

Becoming Resilient



Resilience refers to the ability *to maintain* being centered even when exposed to various stressors. It's related to, but distinct from, the concept of self-regulation which refers to the ability *to return to* a centered state of mind as one becomes uncentered.

The Artist aspect of the psyche operates in terms of emotions. The Artist's emotional resilience to dysregulation is supported by a *sense of belonging*.

- On a program level, there should be community-building features such as singing together; performances; program rituals; celebrations for birthdays, holidays, graduations; public displays of kids art and awards; personalization of bedrooms; and most group activities.
- On an individual level, kids should be encouraged to make active efforts to connect with others and coaching to develop skills at initiating conversations and play.
- Kids should be encouraged to cultivate shared experiences, participating in all group activities, and being present and engaged.
- Kids should be encouraged to practice acceptance and open-mindedness toward other kids' struggles and toward new activities.
- Kids should be encouraged to seek out supports and validation.
- Kids should be encouraged to help one another.

The Scout aspect of the psyche operates in terms of cognitions. The Scout's cognitive resilience to disorganization is supported by a *sense of purpose*.

- On a program level the purpose, the goals, behind all sorts of structures should be explained to the clients.

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- Staff should help kids recognize the purposes, both programmatic and on the individual level, behind all the minute-to-minute and daily tasks the kids are required to do throughout the day.
- At a developmentally appropriate level, staff should help kids recognize the long-term purpose, the long-term goals, of attending a treatment program and of doing schoolwork.
- A larger sense of purpose is enhanced by kids learning to see their own personal development and growth over time, by staff pointing out ways in which they've matured.
- Staff recognizing kids' efforts, and not only outcomes, also supports a sense of purpose.

The Warrior aspect of the psyche operates in terms of both external behaviors and internal behaviors (all sorts of physiological activity). The Warrior's resilience is supported by a *sense of agency* (the concept that one's actions actually produce changes in the world and in your own life).

- Kids should be led by staff through understanding the sequence of events that lead to various outcomes and help kids see how their behaviors determined the path.
- Kids should continually be presented with choices, and choice-points should be identified for kids in-the-moment. Kids should be helped to anticipate the likely pathway of different behavioral choices.
- Staff should make sure to point out the pathways created by positive behaviors. It's human nature to more easily notice the problem-behaviors, but it's the positive behaviors that set kids on the best future path. Kids in residential treatment don't get enough recognition of all the things they do right!

The Chief aspect of the psyche is tasked with self-regulation and coordination of the other aspects. The Chief's resilience is supported by experiencing a *sense of meaning* in the tasks you do, the experiences you have, your relationships with others, and the attitude you take toward unavoidable suffering.

- Kids should be helped to find meaning in the positive things they create and in their own actions.
- Kids should be helped to find meaning in the experiences they have within a treatment program and in the relationships that they form.
- Kids should be helped to feel hopeful that the unavoidable suffering they've experienced in life will, someday, serve them in making them more resilient to future stressors, more empathic and kinder to others, and an all-around better version of themselves. This is not about exploring "reasons" for their suffering but rather is about helping them imagine that their suffering will, one day, even if not today, be meaningful.

Of course, the need for resilience is not restricted to kids. These are basic qualities of the human condition and adults also need a sense of belonging, purpose, agency, and meaning in the difficult work that they do. The details of how that is achieved with staff versus clients will differ, but the underlying principles are the same.