Resiliency and Children’s Mental Health

Assessing Resiliency For Intervention
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Need for Mental Health Screening

- School psychologists have identified the need for population based screening for mental health issues in the schools (Doll & Cummings, 2007).
- Epidemiological research conducted in the 1980s showed that at least 20% of school-aged youth had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, and only a fourth of these children were receiving therapeutic services (Doll, 1996; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).
- Due to a significant gap between the need for and availability of mental health services, schools have become by default, the mental health provider for most school-aged children and adolescents (Hoagwood & Johnson, 2003).

- Early identification is desirable in that children who are identified and treated early may avoid development of psychopathology and associated impairments.
- Early identification is beneficial also because more fully developed psychopathology is more difficult and more costly to treat.
- Early or pre-symptom identification presents an assessment dilemma. How does one identify students who may need preventive intervention without focus on symptoms?
What does Resiliency have to do with Screening and Prevention

- Ann Masten, an expert in resiliency, identified resiliency as ordinary magic, or composed of aspects of good development in general.
- Schools as places through which most if not all children pass are places where we can observe whether or not sufficient amounts of ordinary magic are occurring.
- Children who are less resilient in schools may be less well equipped to learn.

Resiliency vs. Resilience

- Personal resiliency is the capacity to recover from adverse circumstances.
- Resilience is the outcome of an interactive process between the individual and the environment.
  - Requires assessment of external events and circumstances.

A Developmental Perspective

- The strengths of resilient children growing up adaptively in the midst of adversity can be traced back to salient attributes of the parent-infant system.
  - Regulatory capacities of the child
  - Parents' intuitive communicative competence
  - Reciprocal reward system
What is known about Personal Resiliency

- The individual brings to the circumstance personal strengths or areas of resiliency that make him/her less vulnerable, which serve as buffers to damage, and empower him or her to cope with and recover from the circumstance.

How do we assess personal resiliency?

- Identify core areas of personal resiliency
- Use tools/techniques for assessing core areas of personal resiliency
- Understand our own biases and beliefs about resiliency


Identified areas of Personal Resiliency

- **Sense of Mastery**: optimism, self-efficacy and adaptability increases the likelihood that the individual will be able to cope with adverse circumstances.
- **Sense of Relatedness**: Relationships with others and sense of relatedness serves as a buffer against stress.
- **Emotional Reactivity**: Vulnerability to stress or impact from adversity is related to the individuals pre-existing level of emotional reactivity.
Personal Resiliency & Life Events

How are Specific Aspects of Resiliency Related to Accountability?

Sense of Mastery > expectation of success > achievement

Sense of Relatedness > engagement at school > engagement in the learning process > performance.

Emotional reactivity > impact on self-regulation > impact on cognitive processing > ability to learn

Resiliency Scales Design

Three 20 – 24 item self-report questionnaires

Written at a 3th grade reading level.

Response options are ordered on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 0(never), 1(rarely), 2(sometimes), 3(often), 4(almost always).

Norms available for ages gender within age-band.

9 - 11
12 - 14
15 - 18
**Clinical Group Resiliency Profiles**

- Mastery
- Relate
- Reactivity

**Sense of Mastery**

- Self-Efficacy
- Optimism
- Ability
- Adaptability
- SES

**Sense of Mastery: Self-Efficacy**

- **Self-efficacy**: Problem solving attitudes and strategies: seeing problems as challenges or puzzles to be solved, having strategies for approaching problems. Sense that one can master one's environment. Robert White (1969) focused on the development of sense of efficacy, mastery, or sense of competence as essential in a child's development.

  *“I am good at figuring things out.”*
Sense of Mastery: Optimism

- **Optimism** consists of positive attitudes about the world/life in general, and about one's own life specifically; and would refer specifically or generalize to the future. Seligman (1998) describes an optimistic attitude as characterized by specific attribution styles.

  "My life will be happy."

Sense of Mastery: Adaptability

- **Adaptability**: flexibility or adapting to change, being personally receptive to criticism and learning from one's mistakes.

  "I can learn from my mistakes."

Sense of Mastery Subscale Profiles

non-clinical versus clinical samples.
Sense of Relatedness

Basic Trust
Social Support
Comfort
Tolerance of Differences

Sense of Relatedness Subscale Profiles: non-clinical vs clinical samples

Emotional Reactivity

Impairment
Sensitivity
Recovery
Emotional Reactivity Subscale Profiles: non-clinical vs. clinical samples

Screening using Resiliency Index Scores

Personal Resiliency Profile with Resource Index
Personal Vulnerability Index: compares difference between a child’s experience of personal resources with their experience of emotional reactivity.

Clinical Application

Case of CMHA

CMHA

Inadequacy
Compared to others the same age-
- dissatisfied with ability to perform a social and academic tasks
- low confidence level in ability to make decisions, solve problems,
- very low self-esteem
- negative self-image, both in terms of personal and physical attributes.

Reactivity increases vulnerability
- SSIS Self-Control subscale (which includes behaviors such as: stays calm when teased, and uses appropriate behavior when upset) fell in the below average behavior level.
- Interview and resiliency scale data confirm difficulty regaining self-control when becomes upset
Interventions:

- Identifying Strengths
- Identifying Strength Distracters
- Exploring Relationship Resources
- Managing Vulnerability

(Kumar, et al., 2010) Consider different patterns of resiliency in treatment of individuals with psychiatric conditions.

Identifying Strengths

Identifying Strengths

Strength identification begins with an examination of the overall Resiliency Profile and Subscale profiles to identify areas of relative strength experienced by the user. For users who report below average experiences of strengths, the Resiliency Scale might be used to help the user remember and identify positive experiences associated with hidden, forgotten, buried, or unutilized strengths. Block (1990) originally coined the term "islands of competence" and Brooks and Goldman (2001) have more recently expanded on the concept in numerous clinical examples of identifying islands of competence to enhance resiliency in youth.
Identifying Strengths

- Use scales to help students remember or uncover untapped strengths
- Identify “islands of competence”
  - Block, 1980
  - Brooks and Goldstein, 2001

Identify Strength Distractors

- Identify critical issues from life circumstances that may be making it difficult to identify/use a strength
- Factors such as poverty, lack of parental support, internalized expectation that things won’t work
- CBT and other strategies may work to help diffuse these distractors

Self-Efficacy (Related to Motivation)

- Perceived ability within specific context
  - High self-efficacy in math, but not in reading
- Informed by prior success
- Research shows relationships between self-efficacy and higher levels of effort, persistence, achievement (Bandura, 1977; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002)
**Relationship Resources**

- Use Sense of Relatedness Scale to open discussions of how relationship strengths may help to overcome difficulties
- Strengthen weaknesses
- Work with student on further communication strategies to use in trusted relationships
- Use CBT to address perceptions regarding relationships
  - Trust issues
  - Willingness to communicate, etc.

**Support for Parenting Interventions**

- Low maternal psychological control was found to be a protective factor for young adult offspring of depressed mothers
- Low paternal psychological control, high maternal warmth also related to protective factors.

**Family/Parenting**

- The parenting factor might be a promising intervention for protective focus in family therapy approaches with depressed mothers and their children.
- Use of strength-based approaches to parent-child counseling and psychotherapy, with emphasis on the therapeutic potential of video feedback regarding...
Managing Vulnerability

- When there is higher than average emotional reactivity, intervention must focus on management
  - Some may be aware of how this influences strength in functioning, but others may not have clear understanding.

Managing Vulnerability

- Help student in analyzing reactivity by assisting them in breaking it down into more manageable, identifiable components
  - Assist in seeing where they are ultra-sensitive
  - Once have better perspective based on personal experiences, than plan for self-management
Elements of Resiliency in other Initiatives

- SSIS (Social Skills)
  - Assertion Behaviors:
    - Expresses feelings, asks for help, stands up for others
  - Self-Control Behaviors
    - Makes compromises, stays calm when criticized, stays calm when disagreeing, stays calm when pushed or hit
- Providing enriching community activities and experiences to support cognitive development

Questions/Comments

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