

The Genesis Therapy Center

SUMMER, 2015

The Power Of Resiliency

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Positive psychology is the study of happiness. Psychology traditionally focuses on dysfunction such as people with mental illness or other psychological problems and how to treat them. Positive psychology is different in that it examines how ordinary people can become happier and more fulfilled in life. One of the leading causes of happiness regularly studied in positive psychology is resiliency.

Resiliency is one's ability to experience personal setbacks in life yet be able to bounce forward and overcome that traumatic experience, refocusing one's energies on a new calling, a new mission, or a new path. People who are resilient help others with similar experiences to their own, pursue legal reform, or embark on other lofty goals related to their own past personal struggle. Many people deal with trauma, depression and anxiety. However, it's important to understand that resilience is possible. Of the many lessons that survivors of trauma have to teach us, the biggest one may be that it's possible to look into the face of tragedy and emerge fundamentally changed, with an ability to positively affect the world in previously unimaginable ways.

What resiliency teaches us is that the effects of trauma can be two-sided. Although there are

several negative outcomes to trauma, there are also positive outcomes. Therefore, how can one learn to develop resiliency?

Below is a list of 12 principles for developing resiliency and staying brave in the face of adversity (Bergland, 2015):

1. Close-Knit Human Bonds and a Supportive Social Network
2. Aerobic Exercise and Strength Training
3. Mindfulness and Meditation
4. Passion and a Sense of Purpose
5. Loving-Kindness and Self-forgiveness
6. Laughter and a Sense of Humor
7. Curiosity and a Sense of Adventure
8. Optimism and Determination
9. Imagination and Creative Thinking
10. Music Playlists and Anthems
11. Gratitude
12. Faith and Trust in Something Bigger than You. (Some might call it "God")

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.

Jimmy Dean

The Genesis Therapy
Center's

12th Annual

KidPower Benefit

Sunday October 25, 2015

2 to 6pm at Gaelic Park in

Oak Forest

Learned Helplessness

Jennifer Harris, PsyD

“What is the point of trying?” For both mental health professionals and typical people, this can be an overwhelming and frightening thought to hear. Sadly, this thought repeats like a mantra for people who have developed a condition called learned helplessness. Learned helplessness was first conceptualized as a psychological style that results from repeated exposure to uncontrollable and aversive events (Seligman, 1975). It was initially discovered in dogs that were conditioned to expect an electrical shock after hearing a tone. The dogs were later placed in a box that they could easily jump out of. However, researchers discovered that after being conditioned to the eclectic shock, the dogs did not attempt to escape. Because the dogs’ first experience with the electrical shock occurred under uncontrollable conditions and their responses were of no avail, they learned helplessness as a response (Hooker, 1976). In humans, perceived lack of control contributes to motivational deficits (e.g. lack of response), cognitive deficits (e.g. belief that one cannot control the outcome), and emotional deficits (e.g. feeling depressed).

According to learned helplessness theory, the cause of depression is not necessarily the lost object (e.g., a deceased friend), but the real or imagined loss of control over life events.

The theory of learned helplessness is helpful in

gaining an understanding of an individual’s experience, and in understanding these are adaptable responses to trauma. If there is something very painful going on that we can’t change, it makes sense to stop trying. Why remain trusting and hopeful when this just leads to continued pain.

It also poses several risks. Some people view those with learned helplessness deficits as helpless and hopeless in their environment and are at risk for developing a “blame the victim” mentality, where blame is attributed to the victim. Thus, it is important to understand the role of the person who experiences learned helplessness and to challenge that person to think alternatively.

Hooker, C. E. (1976). Learned helplessness. *Social Work, 21*(3), 194-198.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1975). *Helplessness: On depression, development and death*. San Francisco: Freeman.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Schulman, P. (1986). Explanatory style as a predictor of productivity and quitting among life insurance sales agents. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 50*(4), 832-838.

We offer ongoing support groups for parents and ongoing social skills groups for children.

Please call 708-535-7320 for more information, locations and times.

The Genesis Therapy Center

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We’re on the Web!

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Other Locations:

Hyde Park
5600 S Woodlawn

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930 W. Higgins Rd.

LaGrange, IL
14 W. Burlington Ave

Oak Park, IL
1010 Lake Street

Oak Lawn, IL
9411 S 51st Ave.

Oak Lawn, IL
5210 W. 95th Street