



May-June, 1995

Ben Silliman, Family Life Specialist, Editor

AN ELASTIC SPIRIT

They were a young and poor couple with a three-year-old daughter when their son was born, six weeks premature, with multiple complications. For three anxious months of overtime nurture in intensive care and nine more months of hour-by-hour monitoring vital signs at home, they nursed their new baby, their pocketbook, their sense of hope. Gradually, the child gained strength, they gained more time together, and their supportive friends and family rejoiced in the good news.

Pictures of resiliency, the human capacity for adapting and coping over the long term. Stories of persistence, resourcefulness, and creativity are apocryphal in all cultures. Yet research is reversing other popular perceptions: poverty is not an inevitable cycle, most abused children do not become abusive parents, arrest or teen pregnancy is often a wake-up call rather than the first step on a slippery slope to adult problems. Day-to-day, individuals and families more often find ways to meet needs or help one another, rather than acting as help-less victims or heartless victimizers.

"We must banish the use of negative labels because they stifle our work... working with multi-need families necessitates working from strengths."
-Lisa Kaplan & Judith Girard

Discussions on resiliency focus mostly on the "bounce back" capacities of children and youth, with less attention to qualities of resilient families. This newsletter gives attention to those strengths of families which promote growth and nurture their members.

A healthy, resilient family is like a windmill in that its members and its qualities act together to provide needed resources (water and products derived from feeding, irrigation, or manufacture) in places apparently too barren to support life. Hope as well as high-tech are needed to dig a well on such dry ground. Moreover, one of the most daunting natural obstacles (wind) is harnessed to advantage to accomplish this. Think of a windmill with eight blades as an analogy for these strengths of families often cited in the research literature:

Commitment: Family unity, loyalty, and common goals, founded in adults' determination to keep promises of support and stability.

Cohesion: Closeness and warmth among family members, which also allows for individual interests, ideas, and feelings.

Adaptability: Structure and consistency in discipline and decision-making, with room for flexibility and spontaneity as one or all require.

Communication: Consistent openness and empathy in speaking and listening
Spirituality: Shared purpose, values of respect and responsibility, often via faith in God and church support.

Connectedness: Giving and receiving practical and emotional aid, participating in community.

Effective Resource Management: Time together, effective problem solving and resource use.

Coherence : A "can-do" optimism, linked to persistent, positive action.

ROUNDUP ON THIS EDITION

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A PARTING THOUGHT
"Striking Out & Bouncing Back"

*"Greatness lies not in being strong,
but in the right use of strength."*
--Henry Ward Beecher

FAMILY LIFE SPECIALIST ADVENTURES

- 4/ 9 **Balancing Work and Family Compressed Video**, 9-NOON
A wealth of expertise from around Wyoming will shed light on the variety of macro and micro issues involved in balancing work and family.
- 4/12 **Marriage Preparation Training Conference**, Douglas, 10 AM-4 PM.
Professionals in Converse Co., with leadership by Barb Daniels, will be examining issues and resources related to strengthening marriages for more resilient families.
- 4 /18-19 **Working Together to Strengthen Families Conference**, 8 AM-4:30 PM, Cheyenne.
Professionals in Laramie Co., with leadership by Gary Small, are presenting ideas and strategies for prevention and effective intervention to help families help themselves.
- 4/22 **National Parent Education Model Compressed Video**, 9-NOON.
Training and planning with community professionals on what can be done to support and enable parents.
- 4/24 **Resiliency/Conflict Resolution Research Group**, Ft. Collins, CO
UW and CSU faculty are planning a research and intervention project which should begin this Fall.
- 5/ 5 **WY FCE Conference**, Casper.
Ben will present a program on "Intergenerational Influences on Resiliency"
- 5/ 6 **4-H Youth Leadership Conference**, Laramie.
Ben will present a program called "Love Listens."

GOPHER HOLE "Gopher" is a popular name for electronic files accessed via Internet. Both Extension and 4H (CYFERNET) offer "gophers," as well as universities, government agencies, and private organizations. Newsletters, program information, research, and statistical reports, grant announcements, and much other info appear on menus.

The "Mother of all Gophers" for resiliency is the Extension National Network on Family Resiliency (NNFR) gopher located on CYFERNET or Extension-USDA (then select CYFERNET) gopher. Select the Positive Youth Development menu to access four CSREES networks as well as info on Youth-at-Risk programs, PAVNET (Partnerships Against Violence), funding sources, research, newsletters, curricula, professional development, policy, and statistics on children, youth, and families. Select NNFR and learn about:

- * **Means of access** description (how to use and participate)
- * **Projects and people** (program goals and human resources)
- * **Curricula** (empty now, but new material will be added on teen sexuality, parenting, and conflict resolution in 1996)
- * **Research** (summarizing where to look and what's known on child/youth and family strengths) plus a concept paper on why Extension should be involved in promoting resiliency.
- * **FAMNET**: Info on how to talk on-line about family issues.
- * **Evaluation** resources and reports to test effectiveness and provide accountability.

If you can't access this service from your own office, feel free to contact your Family Life Specialist with questions about addressing family problems and building strengths.

Defining Resiliency

Resiliency. (Re sil' ien cy) n. [*< Latin, re-, back + salire, to jump back*]. 1. **Spring into shape; elastic.** 2. **Recovering strength, spirits, etc. quickly.**
--Webster

"The rare child who endures hardship and emerges as a competent and effectively functioning individual." --Neiman (1988)

"The phenomenon of maintaining adaptive functioning in spite of serious risk hazards."
--Rutter (1990)

"...characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resistant to disruption in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situations..."
--McCubbin & McCubbin (1988: 247)

"Family resiliency is the family's ability to cultivate strengths to positively meet the challenges of life."
--CSREES-USDA Family Resiliency Network (1993)

"A pessimist is a man who looks both ways before crossing a one-way street." --Laurence J. Peter

WORKING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES CONFERENCE

--To better understand and work with youth and families--

May 18-19, 1995, Laramie Co. Community College
8 AM to 4:30 PM

Featured speakers/UW Extension: Ben Silliman (Family Resiliency); from other agencies: Ron Jeffries (Youth Alternatives: At Risk Teens), Joe Ramirez (Laramie Co. Community Action: Families in Poverty), LuAnn Gerhart & John Sanford (Youth Alternatives: Building Trust), Jaye Roseborough (Laramie Co. Child Abuse Prevention: Child Abuse), Beth Evans (Consultant: Conflict Resolution), Ruth Davis (Public Health: Working with HIV/AIDS clients), Tom Lee (Dist. Atty's office: Juvenile Justice), Jim Peters (SE Mental Health: Family Preservation). Registration is \$10.

On Friday, May 19, LuAnne Gerhart and John Sanford will provide training on the ROPES course for a \$30 fee.

--To register, call Gary Small, 638-4383--

STATS AND FACTS: DOWN, BUT NOT OUT

The latest statistics from Kids Count (child status and advocacy organization) include data on several types of information often used as risk or resiliency indicators. As you review those for your state or county, keep in mind that:

- * Annual statistics may not be as valuable as trend figures (i.e., "It's not so much where you stand as in what direction you're going.")
- * Wyoming's low population tends to inflate rates (i.e., one more teen arrest or birth increases rates more than here than elsewhere)
- * Low rates may indicate a resilient population if risks are present, but may simply reflect lack of risks (i.e., Low poverty rates may a sign of a bustling economy in a prosperous county, a sign of hard work and resourcefulness in an economically depressed area)
- * Statistics typically indicate outcomes or status. While these static indicators may suggest resiliency, examining processes (how families meet challenges) may provide more valuable information for programming.
- * Categories selected by Kids Count or your Family Life Specialist may not be the only (or most valuable) information you need to assess risks and resiliency. Studies indicate that multiple risks are the best indicator of the severity of challenges to youth and families, so focus on the combination of factors (listed and unlisted) in assessing your situation.

Poverty (1989, by number, percent for families by county percent)

State: 11294, 9.3%

Fremont (1415, 15.6); Goshen (3477, 13.5); Niobrara (93, 13.4); Big Horn (363, 12.5); Platte (290, 12.5); Crook (160, 11.0); Albany (722, 10.4); Natrona (1644, 9.8); Johnson (169, 9.6); Converse (294, 9.5); Lincoln (301, 9.3); Washakie (206, 9.0); Laramie (1764, 8.8); Carbon (387, 8.8); Weston (18, 8.0); Sheridan (474, 7.4); Park (466, 7.3); Sweetwater (719, 7.1); Campbell (543, 7.0); Uinta (312, 6.9); Hot Springs (88, 6.4) Teton (183, 6.3); Sublette (83, 6.3)--Youth programs level the playing field for poor kids.

Source: WY Dept. of Administration and Information, U.S. Census data, 1990.

Juvenile Violent Crime Arrest Rate (1993, by number, rate per 100,000 youths, 10-17 years, by county)

State: 89; 142.5

Niobrara (1, 350.9); Hot Springs (2, 322.6); Campbell (15, 316.9); Natrona (21, 262.6); Converse (4, 226.1); Fremont (9, 187.7); Carbon (4, 176.1); Teton (1, 165.6); Sheridan (5, 162.5); Sublette (1, 150.2); Crook (1, 129); Laramie (4, Albany (3), (111.1); Park (3, 99.7); Sweetwater (6, 94.7); Lincoln (1, 42.7); Uinta (1, 28.3); Big Horn, Goshen, Johnson, Platte, Washakie, Weston (0)--Conflict resolution training may keep rates low.

Source: WY Kids Count.

Births to Single Teens (1993, number and rate; counties by rate)

State: 607; 9.3%

Weston (10, 18.2); Fremont (75, 14.8); Converse (18; 12.7); Big Horn (19; 12.3) Johnson (8, 12.3); Niobrara (8, 12.0); Campbell (57; 11.4); Carbon (24; 11.2); Natrona (95, 10.9); Uinta (33, 10.6); Sheridan (26, 9.3); Washakie (10, 8.8); Sweetwater (53, 8.3); Platte (7, 8.3); Goshen (13; 8.1); Laramie (97, 8.0); Albany (24; 6.2); Park (15, 5.1); Hot Springs (2, 4.8); Lincoln (8, 4.4); Crook (3; 4.4); Teton (5, 3.1); Sublette (2, 2.7)--Parent-child communication training, self-esteem building, and school success correlate with low rates.

Source: WY Kids Count, WY Dept. of Health.

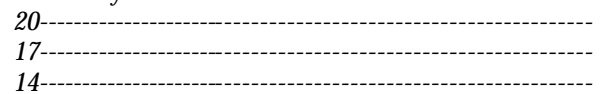
School Dropout Rate (1993-94, by district)

State Rate: 4.17

Carbon#1 (8.26); Fremont#14 (8.09); Fremont#1 (6.35); Sheridan#2 (6.31) Sweetwater#1 (6.12); Albany#1 (6.07); Fremont#25 (5.59); Big Horn#1 (5.44) Natrona#1 (5.39); Uinta#4 (5.33); Hot Springs#1 (5.30); Fremont#9 (5.0); Sweetwater#2 (4.75); Park#1 (4.17); Uinta#1 (4.15); Big Horn#3 (4.07); Goshen#1 (3.96); Lincoln#1 (3.93); Campbell#1 (3.71); Niobrara#1 (3.60); Laramie#1 (3.46); Washakie#1 (3.46); Sublette#9 (3.42); Teton#1 (3.22); Fremont#6 (3.05); Sheridan#1 (2.51); Converse #1 (2.43); Fremont#2 (2.33); Big Horn#4 (2.21); Sheridan#3 (2.15); Big Horn#2 (2.12) Sublette#1 (2.03); Converse #2 (1.88); Laramie#2 (1.97); Platte#1 (1.97); Fremont#24 (1.78); Weston#1 (1.72); Weston#7 (1.63); Carbon#2 (1.36); Crook#1 (1.28); Lincoln#2 (1.19); Park#2 (1.18); Uinta#6 (1.13); Park#16 (1.12); Johnson#1 (1.11); Platte#2 (.67); Fremont#24, 38 & Washakie#2 (0.0)--Parent involvement, a variety of ways to succeed, and extracurricular activities across a range of interests, abilities teach success.

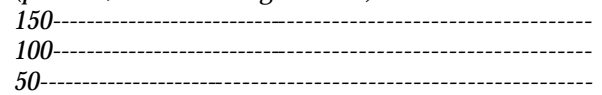
Source: WY Kids Count, WY Dept. of Education.

Percent of Children in Poverty



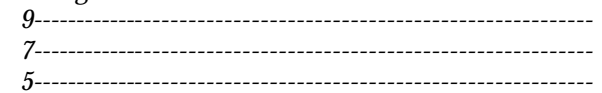
Source: WY Kids Count, U.S. Census data.

Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests (per 100,000 Youths Ages 10-17)



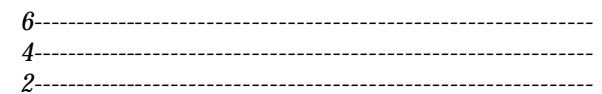
Source: WY Kids Count, U.S. Census data.

Percent of All Births to Single Teens



Source: WY Kids Count, U.S. Census data.

Percent Teens (16-19) Not in School or Labor Force



Source: WY Kids Count, U.S. Census data.

"I don't think of myself as a deprived ghetto girl who made good. I think of myself as somebody who from an early age knew I was responsible for myself, and I had to make good."--Oprah Winfrey

WORK AND FAMILY NOTES**Employee Assistance Programs:
Their Roles in Family Crises**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) developed as alcohol abuse interventions in manufacturing plants after WWII. Today, EAPs offer prevention education or therapy on alcohol/drug abuse, marital/family problems, mental health concerns, and community resource needs to enhance employers' most valuable asset: human resources.

Fred Dickman, et al. in their 1988 basic text, Employee Assistance Programs (Charles Thomas) suggest EAPs save an average of \$3 for every dollar expended, via decreased accidents and absenteeism, health/insurance, lost production, and retraining costs (p.459) EAPs (and the employee climate in general) tend to succeed when guided by policies such as:

- * To have problems are human; workplaces are not immune from these problems
- * The company prefers the interfering problem to be dealt with professionally as early as possible
- * Problems brought to EAP will be handled confidentially, outside personnel files
- * Alcoholism and drug abuse are treated as diseases, not behavior to be punished
- * EAPs exist to assist employees and families, not as a substitute for disciplinary principles or policies
- * Employees will not be coerced to use EAP (p. 112)

Among the topics of emphasis anticipated for the future growth of employee education:

- * Stress symptoms and coping
- * Health screening, early intervention
- * Mental health screening and education in communication, assertiveness, parenting, retirement planning, sexuality/roles, loss and death, victim assistance, day care, AIDS, health care costs, academic topics, professionalism, legal concerns, displaced worker crises (pp. 456-459)

These tasks are increasingly addressing family members as well as employees and being contracted with external providers (UW-CES?).

"In each family a story is playing itself out, and each family's story embodies both its hope and its despair." --Augustus Napier

Communities: Foundations for Resilient Youth and Families

The Search Institute/Lutheran Brotherhood study found the following strengths of communities which reduced risks and increased supports for youth:

- Family Strengths:** parental care and support, monitoring and discipline
- School Strengths:** caring environment, student commitment, parent involvement
- Community Involvement:** youth participation in religious services, structured activities, and other positive connections to supportive adults
- Peer Strengths:** absence of negative behaviors, avoidance of hedonistic values prosocial and responsible values and behavior.

The study concluded that:

- * ***Strong families, youth can be found even in low-asset communities***
- * ***Parental effectiveness influenced community strength only where strong families reached out to at-risk children***
- * ***Youth enthusiasm about school was key to rating the community as strong***
- * ***Civic and religious structured activities were critical indicators of community strengths; families and schools cannot "do it alone"***
- * ***Youth values shape personal behavior; behavior impacts peers most of all***
- "Healthier communities do, in fact, have a positive impact on the youth who live in them--but particularly on the most vulnerable youth."***

Source: Dale A. Blyth & Eugene C. Roelkepartian (1993), in Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

Northwestern University Center for Urban Affairs & Policy Research succeeded in releasing individual and community capacities for development and revitalization by focusing on assets where others saw only liabilities or need.

Traditional focus on needs was shown to:

- * Fragment helping efforts and deny a community's own problem-solving
- * Emphasize deficits and neglect local resources to get help with problems
- * Funnel aid only to agencies identified as experts and problem-solvers
- * Promote scenario of continual decline to justify additional funding
- * Support only maintenance and survival strategies focused on individual persons and issues rather than a more comprehensive community development motif

By contrast, an asset-based model enabled:

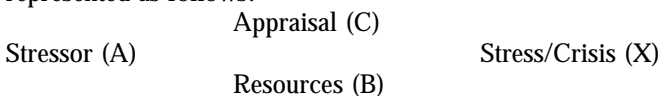
- * Use of individual, organizational capacities and solutions vs. problems
- * Issue-definition and development strategies (including decisions about external resources) which come from within the community
- * Relationship-based (linking families, neighbors, agencies, and institutions in cooperative efforts) rather than task or money-based (i.e., external goals met or resources/personnel purchased, with no added problem-solving potential)

Source: John P. Kretzmann & John L. McKnight. (1993). Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Evanston, IL: Northwestern U Ctr for Urban Affairs & Policy Research.

How Families Bounce Back
FAMILY RESILIENCY MODEL

While a growing body of research documents direct and indirect effects of families on child/youth resiliency, relatively little research focuses on the family unit itself. The Family Resiliency Model represents the processes and outcomes of stress coping and capacity-building in families. A summary of the model and illustration of its use is presented below.

The Family Resiliency Model extends Hill's (1949) of ABCX framework in which stress experienced (X) is seen as a product of the stressor event (A: job demand, developmental task, accident, etc.) and its interaction with family resources (B: attitudes, income, skills, support, etc.) and appraisal (C: view of stressor and capacity to meet it). The model is often represented as follows:



Research in the 1970s/80s produced the Double ABCX model, giving attention to ways in which consequences of adjustment cycles (i.e., increased competence or distress) accumulate to promote long-term **adaptation**, or outcomes of family efforts to bring about balance and harmony after crisis.

The resiliency model, builds on the Double ABCX concept extended coping, giving additional attention to cultural context. Specifically, new challenges are seen in the context of a **pileup of demands** (accumulated stressors and strains, normative transitions, inadequate coping, and ambiguity) and **existing patterns of functioning** (rules, traditions, coalitions, communication, and connections). Thus a teen's health, school, or peer adjustment must be dealt with in the face of past stressors (their lessons and legacy), other demands (i.e., parent job adjustment), quality of family communication or satisfaction with rules and routines.

EX: A family is confronted with a drug-related arrest of a teen child.

Imbalance/Disharmony:
 Adjustment problems due to inadequate coping

Schema: Trust of authorities; Confidence/Helplessness
Coherence: Image/reputation in community
Paradigm: Response to law-breaking, police
Situation Appraisal: Response to arrest, crisis events

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Newly Est.</u>	<u>Interpers.Skill</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>Problem-</u>	<u>Adaptation/</u>
<u>Stressor:</u>	<u>Maladjustment:</u>	<u>Patterns of</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Well-being</u>	<u>Solving &</u>	<u>Coping: Positive or</u>
<u>Arrest</u>	<u>Parent-teen conflict</u>	<u>Functioning:</u>	<u>Structure</u>	<u>Spirituality</u>	<u>Bail or jail;</u>	<u>Negative</u>
		<u>Communic.</u>	<u>& Function</u>	<u>Harmony w/</u>	<u>Counseling,</u>	
		<u>thru police</u>		<u>Community</u>	<u>etc.</u>	
				<u>& Nature</u>		

Pile-up: Earlier childrearing problems; Work/family stress; Family Resources: Member and family unit capacity to Marital discord; Family history of alcoholism; etc. meet challenges and grow from them

Social Support: Ongoing aid/encouragement from friends

Resources which may grow or be depleted through coping and development include:

Personal resources: intelligence, knowledge and skills, personality traits, health (physical, emotional, spiritual), sense of mastery, self-esteem, ethnic identity;

Family resources: cohesion, adaptability, family organization (agreement, clarity, consistency), shared parental leadership, communication, problem-solving, hardiness (internal strength & durability: coordinated commitment, confidence, challenge, control), social support (emotional, esteem, network);

Stressor Appraisal, or sizing up a specific event, is affected over the long term by views of:

A Situation: demands for change in family patterns, affected by Family Paradigms: shared beliefs and expectations which guide specific aspects of family life (work & family, communication, religion, child rearing, etc.), affected by:

Family Coherence: more general dispositions about the logic, meaning, and manageability of challenges and how family resources can meet them, influenced by:

Family Schema: fundamental convictions and values (or world views) used to interpret and interact with the world (i.e., in relation to expectations, beliefs, short/long-term outcomes, and natural or community and relationship contexts).

Education and intervention programs promoting resiliency can use the model to appreciate families' history and status in facing challenges, acknowledge and cultivate member and group skills and capabilities, and appreciate (or help families change) their views the challenge, themselves, and the world.

Source: Hamilton I. McCubbin; Marilyn A. McCubbin; Anne I. Thompson; & Elizabeth A. Thompson. Resiliency in ethnic families: A conceptual model for predicting family adjustment. In H.I. McCubbin, et al. (1995). Resiliency in ethnic minority families: Native and immigrant American Families. Madison, WI: Center for Family Studies.

Resiliency Speaks Many Languages Resiliency in Native American Families

Family stress researcher Hamilton McCubbin is among the first scholars to look at the impact of explicit or implicit ethnic roots on family adaptation to stress and crisis. Learning how families in a variety of cultures adapt to stress and change can have at least three benefits:

- * **Cultural competence:** Grasping the value and behavioral "roots" in varied traditions enhances our understanding and ability to help families use the resources of that tradition.
- * **Appreciation for cultural discontinuity:** Simultaneously, competence can help us understand frustration and dysfunction of persons torn from traditional views and resources (esp. if they have been denied access to mainstream resources as well).
- * **Personal enrichment:** Awareness of a range of cultural values and behaviors can sharpen our sense of our own tradition and expand awareness of ways to cope beyond those we were taught in our own tradition.

McCubbin's Resiliency Model places strong emphasis on the impact of belief systems on how families appraise or respond to stressors. The most specific set of shared beliefs and expectations, or **paradigms**, describe rules which guide specific patterns of functioning in some domain of family life. Samples of these paradigm categories are cited below.

Native American Indian Family Paradigms

While values and patterns vary widely across tribes and clans, the following **values and convictions** are shared by many:

1. Extended family tribal structure.
2. Orientation/concern for collective (vs. individual) social and economic well-being.
3. Great Spirit seen in all phases of life and creation.
4. Respect, care for the land and environment.
4. Present-tense orientation: time is relative, life cyclical.

Specific beliefs and expectations are evident across domains of **family functioning**:

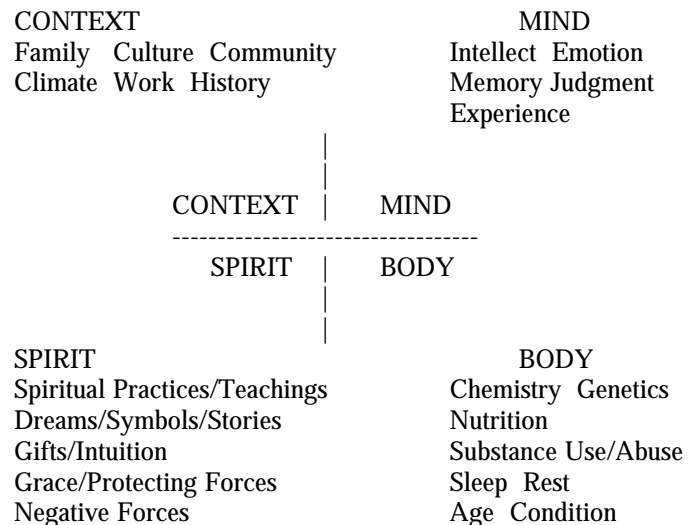
1. Childrearing is community-focused; extended family and friends, as well as parents share in nurture and discipline.
2. Work is done for the present, with contributing roles for all. Accumulated wealth is shared across community.
3. Learning from one another in all facets of life (vs. special expertise passed only from elders) is valued.

Insights on the traditional Native **treatment of illness and disability** may be useful in working with any family:

1. "Disabled" members are valued as functioning members of society (look up the children's book "Knots on a Counting Rope" at your local library)
2. Illness is viewed as part of a more general pattern of harmony and disharmony in a person's life.
3. No Native word for "disability." All persons assimilated.

4. Medicine involves ritual and spirituality aimed at restoring mind/body balance. Family/community participation and public ceremony integral to healing.
5. Problem-solving and accomodation is community-oriented, emphasizing acceptance and integration, social support, care.

Terry L. Cross, with the National Indian Child Welfare Assn. summarizes the four major forces in the Native view of adaptation through this chart emphasizing a holistic approach:



Cross points out that his insights are shared as observations and explanations of Native peoples and their story, which has a different logic (non-linear/scientific) than most research and Western logic. Nevertheless, the world-view represented by the Relational Model interprets much of the Native lifestyle.

Within this model, education and healing which are relational and contextual promote balance and harmony. Natural helpers or healers provide advice (via stories, riddles, encouragement), spiritual teaching (via herbs, rituals [such as sweat lodge], teachings) in a context of existential support and communal tradition.

These notes obviously do not do justice to Cross' work or the relational view of resiliency. The model does point to the importance of understanding the meaning and context of resiliency for each person. And it conveys a truth espoused by many cultures that resiliency is not "me against the world," but a harmony of individual and community, body and spirit.

Source: Hamilton I. McCubbin; Marilyn A. McCubbin; Anne I. Thompson; & Elizabeth A. Thompson. Resiliency in ethnic families: A conceptual model for predicting family adjustment and adaptation. and Terry Cross. Understanding family resiliency from a relational world-view. In H.I. McCubbin, et al. (1995). Resiliency in ethnic minority families: Native and immigrant American Families. Madison, WI: Center for Family Studies.

Being There When It Counts : FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUTH RESILIENCY

Profile of the Resilient Child

Research with children facing a variety of challenges (poverty, physical or emotional problems discrimination, abuse/neglect, etc.) consistently indicates that **resilient children exercise**

1. **Social Competence:** responsiveness, flexibility, empathy and caring, communication skills, sense of humor, other prosocial behaviors
2. **Problem-Solving Skills:** ability to think abstractly, reflectively, and flexibly, and ability to attempt alternate solutions for cognitive and social problems
3. **Autonomy:** sense of independence, internal locus of control, self-efficacy/ coherence, hopefulness, sense of identity, adaptive distancing, high achievement orientation, persistence

Families of resilient children help protect them from risks through

1. **Caring and Support:** bonding with at least one person, warmth & affection of parents, not family structure (i.e., membership)
2. **High Expectations:** parents who see potential for maturity, common sense, learning, and well-being in children; structure and discipline to make it happen; moral climate; religious faith
3. **Encouraging Children's Participation:** valued contributors to life of family; respect for child's independence; protective of children

Source: Bonnie Benard. (1991). Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community. Western Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities.

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Critical Risk and Protective Factors for Youth Resiliency

Level of Impact	-Influences on Child/Youth Resiliency- Risks (increase chance of negative outcomes)	Protective Factors (buffer stress, reduce risks)
Individual	Anti-social behavior and hyperactivity Alienation or rebelliousness	Problem-solving & intellectual abilities Self-esteem, self-efficacy, responsibility
Family	Poor parental monitoring Distant, uninvolved, inconsistent parenting Unclear family rules, expectations, rewards	Close relationship with at least one adult
Peer	Peers engaged in risk behaviors	A close friend
School	School transitions Academic failure Low commitment to school	Positive school experiences
Work Setting	Long work hours	Required helpfulness
Community Level	Low socio-economic status Complacent or permissive community laws and norms Low neighborhood attachment, community disorganization, and high mobility	Belonging to a supportive community Bonding to family, school, other institutions

Source: Bogenschneider, Karen; Small, Stephen; & Riley, David. (1993). "An ecological, risk-focused approach for addressing youth-at-risk." Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Center.

Benard's and Bogenschneider's catalogues of traits provide guides for parent educators, youth leaders, family support and agency personnel, community development facilitators, and citizen committees. For more detail on models, contact your FL Specialist.

Building Resiliency in Limited Resource Families

Is poverty (or welfare) a predictable and consistent cycle of disadvantage from parents to children? The popular answer, of course, is "Yes, it seems we're supporting 'these people' one generation to the next." Yet several recent studies (esp. longitudinal research) suggest that adult poverty status is not an inevitable result of childhood poverty. Moreover, much underemployment and deprivation can be traced to the economic and social context in which even caring families struggle survive and advance their children. A review of protective factors (qualities which enable persons to circumvent life stressors) helps us comprehend how kids born to disadvantage go on to self-reliance and success. Suggestions for how parents and youth leaders can build on these traits are added.

Temperament, including activity level, reflectiveness in meeting new situations, cognitive skills, and positive responsiveness to others has a genetic component, but is largely shaped by adult acceptance, consistent rules and responsibilities (discipline, chores), and learning opportunities shaped to a child's interests and style (i.e., allowing for exuberance or "slowness," depending on personality). Parent confidence and encouragement of school success, language activities (reading and discussion), and respect for individuality make a difference here.

Warmth, Cohesion, and Caring by Adults, especially parents, but perhaps a sensitive grandparent, relatives, foster parents, or neighbors in the absence of a caring parent. Organization of time and energy is a critical issue for many over-stressed parents. A parent who sets aside time for self can be energized to spend quality time each day talking and sharing and to plan periodic special events. Direct aid is strengthened by the climate of support between other members.

External Support: concerned teachers, structured activities in the community, connections to caring agencies or churches. Parents who encourage children's school success and involvement in 4-H, music, sports, or volunteer events enable them to build skills, connect with emotional and practical resources, and feel a sense of belonging. Much of this participation is low-cost, but could be facilitated by available transportation and a family-friendly attitude by leaders. School, work, and church offer competency-building and consistent rewards as well as belief systems which guided and undergirded behavior.

High-achieving Black students from low-income families had parents who:

- 1) Initiated frequent school contact;
- 2) Supported stimulating, caring teachers;
- 3) Held high expectations and became involved with child's schoolwork;
- 4) Established clear role boundaries and parental authority;
- 5) Minimized conflict among family members;
- 6) Engaged in deliberate achievement-training activities;
- 7) Exercised firm, consistent mentoring and rules enforcement;
- 8) Were liberal in nurturing and support; and
- 9) Were able to defer to child's knowledge on intellectual matters.

Sources: Norman Garnezy. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. American Behavioral Scientist, 34, (4), 416-430; Emmy Werner & Ruth Smith. (1992). Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Reginald M. Clark. (1983). Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."
 --Helen Keller

"Six essential qualities that are key to success: Sincerity, personal integrity, humility, courtesy, wisdom, charity."

--William Menninger

Menninger's list is critical for those wishing to empower limited resource families. Recent work on family preservation (social work designed to keep low income or dis-tressed families together and help themselves outlines this **empowerment philosophy**:

1. Believing in families' abilities to change and helping them change themselves.
2. Providing families with a new perspective or outlook.
3. Educating families to increase their skills.
4. Recognizing and building on strengths and resources.
5. Helping families see alternatives, options.
6. Designing intervention strategies which support and strengthen cultural, ethnic roots.

Among the most useful **strategies for making a difference with families** are:

1. Addressing Concrete Needs (housing, food, clothing, transportation, toys, day care, medical needs, budgeting);
2. Building Trusting Relationships (consistent nurturing, teaching, and modeling, presence through stress, while still maintaining some objective distance);
3. Reparenting, or developing sound adult-to-adult (vs. dependent child/authoritarian adult) bonds with professionals and peer support;
4. Putting Parents in Charge by affirming competence, helping them translate values into practical rules and roles, facilitating communication through family meetings, depersonalizing crises, problem-solving;
5. Building Hope through esteem (noting strengths), reframing (changing perspective from short-to-long-term, self-to-others' view), or relabeling (re-naming a pattern to see its positive origins of actions);
6. Building Linkages to Other Resources by helping them expand their network of education, support, and control;
7. Problem-solving and Conflict-resolution Skills, modeled to work out practical matters, hold parents accountable, and explore options.

Source: Lisa Kaplan & Judith L. Girard. (1994). Strengthening High-Risk Families: A Handbook for Practitioners. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

RESOURCES FOR Understanding and Building Resilient Youth and Families

Lerner, Richard M. (1995). America's Youth in Crisis: Challenges and Options for Programs and Policies. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

--Michigan State scholar documents challenges facing children and families with statistics and developmental theory, pointing to model programs which create a positive wave of change. (\$19, Sage: (805-499-9774)

Louv, Richard. (1990). Childhood's Future. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin. --Insightful review of social trends and needs for building capacity and community which supports all (but especially vulnerable) children.

Brodin, Margaret. (1993). Every Kid Counts: 31 Ways to Save Our Children. New York: Harper & Row. --Practical ideas for making a difference on issues such as poverty, child abuse, AIDS, and illiteracy.

Benson, Peter L. (1993). The Troubled Journey. Minneapolis, MN: The Search Institute. --Assets and vulnerabilities of 6th-12th graders in small towns (same study as Blyth & Roelke-partian review, p. 7) with practical recommendations for community action. \$10 (Search: 800-888-7828)

Loyer-Carlson, Vicki; & Fern K. Willits. (Eds., 1993). Youth-at-Risk: The Research and Practice Interface. University Park, PA: The Northeast Center for Rural Development. --A readable discussion of issues facing youth and families at-risk for negative outcomes, including community development, juvenile justice, sex education, pre-vention of rural youth crime/violence, and literacy education. For information, contact Fern K. Willits, The Pennsylvania State University, 113 Armsby Building, University Park, PA 16802.

Family Resource Coalition. (1994) Building Bridges: Supporting Families Across Service Systems. Chicago: Family Resource Coalition. --Profiles of education, child welfare, health care, youth development, disability support, welfare family, and child mental health programs, how they work and why they succeed.. \$10 (FRC: 312-341-0900).

Allen, MaryLee; Patricia Brown; & Belva Findley. (1992). Helping Children by Strengthening Families. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund. --Profiles of programs serving a variety of family needs in a community-based support setting. (\$6.50, CDF: 202-662-3652)

Melaville, Atelia I.; Martin J. Blank; & Gelareh Asayesh (1993). Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services. Washington, CD: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

--Overview of key family systems, community development, and prevention strategies, together with practical suggestions for getting agencies working together to address critical issues. \$12 (US Govt. Printing Office, Supt. of Documents, Mailstop:SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328)

The National Assembly of National Voluntary Health & Social Welfare Organizations. (1994). Building Resiliency: What Works! Washington, DC: The National Assembly. --A practical guide to concepts, planning strategies, and programming models in alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. (\$14, National Assembly: 202-347-2080)

Small, Stephen A. (1990). Preventive programs that support families with adolescents. New York, NY: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. --Review of family needs, parent competence, existing programs, with recommendations for program improvements and research by Univ. Wisconsin Family Life Specialist. (Carnegie: 202-429-7979).

Institute for Mental Health Initiatives. (1994). Building Survival Skills for the 21st Century: Fostering Resilience in Children. --Summary of inner strengths (worth/power/competence/virtue/hope), skills (social/recruiting/prob-solv/stress mgt/planning/emotion control), and facilitative environment (responsive/supportive/belonging/mastery/modeling/limit-setting/realistic expectations) factors in raising resilient children. **IMRI created a conflict-resolution program called ReThink which will be offered as a training/program evaluation package in 1995-96.** (IMHI: 202-264-7111)

Make it Work:PROGRAMMING FOR RESILIENCY

Extension programming can best use the resiliency theme by:

1. ADOPTING A STRENGTHS-BUILDING (VS. PROBLEM-CURING) APPROACH, AFFIRMING WHAT PEOPLE DO RIGHT AND HELPING THEM HELP THEMSELVES.
2. DIRECTING SPECIAL EFFORTS TOWARD THOSE MOST VULNERABLE, TO REDUCE RISKS, INCREASE PROTECTIVE AND COMPETENCE-BUILDING FACTORS.
3. TARGETING SPECIFIC ISSUES (i.e., CONFLICT RESOLUTION, MARRIAGE OR PARENT EDUCATION, SCHOOL-TO-WORK) AND REACHABLE GOALS (i.e., INCREASED SKILLS, REDUCED CONFLICT, TEEN BIRTHS, DIVORCE) WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO LONG-TERM COPING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING (THE OVERALL RESILIENCY THEME).
4. COORDINATING PROGRAMS FOR CHILD/YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO ADDRESS AND USE THE ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM.

PARADOXES: A PARTING THOUGHT**"Striking Out and Bouncing Back"**

The conspicuously wealthy turn up urging the character-building value of privation for the poor.

--John Kenneth Galbraith

It's not how far you fall, but how high you bounce.--Jackson Browne

The trouble with being in the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat.--Lily Tomlin

Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though sometimes it is hard to realize this.--Henry Ford

Resiliency is a fascinating idea: Difficulty does not equal defeat. But it's not as simple as looking on the bright side or giving the old college try. While a majority of abused children do not grow up to abuse their children, all bear some scars and struggles. The family's persistence in adversity is complex, as the comments below suggest.

POVERTY

1. **Crisis makes growth.** All of us have heard the lecture about character-building experiences. And many kids grow up "not knowing they are poor," as the expression goes, enjoying obstacle courses with gopher holes (rural) or garbage cans (urban) as much as poor little rich kids enjoy \$400 plastic gyms. Yet deprivation of basic needs (i.e., inadequate nutrition, housing, or health care) often generates crises too great to be constructive; just as sustained stress on the job may produce burnout or hopelessness.

ABUSE

2. **Invulnerability.** Early researchers were so impressed by the resourcefulness of street kids and severely abused/neglected youth that they considered them "teflon kids." Therapists note that dissociation and autonomy-seeking typical of abuse survivors are scars carried even by those who don't act out or continue the cycle.

DRUGS

3. **High risk/no risk.** "Risk" is often a politically volatile yet statistically imprecise term. Low income, ethnic minority teens are rightly named as most at risk for drug abuse since consequences are most devastating for them. Middle class white teens buy more drugs yet more easily avoid prosecution or get de-tox referral when abuse is recognized. So what's in a label? Moreover, all of us are at risk as long as we ignore these issues.

GANGS

4. **Survival of the fittest.** Are gang members more resilient than their victims? The moral context of resiliency has received little attention, but the term is most often applied to those who thrive in spite of poverty, discrimination, or disadvantage. Making the most of limited resources rather than expropriating others' resources or autonomy is the legacy of resilient survivors and courageous victims.

DISABILITIES

5. **Nothing/everything can be done.** Evidence for genetic (physiological and temperamental) as well as learned (reframing and skill-building) effects on coping occurs throughout the literature. Physical stamina, intelligence and creativity, and sociability are all cited as resiliency assets. However, these traits have a down-side (i.e., stamina may support workaholism or replace careful thinking; sociability with the wrong crowd may lead to trouble). By contrast, quick-tempered persons can learn anger management, experience may compensate for genius, and loyalty often gains more than hard work.

TEEN PREGNANCY

6. **Second chances.** Prevention is the best medicine, but research suggests that for many teen mothers, for instance, a crisis may serve as a "wake-up call" which promotes later family and career success. Parenthood did not have uniformly positive effects on women. However, many behaviors (i.e., suicide) offer no second chances. Whenever possible, it's best to check for gas before lighting a match.

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