

# Building Resilience in School-Aged Children

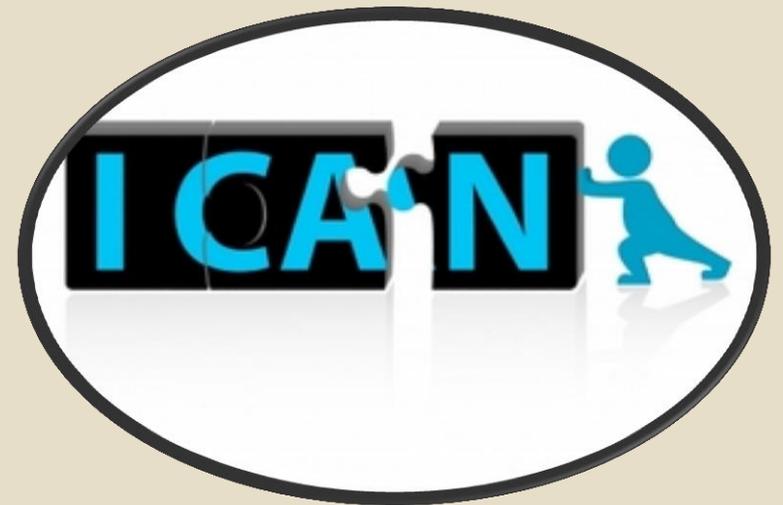


ALDI – October 15, 2015 – Presented by Cindy Finn and Rita McDonough, CEMH

# Three Main Questions



- **What is resilience?**
- **What do we know about resilience?**
- **How can I build resilience with my students?**



# What is resilience?

How do you define it?



# *Predict the outcome...*



- A 5 year-old child watches helplessly as his younger brother drowns.
- In the same year, the boy begins to lose vision due to glaucoma. His family could not afford the medical services that might save his sight.
- Eventually he goes to live in a state institution for the blind.
- Both parents die during his teens.
- He was an African-American boy growing up in poverty in the Southern USA during the 1930's & 40's.
- He loved music but did not have access to many activities.

*From The Power of Resilience  
(Brooks & Goldstein, 2004)*

*Who is this person?*





# Ray Charles



“My mom, to me, was always the most fantastic woman in the world...she didn't have a lot of what people say you are supposed to have. She didn't have a college education... we were in a very small town and very poor... there were no such things as psychologists to teach her how to raise a kid who was such an oddity in that town... I was the only blind kid... but my mom, somehow, she knew that there's nothing wrong with my brain. I just couldn't see.”

# Resilience



- Adaptability of human beings
- Longstanding interest in resilience
  - Children's Stories & Fairy Tales (e.g., *Little Engine that Could*, *Cinderella*)
  - Literature (e.g., *Lord of the Flies*, *Robinson Crusoe*)
  - Popular culture (e.g., *Castaway*, *Survivor*, *Malala*)
  - Research (biology, psychology)



# Resilience & Psychology



- “positive patterns of adaptation in the context of past or present adversity”
- Two implied criteria (A. Masten)
  - Risk, trauma, or adversity has occurred
  - Individual is doing “ok”, coping



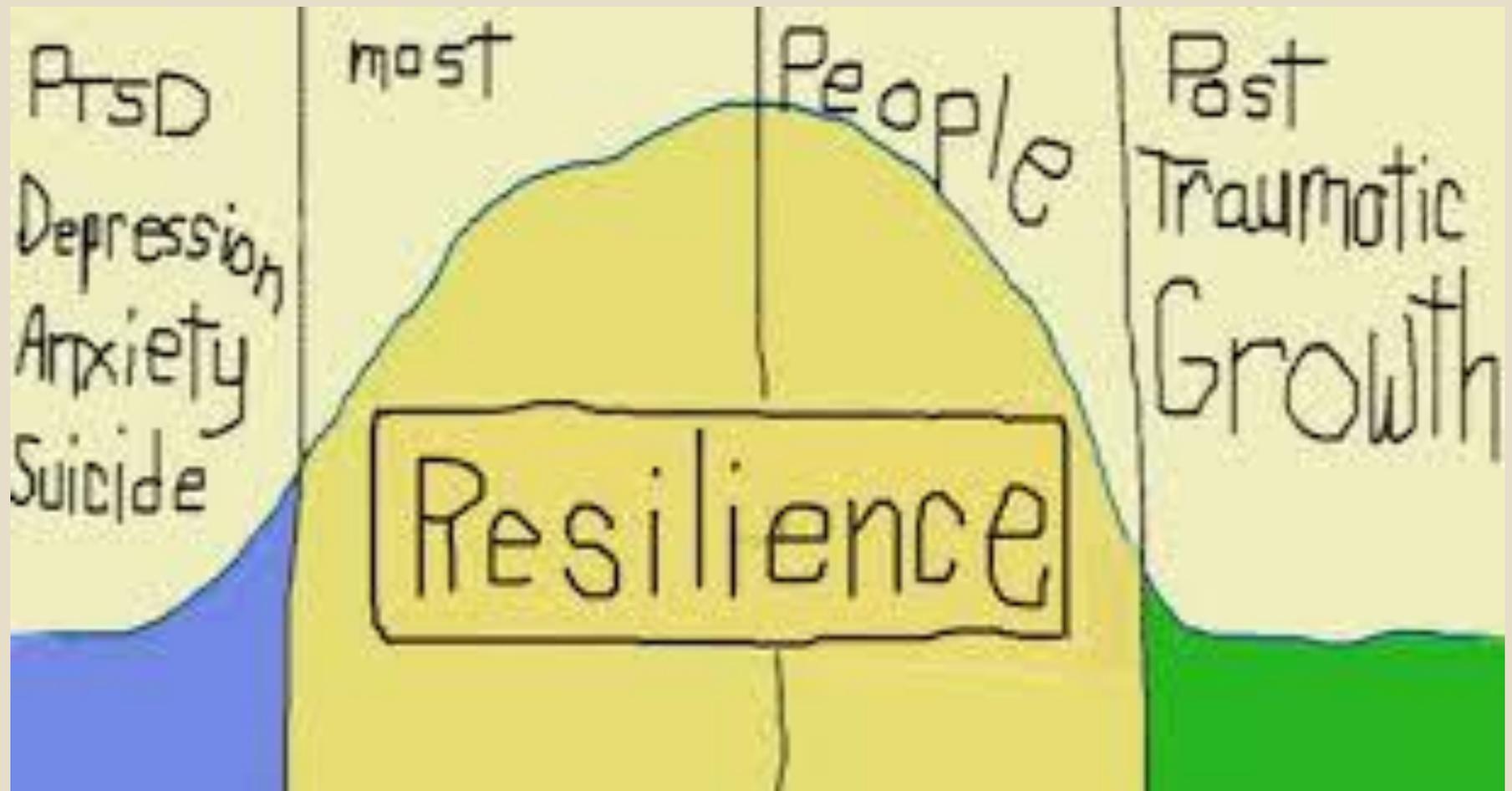
# Exploring construct of resilience



- What is coping/success/doing ok?
  - Positive outcome from high risk context (e.g., poverty)
  - Recovery from trauma (e.g., abuse)
  - Unexpected positive development (despite the odds...)



# We do bounce back...



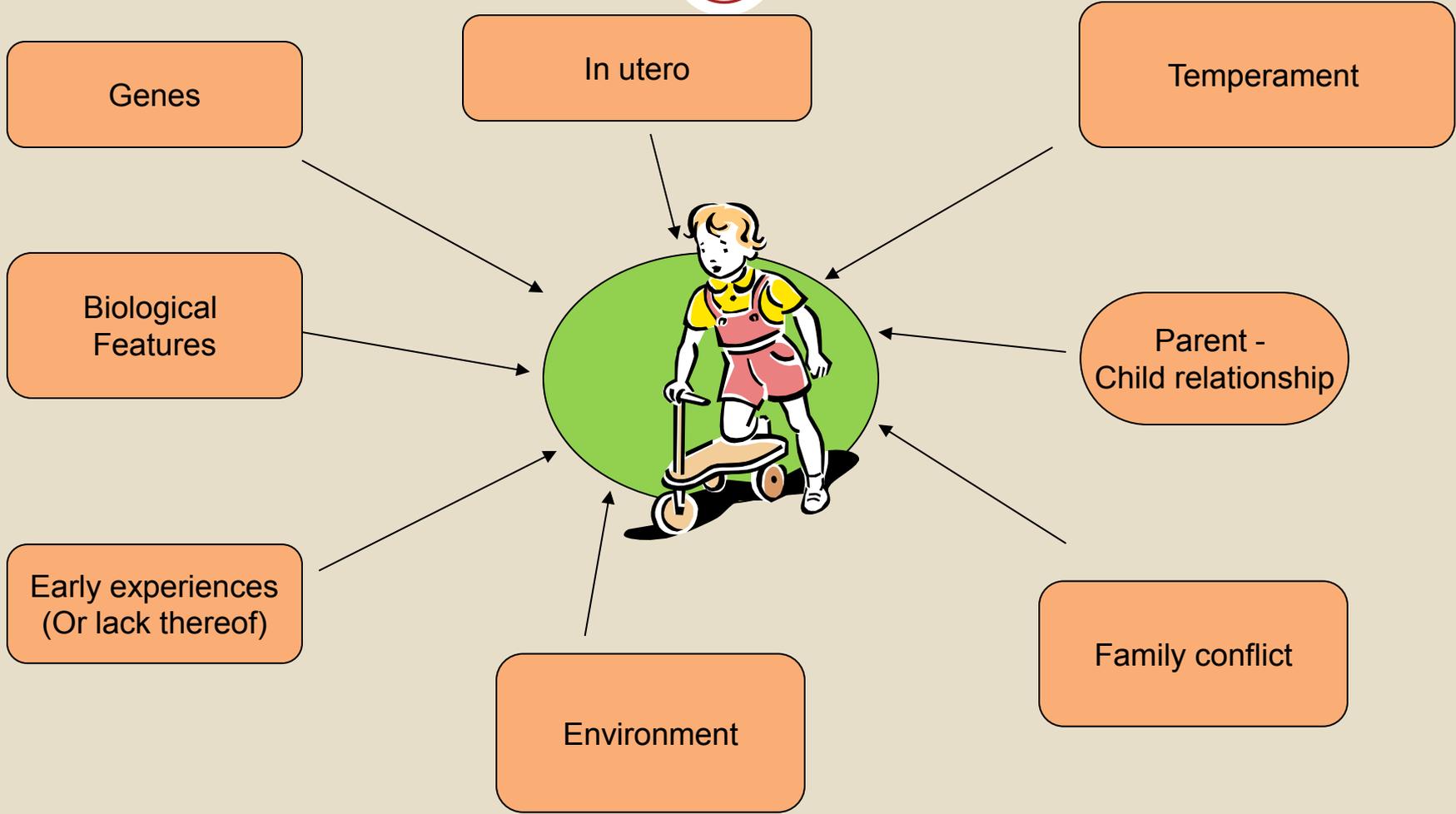
# Issues of Risk & Resilience



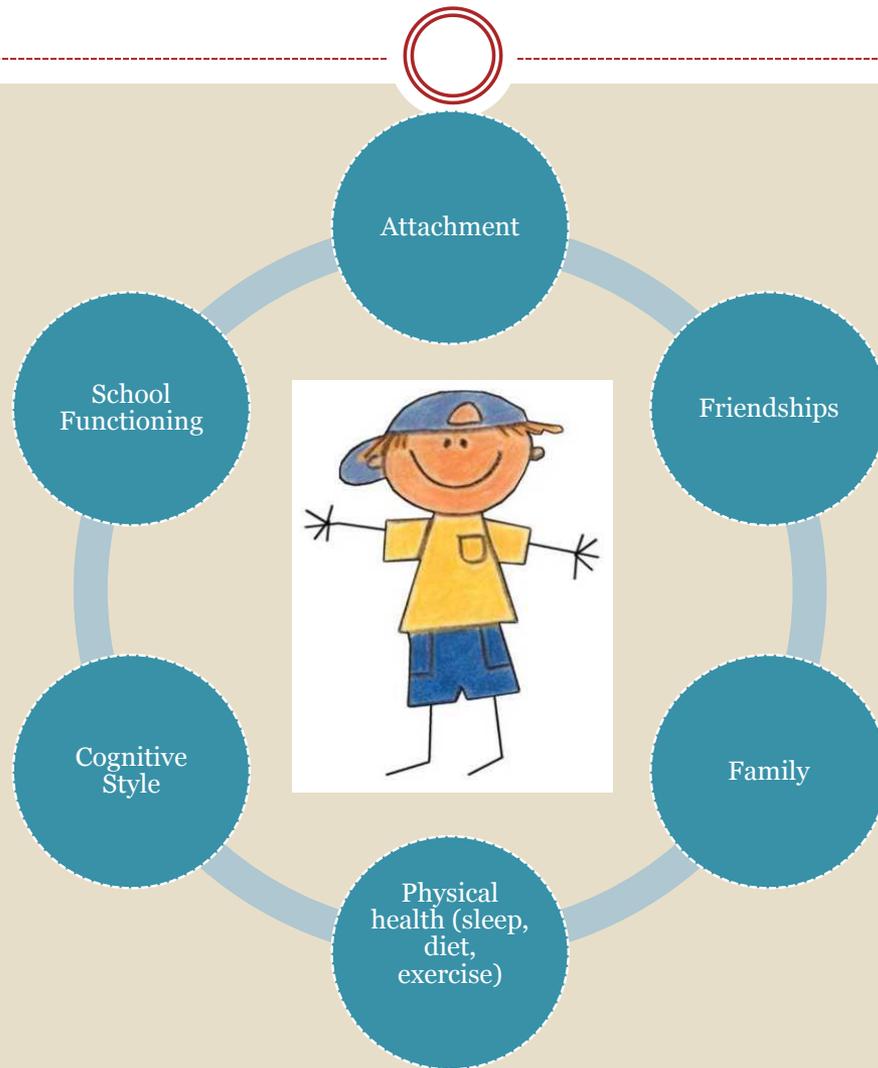
- What makes us vulnerable?
- What makes us strong?
- Risk factors & Protective factors: Flip side of the same coin



# Examples of Risk Factors



# Protective Factors



# The Science of Resilience



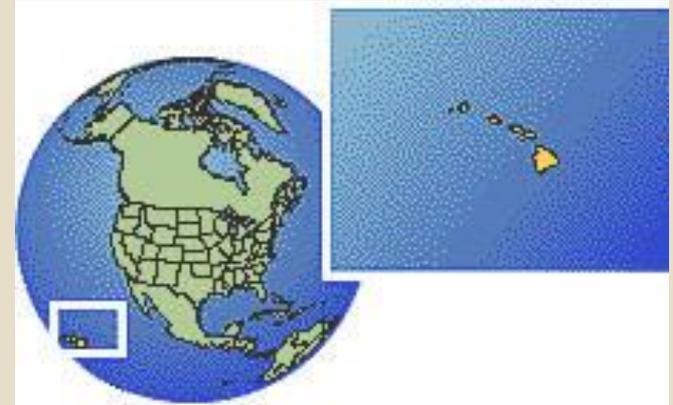
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r8hj72bfGo>



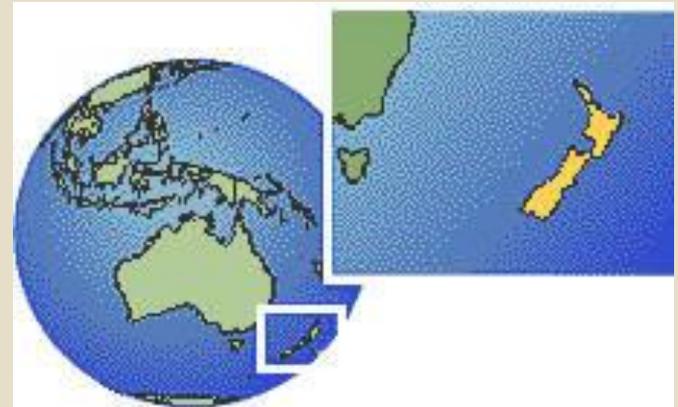
# Studies on resilience & relationships



- Kauai, Hawaii study  
(Werner & Smith)



- Christchurch, NZ study  
(McGee & colleagues)



# Lessons learned from early resilience research



- Power of one significant relationship
- Rethinking resilience



# Resilience Reconsidered



- Resilience as **static** concept

VS.

- Resilience as **fluid** concept

- Resilience as a state of **being**

VS.

- Resilience as a state of **doing**

- GRIT is also important: persistence in the face of adversity



# Ordinary Magic



**“What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families, and relationships, and in their communities.”**

**(Masten, 2001)**

# Strengthening Resilience



- We can increase chances of success by adopting resilient mindsets for ourselves and our students



# Strengthening Resilience



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urU-a\\_FsS5Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urU-a_FsS5Y)

Building Adult Capabilities  
to Improve Child Outcomes  
**A THEORY OF CHANGE**



# Strengthening Resilience



What do you do in your community to foster resilience in children?

# 10 Keys to Resilient Living



- Rewriting negative scripts
- Becoming 'stress hardy' rather than 'stressed out'
- Viewing life through the eyes of others
- Communicating effectively
- Accepting oneself and others
- *Making connections and displaying compassion*
- Dealing effectively with mistakes
- Dealing well with success, building areas of strength
- Developing self-discipline and self-control
- *Maintaining a resilient lifestyle*

(Brooks & Goldstein, 2004)

# Raising Resilient children

(Brooks & Goldstein, 2001)



## These are important:

- **Feeling special and appreciated**
- **Learning to set realistic goals and expectations**
- **Believing in the ability to solve problems and make sound decisions**
- **Using effective coping strategies that promote growth**
- **Recognizing and enjoying strong points and talents**
- **Feeling comfortable with others, effective interpersonal skills with peers and adults**
- **Able to focus attention and energy on things in their lives over which they have control**

# The Power of Schools to Foster Resilience



“Among the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of children... outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngster, a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills but also a confidant and positive role model for personal identification.”

– Emmy Werner



# Our Roles in Building Resilience

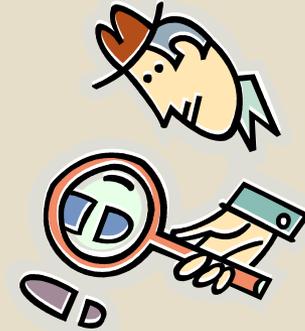
**CHEERLEADER**



**COACH**



**DETECTIVE**



**TALENT  
SCOUT**



**BUS DRIVER**



**TRANSLATOR**



# 2...4...6...8...who do we appreciate?



- Awards
- Rewards
- Photos
- Special Jobs
- Attachment matters!



# “A charismatic adult”

— Dr. Julius Segal



Who are the people your students would say:

- Conveys love and acceptance
- Helps them feel special
- Acts as an advocate on their behalf



# “Turnaround People”

– Dr. Martin Seligman

Individuals who assist youth in reframing their life narratives from victim to resilient:

- Adversity is not personal
  - ✦ “You are not the cause”
- Adversity is not permanent
  - ✦ “This too shall pass”
- Setbacks are not pervasive
  - ✦ “This is only part of your life experience”



Who are the Turnaround People in your students' lives?

# Coaches help us set and achieve goals





# EXPECTATIONS

A master can tell you what he expects of you.  
A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations. (Patricia Neal)

# Realistic Expectations



- Zone of proximal development
- Breaking down tasks (chunking/shaping)
- Help create “looks like/sounds like scenarios”
  - “Imagine that each day when you come into the class, I expect you to be polite, helpful, and ready to work. What does that look like? What does that sound like? How will I treat you? How would you react?”

# Constructive Feedback



Only two things make any significant difference to learning outcomes – constructive feedback and active learning.

(Summary of research by John Hattie)



© Steve Wheeler, University of Plymouth, 2013

# Giving constructive feedback



Ask questions instead of making statements.

- “What was easy for you?”
- “What might you do differently next time?”

Find something positive

Teach students to self-monitor

- Entrance/Exit cards in class



# Detective work: Desperately seeking solutions



# PROBLEM-SOLVING 101



# Be the talent scout!



- What does the student like?
- What are they good at?
- What do they want to learn about?
- Create “Islands of Competence”
- Reframe perceptions



# DRIVING THE BUS



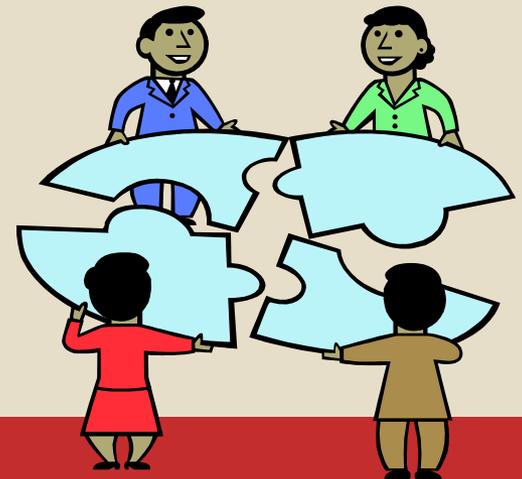
- We are role models
- Strategies for coping
  - Using your support network
  - Self-talk
  - Good choices/bad choices
- What can I influence?
  - Internal vs. External locus of control



# Translating for Others



- Developing intrapersonal skills
  - Help students develop feelings vocabulary
    - ✦ 6 basic emotions: Love, Joy, Surprise, Anger, Sadness, Fear
  - Help students know their triggers
    - ✦ “I” messages “I feel sad when I can’t read”, I get mad when classmates tease me”
- Developing interpersonal skills
  - Help them get along with others
  - Importance of perspective taking



# Resilience & Education



- The power of mindfulness
- Helping students construct useful coping strategies

# Strengthening the student-teacher connection

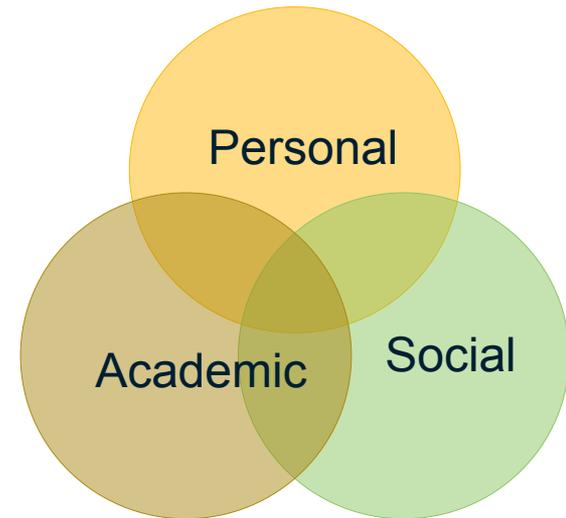


# Connecting with our Students



Mendler's 3 types of connections:

- **Personal:** climate of trust to promote learning
- **Academic:** encourage success in students
- **Social:** peer & adult connections

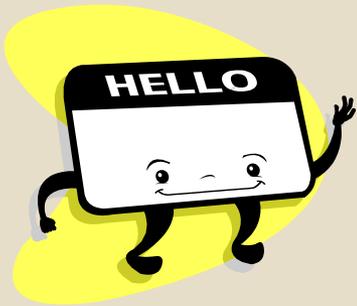


# Strategies for Connecting: Meet 'n greet!



## 4-H Method (Mendler)

- Greet students with 4 welcoming H's:
  - ✦ Hello
  - ✦ How are you?
  - ✦ Handshake
  - ✦ High 5

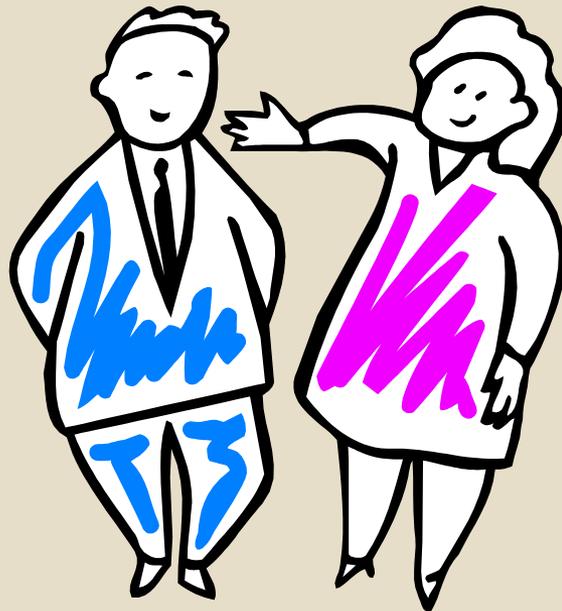


# Never underestimate the Power of the nonverbal



- **Eye contact – the window of the soul**
- **Smile - “Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.”**

**- Mother Theresa**



# Strategies for Connecting: Investing time



- "2 x 10" strategy (Mendler)
  - Get to know a student by investing 2 minutes a day for 10 consecutive school days with him/her
- Banking Time (Pianta)
  - Spend 5-15 minutes interacting with a student
  - Scheduled time, not related to behavior/misbehavior
  - Activity is chosen, led, directed by student

# Activity: Mendler's Suggestions



## Discuss some of the strategies listed:

- What kind of strategy is it - personal, social, academic?
- Would you use it? Have you tried it? Does it work?
- Wild card: Something you would be willing to try



# What am I leaving with today?



- A new way to think about resilience and why it matters so much
- Ideas about building resilience through relationships
  - For myself
  - For others
- Thoughts about improving my relationships with students



**“What will I do differently tomorrow?”**



# APA 10



- **Make connections**

Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Encourage your child to be a friend in order to get friends. Build a strong family network to support your child through his or her inevitable disappointments and hurts. At school, watch to make sure that one child is not being isolated. Connecting with people provides social support and strengthens resilience. Some find comfort in connecting with a higher power, whether through organized religion or privately and you may wish to introduce your child to your own traditions of worship.

- **Help your child by having him or her help others**

Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work, or ask for assistance yourself with some task that he or she can master. At school, brainstorm with children about ways they can help others.

# APA 10



- **Maintain a daily routine**

Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your child to develop his or her own routines.

- **Take a break**

While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying him. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it be news, the Internet or overheard conversations, and make sure your child takes a break from those things if they trouble her. Although schools are being held accountable for performance on standardized tests, build in unstructured time during the school day to allow children to be creative.

- **Teach your child self-care**

Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest. Make sure your child has time to have fun, and make sure that your child hasn't scheduled every moment of his or her life with no "down time" to relax. Caring for oneself and even having fun will help your child stay balanced and better deal with stressful times.

# APA 10



- **Move toward your goals**

Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Moving toward that goal — even if it's a tiny step — and receiving praise for doing so will focus your child on what he or she has accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished, and can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges. At school, break down large assignments into small, achievable goals for younger children, and for older children, acknowledge accomplishments on the way to larger goals.

- **Nurture a positive self-view**

Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and then help him understand that these past challenges help him build the strength to handle future challenges. Help your child learn to trust himself to solve problems and make appropriate decisions. Teach your child to see the humor in life, and the ability to laugh at one's self. At school, help children see how their individual accomplishments contribute to the wellbeing of the class as a whole.

# APA 10



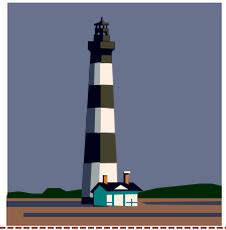
- **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**  
Even when your child is facing very painful events, help him look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term look on his own, help him or her see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook enables your child to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times. In school, use history to show that life moves on after bad events.
- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery**  
Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever he is facing can teach him "what he is made of." At school, consider leading discussions of what each student has learned after facing down a tough situation.
- **Accept that change is part of living**  
Change often can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable. In school, point out how students have changed as they moved up in grade levels and discuss how that change has had an impact on the students.

# Books on Resilience



- *The Power of Resilience* by Bob Brooks & Sam Goldstein (2004).
- *Raising Resilient Children* by Bob Brooks & Sam Goldstein (2001).
- *Connect* by Edward Hallowell (1999)
- *Connecting with Students* by Allen Mendler (2001).
- *Resilience* by Steven Southwick & Dennis Charney
- <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-resilience-series/>

# Children's Books



- *ISH* by Peter Reynolds (2004)
- *THE MOST MAGNIFICENT THING* by Ashley Spires (2014)
- *MEDITATION IS AN OPEN SKY: Mindfulness for Kids* by Whitney Stewart (2014)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgECc3gKuTo>



*THANK  
YOU!*