



ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN CAREGIVERS

Barry J. Jacobs, Psy.D
Crozer-Keystone Family
Medicine Residency
Program—Springfield, PA
emotionalsurvivalguide.com

TODAY'S TALK

- What is resilience?
- Individual and family factors for protection and recovery
- Applications to caregiver resilience
- “Honoring the Mission”; fostering positive meanings
- Caregiver transcript

Karen



- 60-year-old widow
- History of domestic violence, divorce, financial struggles
- Caring for 82-year old father with dementia in her home
- Provided care for 4 other family members
- Stressed but gratified by role
- Resilient

What is Resilience?



"He appears to have lost all of his resilience."

Resilience (cont.)

- “Pattern of positive adaptation in the context of past or present adversity” (Hayslip & Smith, 2012)
- More than just “bouncing back”
- Term used variously:
 - Protection from acute stress
 - Ability to recover
 - Capacity to grow from the experience (“bounce forward”)

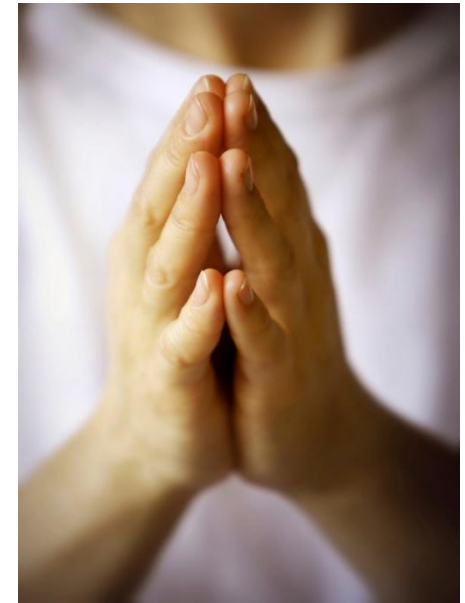
Resilience (cont.)



- Multi-dimensional factors: neurobiology, gene-environment interactions, psychosocial factors (e.g, support), mental features (e.g., sense of agency, planning) (Rutter, 2013)
- Negative experience may have a sensitizing or “steeling” effect in relation to later episodes of adversity (Rutter, 2012); “turning point effects” (Rutter, 1999)

Psychosocial components of individual resilience

- **Southwick & Charney (2012):**
- Optimism
- Facing fear
- Moral compass
- Social support/role models
- Physical & brain fitness
- Cognitive & emotional flexibility
- Meaning, purpose/spirituality



Family resilience



- Coping and adaptational processes in the family as a functional unit (Walsh, 2006)



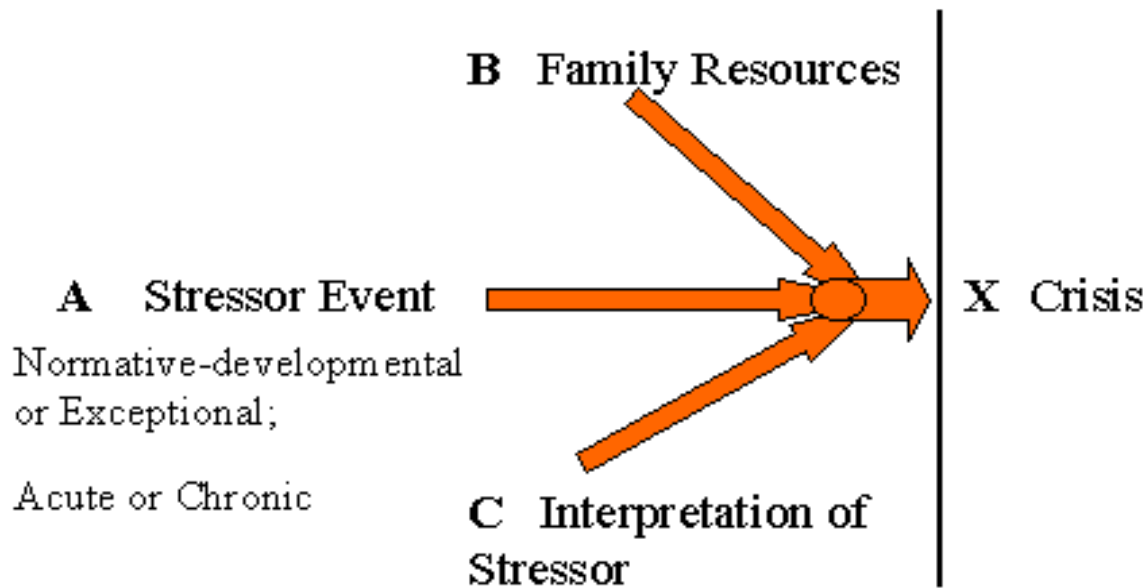
- ***“How a family confronts and manages a disruptive experience, buffers stress, effectively reorganizes, and moves forward with life will influence immediate and long-term adaptation for every family member and for the very survival and well-being of the family unit” (Walsh, 2006, p.15)***

Walsh's Components of Family Resilience (2006)

- **Family belief systems:** making meaning of adversity; positive outlook; spirituality
- **Organizational patterns:** flexibility, connectedness, social and economic resources
- **Communication processes:** clarity, open emotional expression, collaborative problem-solving

A Model of Family Stress (1958)

Reuben Hill's ABC-X Model



ABC-X of CAREGIVING

- A—functional decline due to physical, cognitive and/or behavioral impairments
- Different illnesses and disabilities pose different challenges to families, depending on severity and course of condition and developmental stage of family

ABC-X

- B—family's material resources (money, insurance, availability of local programs)
- External psychological resources (support from extended family members, neighbors, social service/healthcare professionals)
- Internal psychological resources (capacities to communicate, agree on decisions, solve problems, take concerted actions, tolerate emotions, etc.)

ABC-X

- C—Meaning (personal, spiritual, cultural, community-sanctioned) that family members attribute to loved one's illness/disability and to caregiving endeavor
- Example: “Caregiving is an opportunity for growth” vs “Caregiving is a trap”

ABC-X

- Some beliefs act as barriers to caregiver coping (Losada et al, 2006):
- “I should set aside my interests and dedicate myself completely to the care of my relative”
- “A caregiver should only seek help from others when she doesn’t know how to solve a problem”

Family Caregivers



- Great heterogeneity in background, situations and coping styles
- Range of emotional reactions to caregiving: 31% highly stressed; 25% not at all stressed
- Most caregiver research focuses on how to avoid negative outcomes (medical and psychological), not on how to create positive experiences or build resilience (Coons, 2012)



- ***“The majority of caregivers...readily endorse caregiving gains or positive aspect of caregiving [including] having the opportunity to serve as a role model, having the chance to give back to care recipients..., experiencing an enhanced sense of purpose..., feeling appreciated, and helping to maintain the identity and well-being of the family (Coons, 2012, p. 233)***

How do caregiver support programs promote resilience?

- **Direct Emphases**

- Social and economic resources
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Connectedness (e.g. support groups)
- Flexibility (e.g., planning)

- **Indirect or Absent**

- Making meaning of adversity
- Spirituality

Addressing Caregivers' Meanings

In my opinion, addressing meaning is the missing component of caregiver support programs

- Assess meanings
- Make subconscious/unspoken perceptions, beliefs and goals more visible and modifiable
- Foster conscious, positive, realistic beliefs to increase resilience

4 Categories Of Meanings/Beliefs

- Beliefs about **nature and cause** of loved one's illness (attributions) (Why is this happening?)
- Beliefs about one's **sense of purpose** and **responsibility** in making sacrifices on behalf of a loved one ("Why caregive?")
- Beliefs about **setting limits** and **receiving help**
- Beliefs about healthcare and social service **professionals**

Honoring the Mission

- Solicit the story of giving care
- Avoid premature advice-giving
- Inquire about meaning of caregiving in caregiver's life
- Identify and honor caregiver's sense of mission
- Raise issue of sustainability
- Inquire about sources of sustenance
- Karen's transcript



Bolstering Karen's Resilience

- What are the positive meanings that increase Karen's resilience, even though she is stressed?
- Which meanings would increase her willingness to use resources and promote flexible, collaborative problem-solving?



References

- Coon, DW (2012). Resilience and family caregiving. In Annual Review of Gerontology & Geriatrics: Emerging Perspective on Resilience in Adulthood and Later Life (Hayslip & Smith, eds.) New York: Springer
- Hayslip, B & Smith, GC (eds, 2012) Annual Review of Gerontology & Geriatrics: Emerging Perspectives on Resilience in Adulthood and Later Life. New York: Springer
- Losada, A et al (2006). Explanation of caregivers distress from the cognitive model: the role of dysfunctional thoughts, Psicologia Conductual, 14(1), 115-128

References (cont.)

- Nichols WC (2013). Road to understanding family resilience: 1920s to the Twenty-first Century. In Handbook of Family Resilience (D. Becvar, ed), New York: Springer. 3-16.
- Rutter M. (1999). Resilience concepts and findings: implications for family therapy. Journal of Family Therapy, 21:119-144
- Rutter M (2012) Resilience as a dynamic process. Developmental Psychopathology, 24(2):335-44
- Rutter M (2013). Annual research review: Resilience—clinical implications, Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 54(4):474-87

References (cont.)

- Southwick SM & Charney DS (2012). Resilience—the science of mastering life's greatest challenges. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Walsh, F (2006) Strengthening family resilience—Second Edition. New York: Guilford.
- For info on Reuben Hill:
http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/38638_Chapter4.pdf

- The Emotional Survival Guide for Caregivers by Barry J. Jacobs, Psy.D. (Guilford, 2006)

