Ordinary Magic in Action:
Promoting Resilience in Children and Youth

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From the study of resilience we can learn how to improve outcomes for children and youth at risk...
4 waves

1 ~ Descriptive
   ▪ Who is resilient? What makes a difference?

2 ~ Process
   ▪ How do promotive or protective processes work?

3 ~ Intervention
   ▪ Can resilience be promoted?

4 ~ Integration
   ▪ How can sciences of resilience be integrated across multiple levels and disciplines?
Today’s focus

• Meaning

• Lessons learned

• Implications for action

• Highlighting Check & Connect
Capacity of a system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development

RESILIENCE
Development

...emerges from interactions of many systems across levels
Systems in a child’s life are

- **Embedded**
- **Interacting**
- **Interdependent**

Figure adapted from Masten 2003
Therefore

• Resilience is dynamic

• Capacity for adaptation to adversity is distributed across systems

• Individual resilience depends on resilience of other systems

• Resilience is not a trait
Multiple pathways

![Graph showing multiple pathways with time and function axes, with Acute trauma as a point of deviation and different trajectories labeled A, B, and C.](image-url)
## Two key components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trauma</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>Developmental task success</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Developmental tasks

- Expectations and standards of judging progress and prospects in development

  - Early childhood examples
    - Attachment bonds with caregivers
    - Walking & talking
    - Beginnings of compliance and self-control

  - School age
    - Going to school and learning
    - Getting along with others, making friends
    - Following community and school rules for conduct
Developmental cascades

• Adaptation spreads over levels, domains, contexts
  ▪ Neurobiological to behavior to school function
  ▪ Misbehavior to academic and social problems
  ▪ Community to family to child (and vice versa)

• Competence begets competence
  ▪ High returns on early investment in development

• Intervene to initiate or interrupt cascades
  ▪ Key – targeting the level, process, and/or timing
Reading scores 2005 to 2009
26,501 students

Low risk (25%)

...Reduced price (4%)
Nat test norm

Free meals (57%)
HHM (14%)

Cutuli et al 2013
Child Development
HHM student individual reading scores
N≥3000

National avg

Reading score

Grade
What makes a difference?
The “short list” for resilience

- Capable caregiving and parenting
- Other close relationships
- Problem-solving skills
- Self-regulation skills
- Motivation to succeed
- Self-efficacy
- Faith, hope, belief life has meaning
- Effective schools
- Well-functioning communities
What does the short list mean?

• Basic adaptive systems are important for resilience under many different circumstances

• Adaptive capacity extends beyond the person into other social and cultural systems
Adaptive systems in the individual

- **Learning/problem-solving systems**
  - A human brain in good working order
  - Equipped with a powerful thinking system

- **Mastery motivation system**
  - Self-efficacy or intrinsic motivation
  - Motivated to adapt

- **Self-control or regulatory capacity**
  - Of attention, affect, impulse; executive control
  - Able to control behavior to behave strategically
Adaptive systems in the family and other relationships

• **Attachment relationships**
  - Early caregiving system
  - Later with friends, romantic partners, children
  - Mentors

• **Social-control or regulatory capacity**
  - Effective parents, families, other connected adults
  - Prosocial friends and romantic partners
Families matter

• Moderating stress
• Epigenetic programming
• Nurturing body, mind and spirit
• Emotional security
• Economic security
• Safety monitoring
• Scaffolding learning and self-regulation skills
• Facilitating achievement in developmental tasks
• Brokering of resources (social capital)
• Transmitting cultural capital
Schools matter

- Nurture human capital
- Can be asset-rich environments
- Can promote prosocial peer activities
- Facilitate relationships with competent adults
- Afford opportunities for building self-efficacy
- Can provide a sense of return to normal life
- Build capacity for resilience in many ways

...including Check & Connect!
Protective Systems at Other Levels

• **Within the individual**
  - Immune system
  - Arousal regulation systems
  - Stress systems

• **In religion and other cultural systems**
  - Meaning-making systems of belief, rules and rituals for living
  - Attachments to spiritual figures
  - Arousal regulation through meditation or prayer
  - Cultural practices that provide support

• **In community and society systems**
  - Effective schools
  - Communities that work
  - Good health care systems
  - Policies and laws that protect young people or adults
What can we do to promote resilience?

Facilitate resilience by strategic intervention

Promote positive development to prevent problems
Transforming practice

- Overturned deficit models
- Shifted the focus
- Multiple fields
Resilience Framework for Action

5 Ms

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Frame positive goals</th>
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<td>Models</td>
<td>Include positive influences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Assess the positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Prevent - promote - protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Levels and disciplines</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

See Masten 2011 or 2014
Mission
Frame positive goals

- Treat illness ➔ Promote or restore health or wellbeing
- Prevent violence, problems, risky behaviors ➔ Promote school and work success, conflict resolution, healthy relationships, civic engagement, gun safety, positive youth development
- Promote the positive to prevent problems
- Appeal to stakeholders
Models

Include positive influences and outcomes

- Competence and positive outcomes as well as symptoms or problems
- Protective factors as well as vulnerabilities
- Assets and resources as well as risks
**Measures**

Track the positives along with the problems

- **Assess the positive as well as the negative**
  - Strengths in children, families, communities
  - Potential resources and protective factors
  - Strengths in systems

- **Evaluate positive and negative outcomes**
  - Gains, achievements
  - Competence as well as problems or symptoms
Methods
Consider strategies for positive change

• Risk-focused
  ▪ Prevent / reduce risk, adversity, trauma exposure

• Asset-focused
  ▪ Increase resources or access to resources

• Process-focused
  ▪ Restore, mobilize, or harness the power of human adaptive systems
Risk-focused strategies

- Prenatal care to prevent premature birth
- Reduce stress of pregnant women
- Screen and treat depression in mothers
- Reduce child maltreatment
- Avoid multiple foster care placements
- Reduce family violence
- Reduce neighborhood violence
- Clean up toxins
- Dig up landmines
- Prevent homelessness
Asset-focused strategies

- Add financial resources
- Food, water, shelter, medical and dental care
- Provide a tutor
- Educate parents
- Educate teachers and first responders
- Quality childcare & early education programs
- Build schools, playgrounds, libraries
- Build or restore community services
- Stabilize housing, schooling, case managers
- Scholarships from early childhood into adulthood
Adaptive system focused strategies
Engage powerful engines of change

• Foster secure attachment relationships
• **Promote bonds with competent/caring adults**
• Support healthy family life and function
• Protect and nurture brain development
• **Facilitate school bonding and engagement**
• Foster friendships with prosocial peers
• Integrate systems of care
• Provide opportunities
  ▪ to succeed & develop talents
• **Support cultural traditions**
  ▪ that provide children with adaptive tools and opportunities to connect with prosocial adults
Interventions that work typically …

• Are developmentally informed and timed
• Culturally appropriate
• Ecologically and developmentally strategic
• Focus on the positive and existing strengths
• Promote the positive & reduce risk or problems
• Mobilize & support powerful adaptive systems
Windows of opportunity

- When plasticity is surging
- When conditions converge for change
- When systems are in changing, in flux, or unstable
- Some are developmental
- Some arise from chance
- Some arise in the context of adversity
- Some arise when people seek help
The 5th M is for multiple levels, strategies, & disciplines

• Resilience depends on multiple systems
  ▪ Individual
  ▪ Family, school, peer systems
  ▪ Cultures and religions
  ▪ Communities
  ▪ National identities
  ▪ Informational and social media

• Multiple sectors and disciplines can be helpful
Integrate and collaborate

- Effective programs often target multiple systems
- Adversity or risk often comes in cumulative forms that may require multiple intervention strategies
- No one person or sector has the capacity to understand or intervene in complex systems
- Collaborative intervention benefits from collaborative training experiences
Check & Connect

- **Focusing from the outset on**
  - Competence and school success
  - Engagement
  - Relationships
  - Collaborative synergy

- **Linking adaptive systems**
  - Individual – family – school

- **Strategic targeting and timing**
  - When to do what for whom

- **Generating evidence**
  - Resilience can be promoted
New Horizons
The 4th wave of resilience science

Emerging neurobiology of resilience

- Interplay of genes, biological systems, and experience
- Programming and reprogramming of adaptive systems
- Biological embedding of stress, good parenting, culture

Aligning systems to foster resilience

- Linking families, schools, peers, community
  - Check out special issue of *Family Relations* 2015
  - How can communities support family and child resilience?
  - Check & connect as an early exemplar
- Aligning state and national policies with child resilience

Cultural traditions/practices that promote resilience

- At last!
Globalization emerging in many forms

• **Disaster preparedness**
  - Focusing on the needs of children

• **State and national governments**
  - Investing in young children for lifelong benefits
  - Prevention economics

• **U. S. National Academies**
  - Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally

• **International humanitarian action**
  - Raising the bar beyond survival with multi-sector efforts
  - UNICEF, World Bank, Save the Children, and others
Enduring Take-Home Messages

- Resilience is common
- There are many paths of resilience
- Ordinary adaptive systems are powerful
- Resilience can be supported and promoted
- Resilience of children and youth depends on resilience of families, communities, societies
Resilience of societies globally depends on the resilience of children

RESILIENCE
MOOC on Coursera.org
Thank you!

- Families & individual research participants
- Mentors in developmental and resilience science
- Faculty and student colleagues & collaborators
- Community partners

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