

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE SKILLS

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SENG

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted

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Teaching Others

“If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. “ (Portia)

Wm Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 2

GOALS

Resilience requires clear thinking and social skills

Discuss the ABC model

Practice resilience skills

*Resilience skills
can be taught with*
**Time
Patience
Practice**

Why Teach Resilience?

Adversity is inevitable. And children today are experiencing pessimism and depression on an unprecedented scale for innumerable reasons. They...

- **blame themselves whenever things go awry;**
- think in black/white; assume entire blame;
- **become overwhelmed with guilt and feelings of worthlessness.**
- This causes withdrawal from family/friends.
- Cycle increases risk for depression.

Authoritative Parents

- ◎ To teach resilience skills, parents must first be comfortable with the process in their own lives.
- ◎ Authoritative parents tend to engender the most resilience because they
 - Monitor and supervise
 - Provide consistent discipline
 - Are supportive and communicative
 - Help their children develop emotional awareness, expressiveness and control.

The Penn Prevention Program

Cognitive Component

Teach children thoughts are verifiable & changeable. Hopeful Holly & Howard Silvers teach Gloomy Greg & Pessimistic Penny to challenge fleeting, negative thoughts, generate more accurate alternatives and stop fantasizing extremes.

Social Skills & Problem Solving

- Help children handle interpersonal conflicts & solve social problems.
- Children prone to depression behave as aggressive bullies or passive victims
- Say-it-Straight Sam teaches Bully Brenda and Pushover Pete assertiveness skills.

Teaching
the
ABCs

Internal Dialogue – Self-Talk

When problems happen, like getting into a fight with a friend, we all talk to ourselves about what just happened. We think about it inside our head and no one else can hear. We all do it, kids, adults, and it is totally OK.

Example

Sue finds out she didn't get invited to Pam's party. She thinks to herself "Why didn't Pam invite me? She's in two of my classes and we have fun together. She must be mad at me, 'cause everyone was invited. Everyone is talking about it. I'll be so embarrassed when I have to tell them. They'll think I'm a loser. They're probably right."

Set the Stage	ABC Model	Real Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose exercises to be interactive, fun. • Begin with 15 minutes, then 30. • Instill curiosity about child's feelings and thoughts. • Share yours . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice self-talk internal dialogue via simulations, cartoons, vignettes. • Link thoughts to feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose examples from child's own life. • Events when he/she felt mad, sad, scared, embarrassed or acted in a way he/she did not like.

My ABC Journal

Adversity	Beliefs	Consequences
Who, What, When, Where Specific Non-evaluative	Record each one and rate 0-100 on how certain you were.	Record each feeling, rate intensity 0-100 and how you acted.

Beliefs Affect Feelings & Behaviors

- Emotions and behaviors are triggered by how we interpret those events.
- It is our beliefs about those events that cause feelings** and behaviors: anger or sadness, yelling or depression
- Adversities are events that precipitate a reaction from us.**
- Big** – losing a job, a loved one, ending a relationship
- Small** – missing a deadline, being late, arguing with a friend

Parent's Example

Adversity	Beliefs	Consequences
<p>Tom was supposed to mow the lawn before football practice, but when I walked outside, I saw his father mowing it instead.</p>	<p>It figures! Jim is always undermining me with the kids (75). I can't stand this anymore. I'm sick of always being the bad guy around here (90). Every time I give them a chore to do or punish them, Jim lets them off the hook (75).</p>	<p>I got really mad, marched over to him and yelled he was a bad parent (95). I didn't even ask why he was mowing the lawn instead of Tom. It took me almost 45 minutes to calm down.</p>

Training the Optimistic Child

Martin Seligman

**Catch
Automatic
Thoughts**

**Evaluate
Thoughts**

**Challenge
Thoughts**

**Decatas-
trophize**

Unrealistic Optimism

- ◎ **Hollow slogans or images:**
Always seeing the glass as half full, the silver lining;
- ◎ Vague, unrealistic positive self-evaluation: “I’m special.”
- ◎ **Blaming others or dodging responsibility**
- ◎ Exaggerated perceptions of control, “That can’t happen to me.” Therefore, don’t take preventive action.

Realistic Optimism

- Good things may happen and are worth pursuing
- Require effort, problem solving and planning
- Permanent: Sometimes vs always
- Pervasive: Specific vs global
- Personal: Internal vs external

Resilience
is
Clear
Thinking

Match Thoughts to Feelings

Event / Thoughts	Feelings
1. Had a fight with my best friend.	
Now I don't have any friends.	Mad
My friend was mean to me on purpose.	OK
I'll ask her to talk things over when we cool down and we'll make up again soon.	Sad
2. Got a low grade on math test.	
I'm in big trouble at home.	OK
I've been playing around instead of studying.	Scared
I'll work hard and do better on the next test.	Guilty

Explanatory Style

- ◎ How does an optimist / pessimist look, think and act?
- ◎ Optimist sees the positive.
- ◎ Pessimist sees the negative.
- ◎ **Accept responsibility** for what child contributes to problem situation.

Explain Accurately

- ⦿ When something bad happens, if we think it will last forever (permanent), we will feel down, powerless.
- ⦿ If we think the situation is temporary, changeable, we feel energized to change it.
- ⦿ Focus on factors under child's control, actions he/she can take to make things better

Adversity - Beliefs - Consequences

Adversity: Sorry, you can't play. We already have teams.

Permanent Belief: Nobody likes me. They think I'm a wimp.

Consequence: I'm a dummy. Why should I even bother coming to the park?

Temporary Belief: Bummer! I got here too late! Next Tuesday I'll be on time.

Consequence: I'll sign-up Monday and show up Tuesday in uniform and on-time.

Personalization: It's my fault.

- Is it my behavior?

It is temporary and can change.

- Is it my character?

Character is not changeable.

- If the cause of the problem is due to a character flaw, there is nothing I can do about it. It is hopeless.

Due to someone or something else

When a child takes all the blame for bad things, this can make her/him feel very bad about her/himself and s/he may decide to give up without even trying to correct the problem.

Challenge Thoughts

1. **Gather the evidence:**
 - ⦿ If belief is true: be specific
 - ⦿ If belief is not true: be specific
2. **Generate alternatives: what are other ways of viewing adversity?**
 - ⦿ **How would my best friend see it?**
My father? An impartial observer?

3. Evaluate implications: What would happen if...?

- ⦿ What is the worst possible thing that could happen? Be specific.
- ⦿ What is the best possible thing that could happen? Be specific.

4. Develop plan of action: How can you improve the situation?

How can you correct the mistakes?

How can you soften your character flaw?



Belief-Consequence Connection

- Violation of your rights
- Loss: real or intangible
- Violation of other's rights
- Future threat
- Negative comparison to others
- Anger
- Sadness, depression
- Guilt
- Anxiety, fear
- Embarrassment

Elements of Guilt

- ◎ **Breaches in self-regulation:**
procrastinating, overeating
- ◎ **Breaches in commitments:**
ignoring family, infidelities
- ◎ **Later in development:**
need concept of right and wrong

Anxiety

- ⦿ **Survival value**: propel us to practice and prepare
- ⦿ Can **interfere** with successful living
- ⦿ Anxiety-prone tend to be “**what next beliefs**” –
Future can be safe and pleasant, or threatening & overwhelming.

Fear

- ⦿ Physical: heart palpitations, blood pressure imbalance, shallow breathing, loss of appetite
- ⦿ **Behavior and thinking change:**
Speech dysfluency, poor posture & motor coordination
- ⦿ **Memory fails, distracted, reasoning slips**

Benefits of B-C Connection

- ◎ **Keep a log** whenever you feel a strong emotion, jot down what you are feeling and how intense the emotion is. At the end of the week, look for patterns: anger, sadness, guilt, anxiety and embarrassment.
- ◎ **Focus skills of resilience** on the beliefs that are dominating your emotional life.

B-C Connections = Self-Awareness

Emotions

Narrow Focus :
Anger, guilt, embarrassed

Reflection

Behaviors

- ◎ Repeat mistakes:
procrastination,
come-on too strong,
given-in too easily.
- ◎ You solve problem but
forget to act upon solution:
seek new experiences;
take time to enjoy yourself.

Effects of Guilt

⦿ Positive:

- helps us to stop doing what is generating guilt
- motivates us to make amends, apologize

⦿ Related to shame: those prone to shame tend to be less empathic, angry, hostile, depressed.

Disagreement Guidelines: DO

- ⦿ Express feelings with words.
- ⦿ **Model anger control**: take time to cool down.
- ⦿ Resolve conflict and make-up in front of your child.
- ⦿ Criticize your partner's **specific behaviors**, not global personality
- ⦿ Leave child out of certain topics

Disagreement Guidelines:

Don't...

- ⦿ Criticize your spouse with permanent, pervasive labels in front of your child
- ⦿ Give your spouse the “silent treatment.”
- ⦿ Ask your child to choose sides.
- ⦿ Begin a fight in front of your child unless you can finish it in that conversation.

Optimism... is not a cure-all. It will not substitute for good parenting. It will not substitute for a child's developing strong moral values. It will not substitute for ambition and a sense of justice.

Optimism is just a tool, but a powerful tool. In the presence of strong values and ambition, it is the tool that makes **both** individual accomplishment **and** social justice possible.

M. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child* (p. 299)

Resources

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Your Participation is Appreciated!

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