

Resiliency

by Janet Maurer, Ph.D., Director of Counseling Services

Have you ever known children who are able to bounce back, no matter what happens to them? Those children who seem to pull through life's ups and downs relatively unscathed? We describe these kids as 'resilient.' This was the focus of the presentation to parents on October 17th by Linda Kraft, educator from the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit.

Ms. Kraft first described the major developmental tasks of both preteens (ages 10-13) and middle adolescents (ages 14-17). Within this context she explored the profile of the resilient child. There are 4 major abilities that contribute to effective coping and promote resiliency:

1. Social competence (the ability to pick up on social cues, be flexible and responsive, demonstrate empathy for others, have strong communication skills and a sense of humor)
2. Problem-solving skills (the ability to make choices and handle the consequences, think critically, plan, and generate alternatives)
3. Autonomy (develop self-esteem, internal locus of control, independence)
4. Sense of purpose and future (the ability to learn from and live through mistakes, be hopeful, persistent, have aspirations, and find meaning)

Some children are born with these skills and some children need more help in developing them. The 'goodness of fit' between child and parent temperaments may have a major influence on how we help our children strengthen these skills.

There are many individual protective factors that facilitate resiliency. Ms Kraft asked us to think back to our middle school years and consider which of the following factors helped us handle the stresses and difficulties in our lives then. Which factors do our children use now?

- Relationships (sociability, ability to make friends)
- Service (help others/cause)
- Life skills (decision-making, assertiveness, impulse control)
- Humor (good sense of humor)
- Inner direction (internal locus of control)
- Perceptiveness (insightful understanding of others)
- Independence (distancing from unhealthy situations)
- Positive view of personal future (hopefulness)
- Flexibility (adjust to change)
- Love of learning (connection to learning)
- Self-motivation (internal initiative)
- Competence (good at something)
- Self-worth (self confidence)
- Spirituality (faith in something greater than the self)
- Perseverance (stick-to-it-ness)
- Creativity (self expression through arts)