The Concept of Resilience in Chronic Disease

Deb Carlson, PhD
Executive Vice President
Chief Operating Officer
Nebraska Methodist College
Belief in Resiliency??

NOW THIS IS LIVING!
Understanding Resilience

• Why do some people have tremendous amounts of stress and adversity in their lives and yet they seem happy?

• Can it be taught?
How to keep going.....one step at a time

- When facing the challenges of any chronic condition it can lead to burn out....

until we stop struggling to get rid of it, and instead rest and focus on the things in life that matter to us.
Resilience ...

• “it is about bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts” (Sean, a 15- inner city student)

• It happens when we fully recognize the problem at hand and explore untapped resources within ourselves.
A belief in the ‘self-righting’ tendencies within all children, youth, adults, organizations, and communities

Something that adversity can not take away

In a strange way it is the hardships that bring it out in people. ..they develop coping skills that make them stronger
Resiliency Model

Resilience happens when we fully recognize the problem at hand...and explore untapped resources within ourselves.

(Leann Harris, 2014)
How to handle it all.....

• Stress!!!
Stress is not the problem

• Most of us can think of our “stressors” & put them on a continuum.
No stress in any situation until a person reacts to it.

- Life events (good or bad) can be stressful
- You can....become bitter (sad life)
- Or become better (much better life)

your choice
Questions to ask?

• What are your fears and concerns?
• Is fear taking over your life?
• What would you like to be doing more of in your life instead?
• What little steps could you be doing that would make you feel like you are taking charge of your life... instead of being “bullied” by it?
Don’t let uncomfortable feelings take over your life.
Resilience research is clear

- that it is not the stressors themselves that push us over the edge.
- It’s not having protective factors to counter the risk factors.
How do people bounce back?

• An important part of the process is “Protective factors”

• Protective factors.....”moderate, buffer, **insulate against** and thereby mitigate the impact of risk...on behavior development.”

Richard Jessor, Institute of Behavioral Science
Resiliency t-test

- Left: problems you see in the person’s environment. Remember to look at both personal and environmental.

- Right: Use same mindset to identify all the strengths in this person and his/her environment...talents, potential talents, personality qualities...what helps them do as well as they do?
Harder to do the right side......

- Takes longer to activate the brain cells
- Brain programmed for negative
- We focus on what is wrong and sometimes have a difficult time seeing what is right.
- 1st step to build resilience is to look at the whole picture.
Power/Shift to Resiliency

• Research tells us those strengths are more powerful than the risks

• How shift happens..
  – strengths grow in power and influence
  – problems diminish in power and influence
If we want something to grow, what must we do?

- Nurture
- Reinforce
One important step: IDENTIFY

• Need to identify the qualities from the research so we can especially reinforce those...

• “Personal Resiliency Builders”
Personal Resiliency Builders

- Relationships
- Service
- Life Skills
- Inner Direction
- Perceptiveness
- Independence
- Positive View of Personal Future
Builders continued

- Flexibility
- Love of Learning
- Self-motivation
- Competence
- Self-worth
- Spirituality
- Perseverance
- Creativity
Note: All of us have some of these characteristics

• But not ALL

• Even ONE quality can be the life line a person needs to bounce back and from which others qualities can build.
Wolin Research

Lessons learned

– We need to teach people about their strengths
– To be the most powerful, we need to specifically name the strengths
– We then become what the Wolins call “alternative mirrors.”
– By learning about resilience, people can become resilient.
Left side messages

• 90% of what people focus on is the left hand side of “their page”. ...Ashley

• What messages are you sending as “alternative mirrors”

• Do you have a ‘no negativity allowed office’?
To build resiliency:

• Look at the whole picture
  - problems and strengths
do the “T”

• recognize that everyone, has strengths
Send the message to yourself:

• Develop confidence in ability to solve problems.. “fake it until you make it”
• Trust your instincts....use your right brain to identify sources of unnecessary stress...remove
• Create a protective web
• Find something that you enjoy doing
• What “feeds your soul”
Be Proactive

• Choose what you can control • Have a plan and then ACT • Accept things you can’t change • Let them go • Find humor when you can
When adversity happens.....

• Try looking beyond the present to how the future may be a little better
• Visualize what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear
• Doesn’t mean you will not experience difficulty or distress...emotional pain and sadness are common in people
Set realistic goals

- Do something regularly

- Even small steps help you feel a sense of accomplishment toward your goals

- Instead of focusing on what you can’t do, ask what is the one thing I can do that will help move you in the direction that you want to go
How are YOU creating your best life???

What are you doing to make sure you keep your mind and body healthy so that you can be resilient????
Warning....institutional obsession with the negative!!!

• Eyore prevails in the world....Tigger thought he was the only one!!

• Grades...A or F??

• Pity party....ever have one??
What kind of a “alternative mirror” are you?

“It is not about talking people out of painful realities. But there is reframing to be done....”

Dennis Sallebe, 1997.

Be careful of the questions you are asking yourself...
Questions to ask yourself?

• How much energy can I save by accepting the card I’ve been dealt?

• How much am I willing to lose by fighting what is?

• What could I do instead???? Willingness is a moment by moment choice...and very choice we make is an act of resilience.

From: Dealing with Diabetes Burnout by Leann Harris
Reframe/ Survivors Pride

• “If we think we are fragile and broken, we will live a fragile, broken life. If we believe we are strong and wise, we will live with enthusiasm and courage. The way we name ourselves colors the way we live. Who we are is in our eyes. We must be careful how we name ourselves.”  (Wayne Muller, 1996)
Questions ???