RESILIENCE IN OLDER ADULTHOOD

Objectives

- Define resilience and its common themes
- Identify and differentiate the biopsychosocial and spiritual characteristics associated with resilience
- Discuss how culture and diversity influence resilience
- Describe interventions used to promote resilience in older adults

Resilience Defined

- “The capability to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk. This capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment.”
  - (Brier et al., 1997)
- Resilient behaviors are positive outcomes when risks are present.
- Resilience is connected to successful aging.
Common Themes

- Resilience is:
  - Dynamic and depends on life context
  - A combination of risk factors stemming from multiple stressful life events and protective factors that decrease the negative influence of risk.
  - A balance between stress and the ability to cope
  - Developmental and being successful strengthens a person’s competence
  - Most important in times of life transitions

Biopsychosocial/Spiritual Characteristics

**Biological** – innate behavioral characteristics of resilience

- Motivation
- Positive temperament
- Problem Solving Skills
- Autonomy
- Social Competence
*Biological factors can be influenced by the environment.

**Psychological** – personal traits

- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy
- Hope
- Personal control
- Self-understanding
- Learned optimism
- Positive attachments
*These characteristics promote successful coping.

Biopsychosocial/Spiritual Characteristics

**Social** – positive socialization is key to developing resilience.

- Older adults can benefit from their social ties.
- Social resilience is associated with:
  - Flexibility
  - Empathy
  - Effective communication
  - Problem solving
  - Planning and seeking help

**Spiritual** – “how a person seeks to transcend the self in order to discover meaning, belonging, and relatedness to the infinite”

- Faith communities and traditions can promote resilience.
A Discussion About Resilience Among Holocaust Survivors

- This podcast features Dr. Roberta Greene, Professor Emeritus in the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin.
- Dr. Greene will define resilience and its importance in later life.
- She will also share her experience exploring resilience among Holocaust survivors and the themes that were discovered.
- Click on or copy and paste the weblink below to listen to the podcast:
  - https://gsu.sharestream.net/ssdems3.do?u=3d0baeab0060411

Resilience in Later Adulthood

- High resilience is associated with:
  - Better mental and physical health (Wells, 2010).
  - Lower perceived stress and higher life satisfaction and optimism (Wagnild & Collins, 2009).
  - Higher fruit/vegetable consumption and more physical activity (Perna et al., 2012).

Diversity Aspects

- Power and privilege are protective factors that support resilience.
- Groups to consider when fostering resiliency in older adults include:
  - Lower economic status or social class
  - Female gender
  - Minority race/ethnicity
  - Homosexual orientation
  - Poor physical or mental health
The Resiliency Model


Resilience-Enhancing Interventions

- Listen to the stories
- Identify the source of stress
- Acknowledge the loss, vulnerability, and future
- Stabilize/normalize the situation with empathy and affirmation
- Help find the benefits of the adverse event
- Help identify his/her strengths

(Greene & Cohen, 2005)

Resilience-Enhancing Interventions Cont.

- Talk about resilience
- Promote self-efficacy
- Strengthen his/her problem solving abilities
- Acknowledge spirituality in transcending the immediate situation
- Provide resources for change
- Help him/her take control
- Help build social networks (i.e. senior centers, churches)

(Greene & Cohen, 2005)
Resilience Scale

- Healthcare providers can use the resilience scale to screen older adults for resilience, help them recognize their resilience, and identify ways to strengthen it.
- Click on or copy and paste the weblink below to access the resilience scale:

Case Study 1

- Living Alone In Community and Over 85 Years Old: A Case Study (Pierini & Volker, 2009)

Case Study 1 Discussion Questions

- What biopsychosocial and spiritual characteristics did Mary display that are associated with resilience?
- What interventions could be utilized to further increase Mary’s resilience?
- Why is it important to identify Mary’s resilience?
- What life transitions might Mary be experiencing that could affect her resilience?
- What areas of Mary’s life were not discussed by the interviewer that may also contribute to her resilience?
Case Study 2

**Reflections on Hurricane Katrina by Older Adults: Three Case Studies in Resiliency and Survivorship** (Greene, 2012)


**Case Study 2 Discussion Questions**

- What was the impetus in the cases of Katherine, Jerry, and Sally that forced them to display resilient behaviors?
- What type of resilience do Katherine, Jerry, and Sally demonstrate? (i.e. dynamic and static)
- What responses of Katherine, Jerry, and Sally demonstrate that type of resilience?
- Compare and contrast the protective factors of resilience for Katherine, Jerry, and Sally.

**References**