

Promising Practices: Practical Solutions for Difficult Problems

Mark Katz, Ph.D.

© March 2007 Mark Katz, Ph.D. All rights reserved.

Beating the Odds vs. Changing the Odds

- Resilience: strength under adversity
- Multiple risk exposure: limits of emotional endurance

Long Term Multiple Risk Exposure

- Exposure to Single Vs. Multiple Risks
- Children Exposed to 7 or More Risks
(Sameroff, 1992)
- 6 year old, abuse/traumatically stressful life experiences, parent = psychiatric illness/substance abuse problem, impoverished neighborhood, inner city war zone, begins school with uneven abilities (ADHD/LD)

Long Term Multiple Risk Exposure

- At 16, many of these conditions may still be present
- If risk exposure persists, vulnerability persists. When treatment works treatment ends. But risk exposure may persist.

Protective Influences

Events, Experiences, Conditions
That Can Outweigh or Neutralize
the Effects of Exposure
to Known Risk Factors

Protective Processes That Researchers Feel Can Offset the Effects of Multiple Childhood Risks

(Rutter, 1990, Werner and Smith, 1992, Werner, 1993)

1. Experiences That Reduce the Impact of Prevailing Risks:
 - A. Learning to see adversities in a new light
 - B. Reducing the amount of exposure to the risks of adverse conditions; buffers
2. Preventing a Chain Reaction of Negative Life Events; Creating Safety Nets
3. Experiences That Promote a Sense of Mastery
4. Opening the Door to Turning Point Experiences or Second Chance Opportunities

Protective Processes: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light

Among the protective processes identified in the lives of adults who overcame exposure to multiple adverse childhood experiences was the ability to see adverse experiences in a new light.

The meaning one attaches to adverse experiences can determine whether one views oneself as resilient and courageous, or helpless and hopeless.

Protective Influences: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light

- WhyTry Program www.whytry.org
- Learning Leaders
Maggie Kyger, Ph.D. e-mail: kygermm@jmu.edu
Leigh Buckley e-mail: buckleld@hotmail.com
- Brainology
Carol Dweck, Ph.D.
dweck@psych.stanford.edu

Protective Processes: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light (continued)

- The meaning others attach....
- When it's dangerous to be different
- Zebras of the Savannah (Sapolsky, 1998)
- In an environment that you perceive as dangerous and threatening, it makes no sense, from a survival point of view, to appear vulnerable.

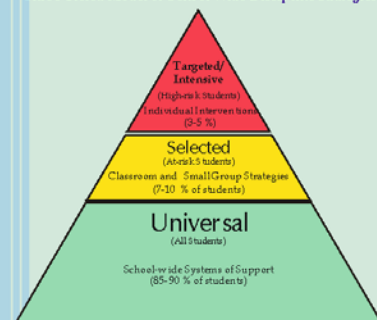
The Role of Social Climate and Bystander Behavior

- Numbers of children who won't accept help – because they feel stigmatized (cont)
- Repelled by special placements
- Won't speak to counselors
- Won't take medication
- Would rather suffer in silence than be target of ridicule
- One of the risk factors in the lives of youth involved in school shootings – feelings of humiliation and shame (Garbarino, 1999)

Changing the Social Climate (cont)

- PeaceBuilders 8004PEACENOW www.peacebuilders.com
- Bullying Prevention Program
nobully@clermson.edu
- The *Stop Bullying Now!* Campaign
www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
- Jigsaw Classroom www.jigsawclassroom.org
- University of Oregon's Institute of Violence and Destructive Behavior
 - Hill Walker, Ph.D. 541-346-3592
hill-walker@cmail.uoregon.edu
 - BEST Practices Jeff Sprague, Ph.D. 541-346-2465

Three-Tiered Model of School-Wide Discipline Strategies



Public Health Model

- Public health model for preventing and treating serious behavioral, emotional and learning problems in school-age children.
- Effective practices at the secondary (selected) and tertiary (targeted/intensive) levels include practices that work at the primary (universal level). The difference is that at the secondary and tertiary levels they occur at much higher doses.

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention Efforts That Can Serve Families, Schools and Neighborhoods

- In any one school, # of students in need of special help far exceeds the school's capacity using existing criteria
- <1% nationally certified for special help (EBD) for serious emotional/behavioral problems (Sprague, 2002).
- Surgeon General (2000) estimates that 18-22% of youth <18 in need of mental health service.
- Marc Atkins, Ph.D. Matkins@psych.uic.edu

For Whom the Bell Curve Tolls

- Individual strengths and talents –
 - Possible to be strong (sometimes extremely so) in sophisticated, complex intellectual areas, and/or areas that involve creativity and inventiveness,
 - And weak (sometimes extremely so), in areas that most others in your age range can master with little effort.
 - Trying harder in these weak areas may not allow you to do much better.

Protective Influences: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light
Delays in Executive Functions - Preventing and Reducing
Problems Related to Self Control

- Can people – children, teenagers or adults – know what to do, yet have problems consistently, predictably and independently doing what they know?
- Researchers find that some students evidence significant delays in “executive functions.” (Barkley, 2002)
- Executive functions = higher order cognitive processes that manage other mental functions. Think of a conductor of a symphony orchestra. (Brown, 2003).

Protective Influences: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light
Delays in Executive Functions - Preventing and Reducing
Problems Related to Self Control

- What could cause people – children, teenagers or adults – to know what to do, yet have problems consistently, predictably and independently doing what they know?
 - Neuropsychological profile in the absence of prolonged traumatic stress exposure
 - Prolonged traumatic stress exposure without a pre-existing history of problems associated with executive functions (Perry, 2002).
 - Both prolonged traumatic stress exposure and pre-existing history?

Protective Influences: Learning to See Adversities in a New Light

- Helping children/youth develop new understanding of learning differences
 - Re-framing stages: Recognition, acceptance, understanding, action; (How one SD teacher did this)
 - Books, videos, other resources (goal is to reach the child/youth, extended family, school, community)
 - Unique strengths and talents of those who learn differently - people from all walks of life, some very well known
 - Opportunities to get to know others who are now successful, who also struggled in school

Protective Processes That Researchers Feel Can Offset the Effects of Multiple Childhood Risks
(Rutter, 1990, Werner and Smith, 1992, Werner, 1993)

1. Experiences That Reduce the Impact of Prevailing Risks:

- B) Reducing the amount of exposure to prevailing risks or adverse conditions; providing buffers**

“Protective Schools”

- For children at risk for serious emotional, behavioral, learning and later life adjustment problems, can simply going to school each day actually protect them from these negative outcomes years down the road?

Protective Influences: Reducing the Amount of Exposure to Prevailing Risks; Providing Buffers (cont)

- Irvine Paraprofessional Program (IPP)
Ron Kotkin, Ph.D., rakotkin@uci.edu
- Protective Schools (Tucson, Arizona)
Kris Bosworth, Ph.D., bosworkk@u.arizona.edu
www.tucsonlinks.org
- Montgomery County GT/LD Model
Marisa Stemple e-mail: Marisa_stemple@fc.mcps.k12.md.us
GT/LD Network www.gtlldnetwork.org

Protective Processes That Researchers Feel Can Offset the Effects of Multiple Childhood Risks
(Rutter, 1990, Werner and Smith, 1992, Werner, 1993)

- 2. Preventing a Chain Reaction of Negative Life Events; Creating Safety Nets**

Protective Influences: Preventing a Chain Reaction of Negative Life Events; Creating Safety Nets

- Interplay between temperament and adverse life experiences
- Wraparound services
- Naomi Tannen study - 7 categories of service
- Open Arms Program
Kathleen Regan, R.N. *Opening Our Arms* (2006)

Protective Processes That Researchers Feel Can Offset the Effects of Multiple Childhood Risks
(Rutter, 1990, Werner and Smith, 1992, Werner, 1993)

- 3. Experiences That Promote a Sense of Mastery**

Fostering a Sense of Mastery

- Increasing Behavioral Successes (ADHD, ODD, Early Onset Bipolar, PTSD, Attachment Problems)
- "Do Better, and You'll Try Harder" (Rick Lavoie)
- Success experiences are to mastery as failure (over and over) is to learned helplessness
- Caregivers/teachers can determine # of success experiences children/students have and in what areas

Practical Strategies for Fostering a Sense of Mastery

- Highlighting, nurturing and expressing strengths and talents, and things you feel passionate about
- To feel you're making a contribution: Required Helpfulness
- Intimate relationship at any time during the life span
- "More chips a the end of the day" (Rick Lavoie video)

Programs and Practices

- Irvine Paraprofessional Program (IPP)
Ron Kotkin, Ph.D., rakotkin@uci.edu
- Regional Intervention Program
www.ripnetwork.org
- First Step to Success
Hill Walker, Ph.D. hwalker@oregon.uoregon.edu
- Collaborative Problem Solving
Ross Greene, Ph.D. CPS Institute 617-965-3000
- Good Behavior Game
Dennis Embry Ph.D. dde@paxis.org
Baltimore Prevention Program www.bpp.jhu.edu/

Protective Processes That Researchers Feel Can Offset the Effects of Multiple Childhood Risks (Rutter, 1990, Werner and Smith, 1992, Werner, 1993)

4. Opening the Door to Turning Point Experiences or Second Chance Opportunities

Children Exposed to Multiple Risks Who Succumb, Then Rebound Decades Later

- The role of human understanding in overcoming a difficult past, the role of misunderstanding in perpetuating one
- The impact of cumulative and persisting risk exposure on otherwise healthy, resilient children
- The value of partial victories
- Those who "beat the odds" may have enjoyed better odds

Children Who Succumb, Then Rebound Decades Later

- Overcoming a difficult past – the resilience within us, or the resilience between us?
- Possibilities versus probabilities
- Processes versus practices
- EBP: Are there things that count that can't be counted?
- Turning points