

# About the Presenter

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- New York State licensed psychologist
- 30 years of public mental health experience in inpatient and outpatient services
- Co-Director of Evidence Based Practices with the New York State Office of Mental Health
- Designing rehabilitation programs, working with families and consumer advocacy organizations,
- Providing organizational change management consultation to behavioral health organizations.
- Lead author of the Wellness Self-Management; Wellness Self-Management Plus and Knowledge Empowers You (KEY) workbooks.
- Consultant to numerous organizations implementing integrated care models for individuals with serious mental health problems through the Center for Integrated Health Solutions
- Consultant with the National Council for Behavioral Health to design and facilitate learning communities on trauma informed care with behavioral health agencies across the United States.
- Dr. Salerno assists organizations serving impoverished communities to systematically adopt and sustain practice innovations as a faculty and senior research scientist at the McSilver Institute at NYU

# The knowledge and science today: The distressing news

- Adverse life events and conditions, especially in childhood, may have a profound influence on the physical, mental health and overall wellbeing of a person. (trauma)
- The prevalence in the general population and especially in mental health, substance use, general healthcare, prisons, homeless and impoverished communities makes this a serious public health challenge
- The impact on individuals, families, communities and society at large is dramatic
- The healthcare system (including mental health and substance abuse) is just beginning to recognize the role of adverse life events (ACE's Study) on the people they serve
- Treating the consequences of adverse life events is a critical challenge for our society (numerous individual and group treatments have been and continue to be developed)

# The knowledge and science today: The encouraging news

- Healthcare, schools, criminal justice, shelter systems and communities are recognizing the prevalence of adverse life experiences and the importance of creating a trauma informed approach to supporting children, youth and adults
- Seeing people through a trauma lens changes ones perception, feelings and behavior at the individual and organization level.
- Many, if not most people, who have experienced significant adverse life events get through it without serious physical, emotional or substance use problems.
- We often describe these individuals as resilient- bouncing back from serious losses, threats, abuse and other harmful experiences.
- Increasingly, we are beginning to explore and examine the benefits of using a resiliency building lens. What are the characteristics of people who bounce back that may help us create resources, interventions, systems that strengthens a persons resilience.
- We can do it!

# Resilient Kids and Adults: Bottomline

- Have an I'm OK – You're OK view of ourselves and others
- Viewing oneself as Lovable and Capable

# What the American Psychological Association says: Tips to building resilience\*

## 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.

## 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.

\*<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

# More tips for parents

## Take a break

- 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.

## 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.

# More Tips

## **Nurture a positive self-view**

- Point out ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and that these past challenges 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.

## **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**

- 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.

# Focus on Healthy Social Connections: We can all ask ourselves...

- Do we recognize that adults' unconditional belief in a young person— and holding them to high expectations—is the single most important factor determining whether they will be able to overcome challenging circumstances?
- Do we enter young people's lives without permission, or do we give them time to understand we are worthy of their trust?
- Do we build a sense of safety, calm, warmth in a person's home, extended family, school, neighborhood and community?
- Do we encourage young people to take pride in the various ethnic, religious, or cultural groups they belong to?
- Does everyone exist in their own world hiding behind earphones, and texting distant friends, or is communication happening here?
- Are their trusted adults who are healthy role models in a child's life?
- Do families have the opportunity to have dinner together much of the time?
- Do schools offer students numerous opportunities to establish a connection with teachers, coaches, after school club organizers, mentors?

# Focus on strengths: what's strong rather than what's wrong

- Are we as “obsessed” with identifying, encouraging and offering numerous opportunities for young and old to build on their strengths.
- Do we design school systems that are flexible and create approaches that align with individual strengths, learning styles and preferences
- DO we see the resiliency building role played by sports, art, dance, drama, music and a variety of after school clubs.

# Focus on Ways of Coping

- Do we recognize that so many of the risk behaviors youth engage in are attempts at reducing the stress/pain in their lives?
- Do we condemn young people for their behaviors? Do we increase their sense of shame and therefore drive them toward those behaviors?
- Do we guide youth to develop positive, effective coping strategies?
- Do we model positive coping strategies on a daily basis?
- Do we encourage caring for our bodies through exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep?
- Does our community have resources where children can safely play and exercise either in the outdoors, or in recreational centers? (capable)
- Do we encourage creative expression? Does our community offer resources and programs where children and teens are able to learn and practice creative expression?
- Do we encourage written and verbal expression in a way that allows each youth to reveal thoughts in a comfortable manner, whether through talking, journaling, poetry or rap?
- Do we create an environment where talking, listening, and sharing is safe and productive?

# Children Learn What They Live

If children live with **CRITICISM**, they learn to **CONDEMN**.

If children live with **HOSTILITY**, they learn to **FIGHT**.

If children live with **FEAR**, they learn to be **APPREHENSIVE**.

If children live with **PITY**, they learn to feel **SORRY** for themselves.

If children live with **RIDICULE**, they learn to feel **SHY**.

If children live with **JEALOUSY**, they learn to feel **ENVY**.

If children live with **SHAME**, they learn to feel **GUILTY**.

If children live with **ENCOURAGEMENT**, they learn **CONFIDENCE**.

If children live with **TOLERANCE**, they learn **PATIENCE**.

If children live with **PRAISE**, they learn **APPRECIATION**.

If children live with **ACCEPTANCE**, they learn to **LOVE**.

If children live with **APPROVAL**, they learn to **LIKE** themselves.

If children live with **RECOGNITION**, they learn it is good to have a **GOAL**.

If children live with **SHARING**, they learn **GENEROSITY**.

If children live with **HONESTY**, they learn **TRUTHFULNESS**.

If children live with **FAIRNESS**, they learn **JUSTICE**.

If children live with **KINDNESS** and consideration, they learn **RESPECT**.

If children live with **SECURITY**, they learn to **HAVE FAITH**  
in themselves and in those about them.

If children live with **FRIENDLINESS**, they learn the world  
is a **NICE** place in which to live.