

...BUILD RESILIENCE

SIX FACTORS

Building clients' resilience is a powerful product of experiential education (EE). **Resilience** is the capacity to: cope with adversity in life, recover from trauma, and bounce back from hardships. Six groups of protective factors contribute to the importance of resilience for EE clients.

1. **Individually-based AUTO**factors are the characteristics found in resilient people, such as restraint, temperament, bravery, intelligence, gratitude, kindness, happiness, compassion, hope, optimism, and humor.
2. **Physiologically-based ENDO**factors are the epigenetic switches that operate at a molecular level in humans. When a gene is turned on, its compiled DNA sequences are transcribed into proteins and hormones that regulate bodily operations. A healthy lifestyle can turn on the genes related to building resilience.
3. **Socially-based MESO**factors are the middle ground of family at home and friends in school, work or play. Resilience is improved by high quality social connections with at least one emotionally supportive friend, parent, teacher, mentor, caregiver, role model, or other ally.
4. **Community-based ECTO**factors are the outside influences that society has on resilient people. Accountable for justice, health, education, environment, and social support, these services provide safe spaces to exchange confidential information, to offer necessary resources that meet basic needs, and to give helpful counseling that supports resilience building.
5. **Heritage-based RETRO**factors are a cultural or spiritual background behind the resilient individual. Their ideological values, life philosophies and religious convictions can help find meaning when facing adversity. Ethnic pride and a supportive group with common language, religion, or tradition can offer a strong source of resilience building.

6. **Dissonance-based PRO**factors come from natural challenges in a person's life that build resilience by taking risk, overcoming fear, and resolving conflict. Successfully dealing with unfamiliar dangers, novel learning opportunities, and uncomfortable social situations often enhances resiliency.

PROGRAMMING

Profactors are where EE programs have the greatest or most obvious influence. Adventure provides ample occasions to test one's self by successfully attempting challenges in nature. A secondary improvement may also be obtained by paying attention to the five other factors.

1. **Autofactors** can be improved by shifting clients' internal narratives of self-efficacy (belief they can accomplish a task) and self-worth (value they give to themselves) from negative criticism to positive confidence by reflective opportunities for self-affirmation.
2. **Endofactors** are boosted through exercise, nutrition, substance avoidance, and sleep.
3. **Mesofactors** can be increased by a supportive person who helps normalize crises, places the distress in a meaningful context, maintains a positive outlook, acts as a non-judgmental sounding board, and collaboratively solves problems and makes decisions with clients.
4. **Ectofactors** can be holistically strengthened by linking clients to community resources. Program staff can ensure a mentally and physically safe space for all clients.
5. **Retrofactors** can be enhanced through very respectful reclaiming of one's own culture through rites of passage.

Focus on **building safe spaces** where clients can freely push their comfort zones. Assist them to get **away from learned helplessness** (the belief they are incapable of change or control over circumstances) and **toward stress inoculation** (able to create effective responses to distress).

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FURTHER RESOURCES

READING

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