

## Exploring Resilience Handout

---

- Life has its ups and downs - So does recovery
- Resilience is successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences and overcoming problems
- Resilient people bounce back, and handle pressure without acting in harmful ways
- Resilience improves as you can learn how to cope
- Everyone is born with a potential to develop resilience, but it is something you have to reach for – it isn't just given to you

### Why Do We Need Resilience?

- It is “an insulating force”, helping us cope and recover quickly from problems, hardship, or trauma
- It's not an event – It's how we manage the process of life
- Many “high risk” children or teens who are raised in war-torn communities or dysfunctional families (including substance abuse, crime, neglect or abuse) grow up to lead successful lives as adults with strong abilities to love and work
- Every day there is opportunity to embark on the path of resilience as we deal with life changes, difficult situations, or turning points in our lives

### Case Study

- *A young woman graduating from college was very worried about finding a job.*
- *She told herself, “I can do this. I have managed things like this before.”*
- *But she knew that the past situations were difficult and frustrating.*
- *Then she realized, “I have changed since then. I have had a lot more experiences, and have learned a lot since then.”*
- *“This time I will be more prepared for the challenges.”*

### Exploring Resilience

- **Positive attitude** –Realizing need for change is normal
- **Flexibility** – Needing only a short time to recover
- **Being proactive** – Responding with problem-solving, teamwork, and ability to change
- Three C's of **Hardiness**



## Exploring Resilience Handout

---

- Maintain hope and a sense of humor
- Take care of yourself, physically and emotionally

### **Resilience and Coping**

- Resilience during tough times can lead to solving some of the problems and barriers you have
- Your resilience can give you the strength to keep trying
- Going through traumatic experiences can actually help you become stronger, better, and wiser
- Resilience can help you cope better and restore balance when you feeling depressed or despairing

### **What Does Resilience Look Like?**

- Making realistic plans and taking steps to carry them out
- Having a positive view of yourself, strengths, and abilities
- Effectively communicating and problem solving
- Managing strong feelings and impulses
- Developing insight into your emotions
- Adapting and functioning well at work and home
- Achieving life balance (this may involve spirituality)
- Having a high quality of life in spite of difficulties

### **Tom Peterson's Resilience Story**

- Tom worked for many years and built a solid business selling TV's, and stereo systems. His reputation was good value, satisfaction guaranteed, and friendly service.
- He advertised a lot, and was known for his crew cut and cheerful TV commercials. When he was given a chance to buy out a competing company, Stereo Super Stores, his wife discouraged him.
- Tom saw it as a solid, rare opportunity. But it turned out to be a mistake, and he was forced into bankruptcy.

## Exploring Resilience Handout

---

- His new commercial said, “I should have listened to my wife when she told me not to buy the Stereo “Stupid” Stores. I made a mistake, but we are still in business with a new name. We are now “Tom Peterson and Gloria, too.”
- Listen to one of his old commercials (probably from early 90’s at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwZ80FEEZQo> or click on the link below

### Tom’s Resilience and Coping

- **Problem focused** –Dealing with the problem’s cause (finding out more, learning new skills, or adapting)
- **Emotion focused** – Releasing pent-up emotions without hostility (using distraction, or relaxation strategies)
- **Socially focused** (getting emotional support from others)
- **Appraisal focused** – Changing your thinking about the problem (distancing , changing goals, seeing humor)
- *Discussion: Which ways of coping did Tom use?*
- *Which way of coping do you think is the best?*
- *Do you react that way when you have problems?*

### Cheryl’s Resilience Story

- Cheryl was an art teacher who had cancer of the breast. She read books about her illness, and did research on the internet to prepare questions for when she saw her doctor.
- She was expecting to lose her hair after chemotherapy, but didn’t think it would bother her too much, and did not plan to wear a wig. But she was concerned because hats were not allowed at her school.
- So she decided to wear scarves, and thought “I wish I could use it as a teaching tool.” One day she laughingly said, “I think I’ll buy white scarves so I can make prints on them for Artist of the Week.”

### What Traits Do Survivors Have?

- **Reason** –Focus on problem-solving, controlling emotions and avoiding panic for logical and realistic thinking

## Exploring Resilience Handout

---

- **Focus** – Be “present in the moment,” not thinking too much about past experiences or future possibilities
- **Humor** – Try to be more amused than angry about situation
- **Integration** – See the crisis and its consequences as one part of their larger life story, not a big part of their identity
- **Positivity**- Know you won’t be the same. Find something positive about the challenge - You can become a better person

Ralston, A. (2003). Aron Ralston’s survivor traits. Retrieved June 17, 2008 from [www.resiliencycenter.com/stories/2003stories/0305ralston.shtml](http://www.resiliencycenter.com/stories/2003stories/0305ralston.shtml)

### Discussion

- *What is an example of a person becoming wiser, better or stronger after having setbacks or tough times?*
- *What does “making lemonade from lemons” mean to you?*
- *Give an example of a learning/coping reaction to having psychiatric illness.*
- *Give an example of a victim/blaming reaction to having psychiatric illness.*
- *What are some ways that you can help yourself become more resilient?*

### Conclusion: Choosing Resilience

- You have some control of your attitude, focus, coping, and habits
- Decide to create either barriers or bridges to a better future
- Resilience can be learned by developing the unique abilities you were born with
- As you bounce back from struggles and setbacks, you can develop more strength and abilities
- Choose to be resilient, and be a survivor on your recovery journey

### Optional Activities

- **Take the How Resilient Are You? Quiz** from <http://www.resiliencycenter.com/resiliencyquiz.shtml> by completing the quiz online.
- Write your score down. Repeat the test during your recovery.

## Exploring Resilience Handout

---

- Listen to audio recording Develop Resilience to Recover From Setbacks at <https://www.achievesolutions.net/achievesolutions/en/Content.do?contentId=19467>
- Or read the article by Amy Fries. (2006). Develop resilience to recover from setbacks. Retrieved 11-23-09 from <http://virginiatech.healthandperformancesolutions.net/Resilience/Develop%20Resilience%20to%20Recover%20From%20Setbacks.pdf>
- Or watch an inspiring story of Nick Vujicic, “the man with no arms or legs” on DVD in folder or at Youtube.com (5 min and 18 sec.)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQPmY4nljVE>

### References

- Messina, J. J. & Messina, C. (2009). Maintaining resilience in tough times. Retrieved June 17, 2009 from <http://www.jamesimessina.com/copingintoughtimes/resilienceintoughtimes.html>
- Neill, J. (2006). What is psychological resilience? Retrieved 11-23-09 from <http://www.wilderdom.com/psychology/resilience/PsychologicalResilience.html>
- Peterson, T. (n.d.). Learn a lesson, find the gift. Retrieved 6-17-09 from <http://www.resiliencycenter.com/stories/story04.shtml>