



Preparing Young Adults
with Learning Differences
for Success Since 1984

CREATING RESILIENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Researchers have defined resilience in many ways:

- An ability to recover or adjust easily to misfortune or change.
- The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.
- The ability to bounce back from difficult experiences.
- Remaining competent despite exposure to misfortune or stressful events.

In general, resilience is what gives people the psychological strength to cope with stress, change, and adversity.

RESILIENCE IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

- It is not a trait – everyone has the ability to become resilient
- It is a process involving behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed over time.
- Combination of skills and positive attributes that people gain from their life experiences.
- Together, these attributes help us to solve problems, cope with challenges, and bounce back from disappointments.

Resilience is a process that can and should be taught to and learned by all children beginning at a young age to prepare them to navigate the world as they grow.

WHAT MAKES RESILIENCE-

BY LYN BROOKS

<https://vimeo.com/102780392>

“Resilience is a crucial ingredient – perhaps *the* crucial ingredient – to a happy, healthy life. More than anything else, it’s what determines how we rise above what threatens to wear us down.”

— Andrew Shatté, 2014

Resilience requires us to find the “**wiggle room**” in ourselves to move between our wish/demand to learn/succeed and our disappointments in failure.



COMPONENTS OF RESILIENCY

Cognitive & Behavioral Factors

- Social, emotional and problem-solving skills
- Sense of optimism, autonomy and self-esteem

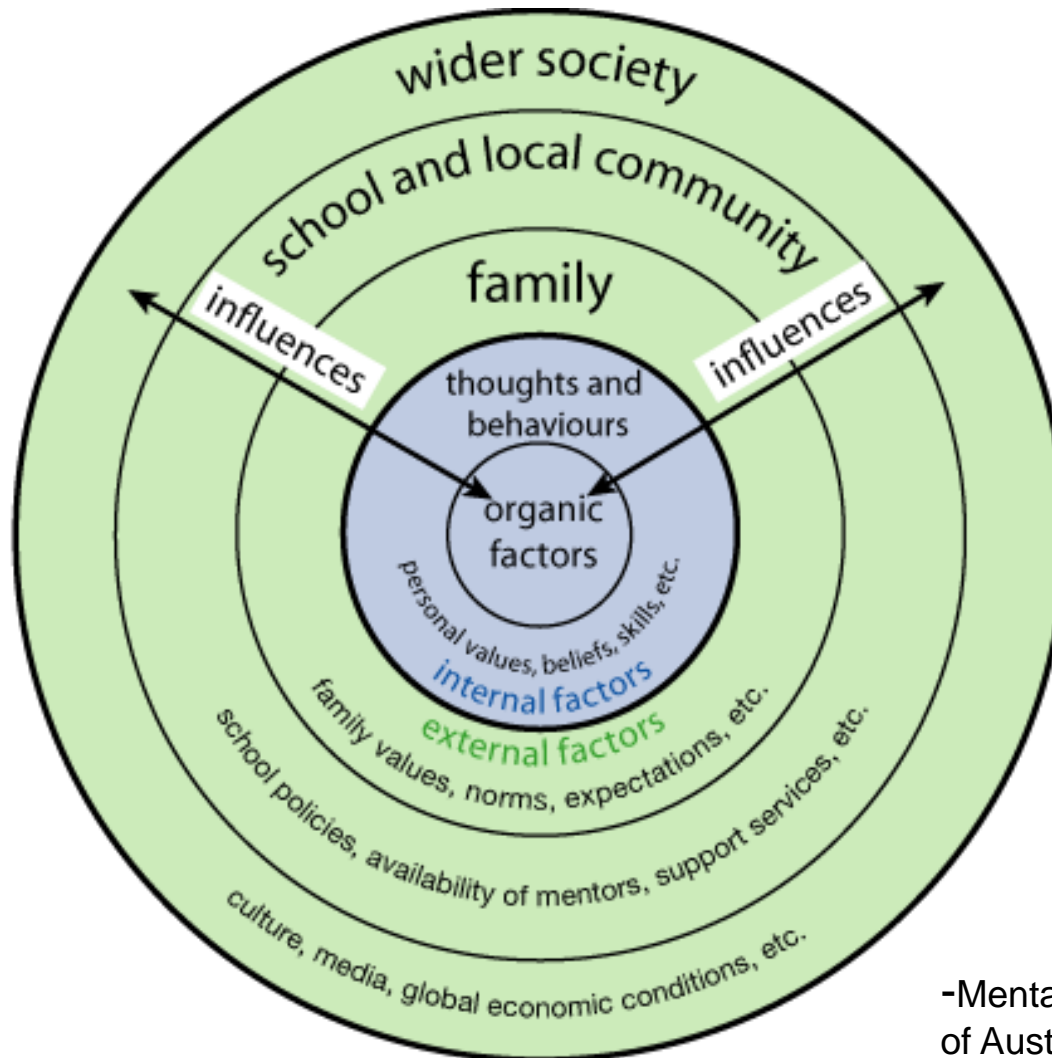
Organic & Genetic Factors

- Gender, temperament, intelligence, physical health

Social Factors

- Relationships with parents, peers, teachers, and outside world

AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF FACTORS AFFECTING RESILIENCY



RESILIENCE IN STUDENTS WITH LD

- Life is uncertain and students need to respond appropriately to handle unexpected changes.
- Students with LD have differing levels of impaired intelligence and social functioning and often become overwhelmed when faced with life's unexpected changes.
- In order to achieve academic and personal success, it is imperative that these students learn how to become resilient individuals. It is important that their families and educators help them:
 - develop a healthy attitude towards mistakes and setbacks
 - learn problem-solving, flexible thinking, and anxiety management strategies
 - foster their strengths and interests instead of focusing on their deficits

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN STUDENTS WITH LD

- Help students develop a healthy attitude toward mistakes and adversity so they can persevere and experience future success.
- Use a strengths-based approach – developing their strengths and interests rather than focusing on fixing their deficits.
- Help students develop a growth mindset by understanding that they can become smarter and attain future success.
- Those with a growth mindset view the world in a hopeful and optimistic way and are more likely to view mistakes, hardships, and obstacles as challenges to confront rather than as stressors to avoid.

MINDSET IS KEY TO RESILIENCE

- Mindset describes the way people think about their abilities to change and grow.
- Individuals have either a fixed or a growth mindset.
- Many students with LD come to college with a predisposition to a fixed mindset. Often, past experiences have convinced them that they are incapable of academic success or are simply not smart.
- It is especially important for educators to cultivate a growth mindset when working with these students and to help them identify and work with their personal strengths.
- Establishing a growth mindset encourages people to grow and learn new things, and is a key factor in developing resilience within this student population.

FIXED VS. GROWTH MINDSET

FIXED MINDSET

- Wants to prove intelligence or talents
- Avoids challenges for fear
- Gives up in the face of tough obstacles
- Avoids hard labor
- Treats criticism as an attack
- Feels threatened by others' success

GROWTH MINDSET

- Wants to improve intelligence or talents
- Engages challenges to improve
- Persists in overcoming obstacles
- Sees labor as the path to success
- Treats criticism as an opportunity
- Feels inspired by others' success

FIXED VS. GROWTH MINDSET

BY MATTHEW METOYER

<https://vimeo.com/90276972>

**“I am not discouraged,
because every wrong
attempt discarded is
another step forward.”**

—Thomas Edison

COMPONENTS OF RESILIENCE

- Organic/Genetic
- Cognitive/Behavioral
- Social Factors

How can we foster growth and development in these areas?

ORGANIC AND GENETIC FACTORS:

- **Gender**- males/females affected differently
- **Temperament**- what causes stress, what is the threshold
- **Intelligence** – students may struggle in specific areas, and thrive in others
- **Physical Health** – lack of knowledge, motivation, “home-body”

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

- Stress relievers
- Physical fitness
- Some things we can't control...be[A]ware!

COGNITIVE & BEHAVIORAL FACTORS:

- Problem-solving
- Metacognition
- Self-esteem/confidence
- Decision making
- Sense of autonomy
- Executive Functioning

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Problem Solving/Decision Making

- Be a catalyst
- Guide them
- Trial and error- allow them to fail
- Consider:
 - Scheduling, content, class size, learning style, etc.

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Metacognition: Thinking about thinking

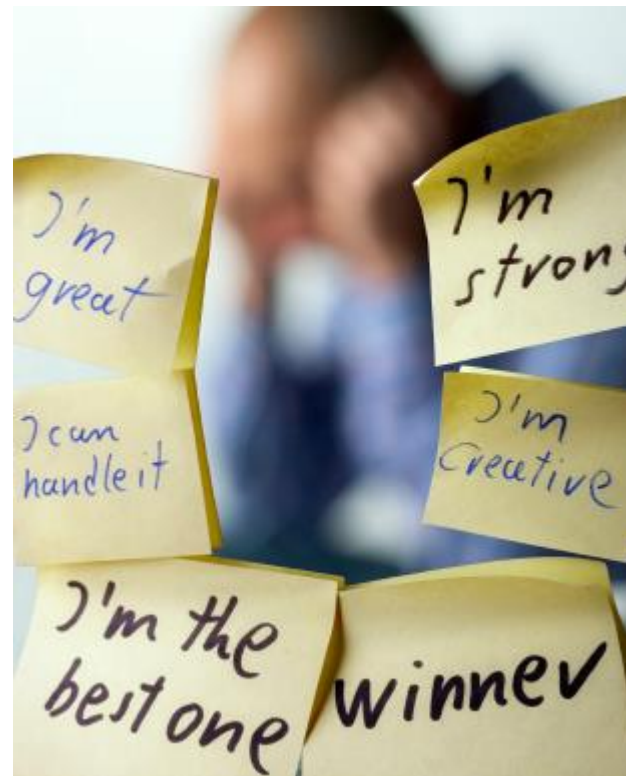
- How do I think?
- How do I work?
- Why am I stuck?
- What is frustrating?
- What do I need?

I can't → How can I?

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Self Esteem/Confidence

- Positive self talk
- Recognizing successes
- Normalizing “failures”

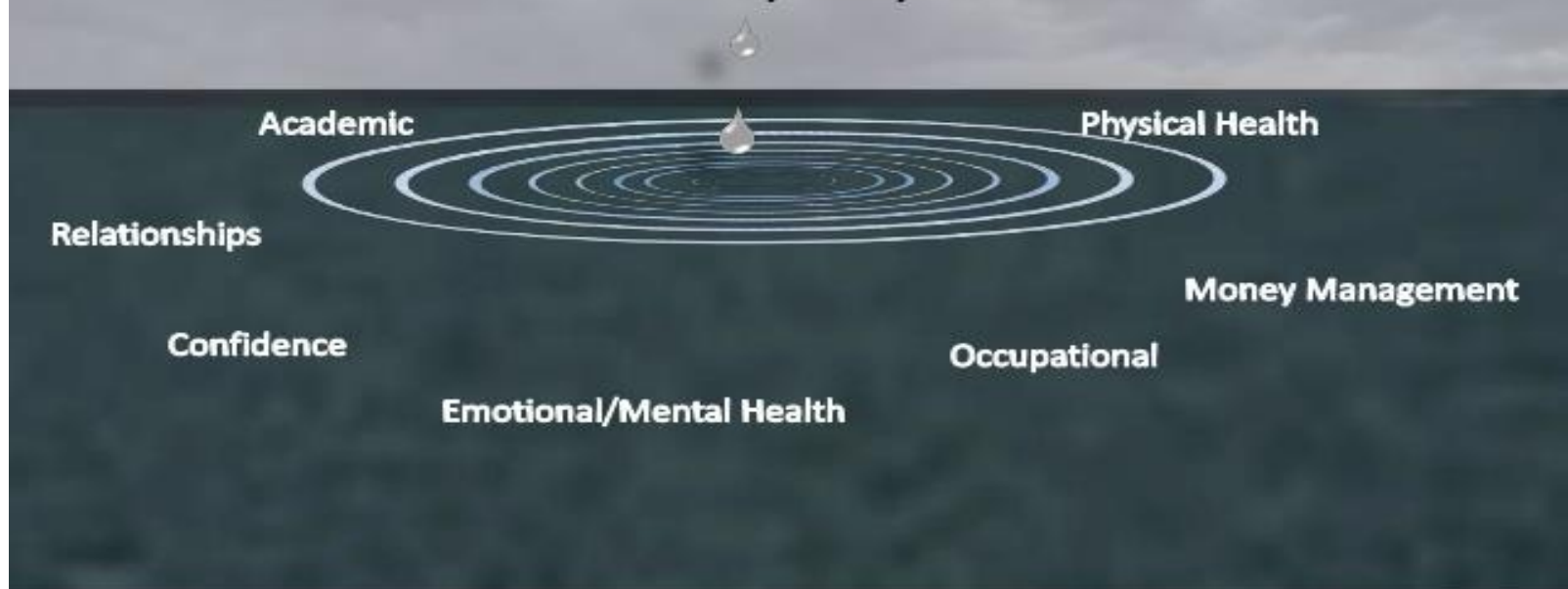


PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Executive Functioning

Ripple Effect of Executive Functioning Skills

Weak executive functioning can cause problems in many life areas. Likewise, simple improvements can have a positive affect in many ways



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL FACTORS

- Parents
- Peers
- Professors
- Community supports



After many years of wavering Dennis finally makes the decision to step out of his comfort zone.

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

PARENTS

- Letting go
- Help student advocate for themselves



"YES, MOTHER, I TOLD YOU, I'M DOING FINE ON MY OWN AT COLLEGE ... HEY, COULD YOU LOG ON AND FIND MY SCHEDULE, ORDER MY BOOKS AND CALL ME WHEN IT'S TIME FOR CLASS?"

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

PEERS

Encourage students to:

- Develop a positive social circle
- Get connected on campus
- Find a peer mentor

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

PROFESSORS

Help students develop skills these areas:

- Faculty Interaction
- Communication
- Classroom behavior
- Best match if possible
- Advocate

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Identify and reach out to resources on campus:

- Disability/Support Services Office
- Counseling Center
- Tutoring
- Student Advocacy Office

STRATEGIES TO REMEMBER

- Each student is an individual-ask questions
- Encourage self-knowledge and self-advocacy
- Develop a rapport- be positive!
- Ask open-ended questions
- Give space when you see they are upset/stressed
- Be honest
- Listen
- Have a plan
- *Help Problem Solve*



RESILIENCE

Perseverance, no matter what the odds

STUDENT 1: CODY

- **19 years old**
- **Full Scale IQ-133**
- **Diagnosis**
 - Asperger's
 - ADHD
 - GAD
 - Depression
- **On Leave from an Ivy League School**

CODY

STRENGTHS

- Intelligent
- Good Character
- Ethical
- Desire to learn and overcome challenges
- Motivated to achieve goals

AREAS OF NEED

- Academic Support
- Managing Stress/Anxiety
- EF Skills-prioritizing & organization
- Social Skills-isolates self
- Life Skills
- Wellness/Hygiene
- Rigid/Black & white thinking

INTERVENTIONS

- **Academic**-Smaller course load
- **Life Skills**- Cook, clean and do laundry while breaking them into smaller tasks
- **Therapy**-Strategies to manage stress/anxiety
- **EF Skills**-organization, prioritizing, planning-download apps (for reminders, calendar, assignments due)
- **Social Skills**-Data! Track interactions and rate them, classroom behavior, flexibility
- **Wellness**-Meal Planning, Hygiene, Exercise plan

OUTCOMES

AT CIP

- Attended a different college (more suited to needs)
- Started asking for & accepting help (school, job, social situations)
- Became more socially aware
- Used his resources
- Got a job at a Museum
- Joining co-workers on social activities

POST CIP

- Transitioned out by attending school with a small course load, working at the museum, & applying back to the Ivy League School
- Returned to his dream school!
- Received B's 1st semester, socializing, and increasing course load

STUDENT 2: JOHN

- **22 years old**
- **Full Scale IQ-116**
- **Diagnosis**
 - **ADD/ADHD**
- **Attended 3 different schools – “unsuccessfully”**
- **Goal was a business/accounting degree**

JOHN

STRENGTHS

- Hard Working
- Work Experience
- Intelligent
- Wants to be Successful
- Does best with real world application of ideas

AREAS OF NEED

- EF Skills-Prioritizing, follow through
- Social Skills
- Academic-Finishing assigned work
- Using available resources
- Wellness

INTERVENTIONS

- **Academic Support/EF Skills**-prioritizing, follow through/accountability, career interests
- **Social Skills**-Self-Advocacy, taking initiative
- **Wellness**- developed an exercise routine he could do with his busy schedule

OUTCOMES

AT CIP

- Explored interests/ programs
- Signed up for class at culinary institute
- Reduced supports over time
- Moved into his own apartment

POST CIP

- Graduated from the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute
- Deciding whether to continue on with school or to go straight into work
- More Confident
- HAPPY!

STUDENT 3: STEVE (CURRENT)

- **22 years old**
- **Full Scale IQ-111**
- **Diagnosis:**
 - Asperger's
 - ADHD
 - LD
 - GAD
 - Dysthymic
- **Attended 2 colleges- withdrew due to poor attendance**

STEVE

STRENGTHS

- Very creative
- Intelligent
- Good Character
- Wants to go to school and get a degree (now in music)

AREAS OF NEED

- Trouble expressing feelings
- Works at a slow pace; constantly revises as wants to get it “perfect”
- EF Challenges-Organizing time & Follow through
- Social Skills
- Hard on himself (self-esteem issues)

INTERVENTIONS

- **Academic**- smaller caseload, accountability, using resources
- **Social Skills**- living with roommate, initialing plans, writing scripts for calls/emails
- **Wellness**- hygiene, creating an at-home exercise plan, meal planning
- **EF Skills**-organization, prioritizing, follow through
- **Therapy**-strategies to manage anxiety & expressing feelings; self- esteem
- **Life Skills**-Laundry, Cooking, Cleaning

OUTCOMES

AT CIP

- Began/completed the Select Sound Certificate
- Learned that it's ok to fail and how you respond to the failure is what matters
- More open to reaching out for help
- Skills to bounce back

CURRENT

- CIP off Campus Support (Minimal-Therapy & Wellness)
- Full Time Student at Local College
- Enrolled in extra academic support program
- Living independently

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Brooks, R., & Goldstein, S. (2012). *Raising Resilient Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Strategies for Maximizing Their Strengths, Coping with Adversity, and Developing a Social Mindset*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Truebridge, S. (2013). *Resilience Begins with Beliefs: Building on Student Strengths for Success in School*. New York: Teachers College Press.

GET IN TOUCH



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