Resilience and Academic Success

College can be a stressful experience for many young people. **Hardiness** is a characteristic that is important for academic success.

Q: Can you benefit from improving your resilience-related cognitive and behavioral skills?

To become more resilient, you must decide that you find personal value in this change, it must be important to you. You must be willing to take action to develop resilience, it is not something that will develop passively.
Is it the mountain we conquer, or ourselves we conquer?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXYmxMGVFsE
Resilience is...

- Not just surviving, but thriving in adversity
- The ability to persevere through obstacles
- The confidence in yourself to persist when life is difficult

Synonyms: Grit, mental toughness, hardiness

Proverb – Tough seas make good skippers
Defining Resiliency

- **Resiliency**: quality in objects to hold or recover their shape, or in people to stay intact. This is a kind of strength. If you bend a fork and it bends right back — that's **resiliency**.
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Resilience in the News

"Boston is a tough and resilient town. So are its people." Barack Obama - Boston Bombing

"...part of what makes America strong is our resilience, tenacity, innovation and our willingness to be optimistic about our future." Valerie Jarrett

"A Year After Sandy, New Initiative To Help 'Resilient' Cities Prepare For Disaster"
Headline from Forbes - Sandy Hurricane

"I’ve always been impressed with the tremendous resilience of the American economy”
Dick Cheney

"Resilience, recovery, grief on Sandy Anniversary"
Headline from Yahoo News - Sandy Hurricane

"After The Sandy Hook Shooting, Experts Say Kids Are Resilient In Coping with Trauma"
Headline from Huffington Post - Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting
Resilience and Academic Success

• Use of a journal
  – Helpful to track important events
  – Use to complete the exercises done for this program
  – Carry with or access every day

• On a daily basis keep a Gratitude Journal for the semester, each day write about 3 good things that happened to you, and journal about these experiences
Resilience comes from....

A. Early experiences of risk taking
   Results of this risk taking include both success and failure

B. Realistic expectations of self and others

C. Awareness of your limitations

D. Identification of negative thoughts that limit risk taking and increase stress.

IT IS NOT A ‘BORN WITH’ QUALITY’
Resilience comes from….

A. Early experiences

1. where have you taken on a challenge, struggled and persisted to success?

2. where have you taken on a challenge, failed and then tried again?

- Thomas Edison

- Try… fail… try again…. fail better… try again…..
A. Early Experiences
High School

What characteristics of yours or your high school made it less likely you would develop grit?
– HS was easy because......

What high school experiences made it more likely that you would develop resilience?
– Challenges in HS included.....
B. Core expectations/beliefs that undermine resilience

- Making mistakes is a sign of incompetence
- If I make a mistake, I am a failure
- Patience is for other people
- Failure is a sign of weakness
- Distress should be avoided
Understanding and Managing Expectations

Use feedback/information from others to help form realistic expectations about a goal or challenge.

Use this data to develop a set of expectations and process for achieving your goals.

**Exercise:** Interview a classmate about a difficult experience or challenge. Collect objective data on their experience and use it to set expectations for your own experience.
C. Personal Limitations

Common beliefs inconsistent with the idea of having limitations

- Perfection is obtainable
- If I work hard, I will always be successful
  - (Corollary) If I’m not successful, it’s because I didn’t try hard enough
- People will think poorly of me if I don’t meet their expectations
- I have no limitations
D. Transforming Stress into Resilience

• Four common responses to stress and stressful situations.

– Our ability to manage stress is often determined by your historical experience including
  • Lessons from parents
  • Experiences in school
  • Tolerance for distress
  • Self-esteem

Can you identify your most common stressors?
Four common responses to stress and stressful situations

Four common responses to stress and stressful situations

1. **GIVING UP**

Individuals who give up succumb to the stressful situation and feel defeated.

- Often lack persistence
- Are uncomfortable taking on challenge
- Avoid situations that might result in distress

The avoidance of failure is comforting

The idea of failure implies a person has tried and given their best effort.

- May rationalize that, with more effort, or different circumstances, they would have been successful
Four common responses to stress and stressful situations

2. PUT UP

Individuals who **put up** usually struggle with the stressful situation

- they usually have the ability to tolerate some distress and accept that their level of well-being is diminished temporarily
Four common responses to stress and stressful situations

3. **BOUNCE UP**

Individuals who **bounce up** fully recover from the stressful situation back to their prior level of functioning, which we call **resilience**

- **No fear of failure**
- **Willing to accept challenge**
- **Tolerance of distress/discomfort**
Four common responses to stress and stressful situations

4. **STEP UP**

Individuals who step up do whatever it takes to meet the challenge and grow to an even higher level of functioning and well-being than previously experienced, an experience called *thriving*.
Making intentional decisions

• Resilience grows from thoughtful, intentional decision-making

• A critical aspect of decision-making:
  – recognize that you should never do something that you don’t want to do!!!
Your personal responsibility line

Acceptance of personal responsibility
Ownership of choices and freedom to choose
Saying… ‘I want to….’

Personal Responsibility
Saying… “I need to….”

denying, blaming, making excuses, rationalizing, intellectualizing

(More time spent above the line = greater self esteem)
3 Assignments for session II

1. Develop a personal set of goals and objectives for your life…. A mission statement.

   - Identify ways in which you can use the statement in times of struggle, adversity and discouragement.

   - Recognize your personal ideals/beliefs about performance, what do you expect from yourself.

   - Identify important personal goals and values

2. Make a list of joyful activities and events and use the list to identify your passions in life.
3 Assignments for session II

3. Opened door exercise: write about three times in your life when an important door closed on you and consider what doors opened after they closed
Example mission statement

Values

– Working with people, direct care
– Living near parents to care for them when elderly
– Work has variety and challenge

Goals

– Ph.D in Counseling Psychology
– Working at a highly competitive university CC
– Opportunities to teach and provide direct care