Ideas...


- Activities (puzzles, coloring, watch a movie, draw, cook, bake, read, write in a journal, listen to music, go outside, play with your pet, knit/crochet)
- Contribute (donate, help a neighbor, text/call a friend to see how they are, make a card for someone, bake cookies for a friend/relative)
- Create a Different Emotion (comedy, listen to soothing music (if anxious) or upbeat music (if sad), laugh out loud, write a gratitude list, read a thriller/mystery novel)
- Movement (yoga, exercise, stretch, dance, ride a bike, go for a hike, hand massage, jumping jacks)
- Soothe Your Senses (warm shower/bath, light a candle, put on your favorite lotion/perfume, make tea or coffee, put on comfy clothes, paint nails)
- Be Kind To Yourself (validate yourself "This is hard and I am doing the best I can" or "I can get through this")



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For When It Is Extremely Hard!

- Intense exercise
- Tip the Temperature (face in ice water for 30 seconds, taking breaths)
- Paced Breathing
- Paired Muscle Relaxation
- Improve the Moment (Imagery, Meaning, Prayer, Relaxing Activities, One Thing in the Moment, Vacation, Encouragement)



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In Conclusion...

We can accept reality (even when it's painful) AND work to change it

We can practice problem solving AND problem acceptance

We can be tough AND be gentle

We can be independent AND also need help

We can grieve AND be resilient



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Thank You

Questions?

Kara Sharp LPC
Julie Piper LPC

