Learning to Bounce Back

"Try the rough water as well as the smooth. Rough water can teach lessons worth knowing."  ~~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Patti J. Fleck, Ph.D., Director
Counseling, Disability Support Services, and Student Wellness (CDSW)
Today’s Focus

I. Definition of Resilience

II. Components of Resilience
   - Social Connection
   - Attitude
   - Values
   - Emotional Acceptance
   - Silliness-Humor

III. Personal Application
Resilience is

• “… adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress (e.g. family & relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace, & financial stressors).

• “bouncing back” from difficult experiences

• Recovering from catastrophes

• Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience.

• LEARNABLE!!!

The American Psychological Association
How Resilient Are YOU?

http://www.resiliencycenter.com/resiliencyquiz.shtml

Rate yourself from 1 to 5 on the following:

(1 = very little
5 = very strong)
Scoring

80 or higher very resilient!
65-80 better than most
50-65 slow, but adequate
40-50 you're struggling
40 or under seek help!
Resilience . . . SAVES

- Social Connection
- Attitude
- Values
- Emotional Acceptance
- Silliness-Humor
Social Connection

• Humans are by nature social creatures.
• Social connection is one of the most important components of resilience and is protective against mental illness.
• Social connection leads to a release of oxytocin which dampens the stress response by inhibiting the amygdala.
• Oxytocin is essential in providing and receiving social support.
• One of the most natural ways to release oxytocin is to give and receive a hug.
Social Connection - Altruism

• Research indicates MH and resilience are related to helping others.

• Harlow monkey experiments. The only way monkeys raised w/o nurturance could recover was to nurture younger monkeys.

• When we help others, our brains are rewarded with an increase in dopamine.

• Service learning projects and volunteer work can work to help foster resilience.
Social Connection - Altruism

Mentoring is the imparting and receiving of life’s wisdom.
• Trust/safety
• Respect
• Listening
• Open mindedness - excitement about the process of discovery
• Encourage awareness and responsibility

Gratefulness - Gratitude is an affirmation of the goodness in one’s life and the recognition that the sources of this goodness lie at least partially outside the self.
Attitude – Learned Optimism

• **Permanence**: This too shall pass. Disappointing grades, conflict with friends/family, car issues, stress at work, etc. come and go.

• **Pervasiveness**: Allow and focus on positive events to brighten your entire experience rather than letting the negative events darken the other areas. Examples?

• **Personalization**: Acknowledge your own internal contributions to positive events and the contextual causes of difficult events.
"The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude."

— William James
Values and Spirituality

• Beliefs, principles, faith, meaning, purpose

• Acknowledging, welcoming, and working to balance contrasts and undefinable experiences.

• “To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle any human being can fight, and never stop fighting.” e.e. cummings
Emotional Acceptance

• Problems defined as the presence of unpleasant feelings, thoughts, memories, bodily sensations, etc.

• Undesirable experiences seen as signals that something is wrong and has to change.

• Healthy living cannot occur until negative experiences are eliminated.

Not true!!!
Emotional Acceptance

Rather than avoiding . . .

• Actively seek **awareness** and strive to **embrace** of what's going on inside without trying to change things

• “Creative Hopelessness”- engendering a posture of giving up when giving up is what is called for in the service of larger goals.
Emotional Acceptance
Silliness – Humor

• Studies have shown that laughter helps relieve pain, increase happiness ratings, and strengthen the immune response.

• Humor helps integrate opposing perspectives and make meaning of suffering.

• Resilience includes components of humor, especially when life is serious, difficult, and sad in so many ways.

• How have you used humor effectively?
What will you do to build resilience?
Let’s Breathe

• Inhale through nose, count slowly up to 5 . . . inhale calm, peace, relaxation with in breath

• Breathe down into your belly, hold breath

• Exhale, count down to 1 . . . envision tension, anxiety, toxins leaving your body
Remember . . . Resilience SAVES

- **Social Connection**  (belonging, feeling valued)

- **Attitude**  (flexible thinking, optimism, gratitude, hope, perspective)

- **Values**  (‘successful failure’ reframe to find new growth opportunities)

- **Emotional Acceptance**  (self-awareness, -care, and -regulation, change is part of life, surrender)

- **Silliness-Humor**
Factors That Contribute to Resilience

- Close relationships with family and friends
- A positive view of yourself
- Confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Good problem-solving and communication skills
- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
- The ability to manage strong feelings and impulses
- Feeling in control
- Seeking help and resources
Factors That Contribute to Resilience

• Seeing yourself as resilient
• Coping with stress in healthy ways and avoiding harmful coping strategies
• Helping others
• Finding positive meaning in your life despite difficult or traumatic events

http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience/what-resilience
Short Recap

www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXYmxMGVFsaE
Wrap Up
Q&A