PART 1
Strengths to Make It Through

How Families Can Grow Together Through Everyday Challenges . . . and Big Stuff

Discovering Your Family’s Strengths
A ParentFurther webinar series from Search Institute
Based on The American Family Assets Study
THE AMERICAN **Family Assets** STUDY

- 1,511 families
  - One parenting adult
  - One 10 – 15 year old
- Diverse (quotas)
- Oversampled
  - African Americans
  - Latino/Latina
  - Asian Americans
- Weighed to U. S. Census

**OVERVIEW PRESENTATIONS:**
- www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-assets
- disneydiscovertogther.com

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**Family Assets Framework**

- Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS
- Establishing ROUTINES
- Maintaining EXPECTATION S
- Adapting to CHALLENGES
- Connecting to COMMUNITY

www.parentfurther.com/familyassets
Family Assets Webinar Series

- September: Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS
- May 14: Establishing ROUTINES (Noon, Central Time)
- November: Maintaining EXPECTATIONS
- TODAY: Adapting to CHALLENGES
- July: Connecting to COMMUNITY

(Schedule subject to change)

Session Overview

- Challenges families face
- Resilience
- Adapting to Challenges
- Strategies for parents
- Strategies for those who work with families
What Experience Do You Bring?

What are some experiences you've had or families you've worked with that are on your mind as we begin this conversation?

- What challenges have you/do they face?
- How have those experiences shaped you or them?

You may keep these thoughts private, or you may share them with us by typing them in the chat section.

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POLL

Which of the following is your primary interest in participating in this webinar?

1. Help my own family deal with everyday stresses
2. Help my own family deal with a major challenge
3. Support families I work with in dealing with everyday stresses
4. Support families I work with in overcoming major challenges
Underlying Themes

• The power of family strengths to . . .
  – Manage everyday challenges
  – Cope with crises
  – Recover from trauma

• The power of everyday actions, practices

• The central role of relationships
Challenges in Past 2 Years (2011)

- A financial crisis: 30%
- A family member with a serious illness or disability: 27%
- Lost a job or been unemployed: 27%
- Death of a grandparent or other close relative: 25%
- Dealing with a disability/handicap: 18%
- Had a serious accident or illness: 17%
- A family member struggled with alcohol or other drugs: 14%
- A family member arrested or imprisoned for crime: 11%
- A family member has been a victim of a crime: 9%
- Experienced a separation or divorce: 8%

- 12% reported 0 out of 75 possible
- 50% reported 6 or lower (out of 75 possible)
- Mean = 9 out of 75

The Current Focus on Childhood Trauma

**Potential**
- Current interest in childhood trauma
  - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)*
- Invest in those facing greatest challenges

**Risk**
- Re-enforce perceptions of families, youth as dysfunctional
- A sense of inevitability
- Identify “determinants,” rather than “factors”

* Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: http://acestudy.org/
The Negative Effect of Risk Focus

“Most studies . . . tended to dismiss the family as hopelessly dysfunctional and to seek positive extrafamilial resources to counter the negative impact. Thus, families were seen to contribute to risk, but not to resilience.”

— Froma Walsh


Resilience in Families
Resilience: The capacity to withstand traumatic and stressful experiences.

“People who are resilient draw on strengths in themselves, their relationships, and their communities to help them overcome adversity.”

— This Emotional Life (PBS, 2010) www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience

“Ordinary Magic”

“Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities.”

— Ann Masten, 1991

Family Assets as Resilience Factors

Stressful Life Events

13 Stressful Life Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Experienced</th>
<th>Family Experienced</th>
<th>Youth Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation or divorce</td>
<td>Victim of a crime</td>
<td>Death of parent/caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job loss/unemployment</td>
<td>Arrested or imprisoned for a crime</td>
<td>Death of sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious accident or illness</td>
<td>Struggled with abuse or alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>Death of grandparent/close relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>Death of a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military deployment</td>
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Weighted for recency and intensity

Stressful Life Events

High-Stressed Families
14% of families (n = 207) who score highest (≥ 17 out of 75)

Family Assets & Resilience

If youth in high-stressed families experience high levels of family assets, they are . . .

- 9 times more likely to exhibit Personal responsibility
- 7 times to exhibit Self-regulation
- 7 times to exhibit School engagement
- 5 times to exhibit Caring

. . . than youth in high-stressed families who experience low levels of family assets.
Adaptability in Families
Strengths to Thrive Amid Everyday Challenges

Adapting to CHALLENGES

- Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS
- Establishing ROUTINES
- Maintaining EXPECTATIONS
- Adapting to CHALLENGES
- Connecting to COMMUNITY

14. Management of Daily Commitments
15. Adaptability
16. Problem Solving
17. Democratic Decision Making
Which of these is hardest for your family?
A. Managing daily commitments
B. Being adaptable
C. Solving problems together
D. Making decisions together

If there’s something else, jot it in the comments section.

**POLL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment Management</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Managing Daily Commitments: Different Issues for Different Families

• Multiple jobs to make ends meet
• Care-giving for a relative
• Juggling work and school expectations along with community participation, other activities
• These can squeeze out or interrupt . . .
  – Family fun and time together
  – Couple time
• Where does technology help and hurt?

Management of Daily Commitments

When families work together to . . .
• Manage multiple commitments
• Make choices in light of shared, sometimes-competing interests
• Provide mutual support
• Take time to do things they enjoy

Then . . .
They . . .
• Reduce stress
• Increase personal and family satisfaction
• Develop negotiation
• Clarify role expectations and role balance.

Adaptability

• Important in order to . . .
  – Adjust to new realities (internal or external)
  – Navigate relationships with each other

• Adjust to changing parent-child relationships
  – Changing roles and responsibilities
  – Increased autonomy
  – New capacities, interests

• Interacts with appropriate structure, routine

Problem Solving: Two Elements

**Practical Strategies**
- Tackling issues (instead of putting them off)
- Working together to solve the problems
- Accepting responsibility (not just blaming others)
- Focus on maintaining relationships throughout

**Meaning Making**
- How the family makes sense of the adversity while trying to adapt to new realities:
  - Tap religious or spiritual resources
  - Story telling
  - Investing in a cause, person
  - Maintaining hope

Democratic Decision Making

- Democratic or shared decision making develops in young people:
  - Capacity to negotiate and compromise
  - Ability to make decision on their own when they need to
- Less about the "decisional authority"; more about the interactions around decision making
- How parenting adults and children engage each other in decision making and problem solving
- Authority shifts as young people mature

Levels of Shared Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Collaboration</th>
<th>Medium Collaboration</th>
<th>High Collaboration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent lets child decide on her/his own</td>
<td>Parent gives child options to choose from</td>
<td>Parent and child talk about pros and cons of different options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent decides on their own with little or no input from the child.</td>
<td>Parent explains the reasons for her or his decisions</td>
<td>Parent suggests ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for mutually acceptable choices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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10 Strategies for Growing Together (1)

1. Build a foundation of strengths through smaller challenges to help with the bigger ones
2. Be intentional about spending time together
3. Avoid blaming or shaming
4. Solve problems and make decisions together
5. Maintain routines, rituals that make life a bit more predictable
10 Strategies for Growing Together (2)

6. Ask for support and help from caring people
7. Pay attention to transitions and milestones
8. Be intentional about meaning making
9. Put relationships first
10. Be patient with yourself and with others

Strategies for People Who Seek to Support Families
Reframing the Emphasis

- When families are under stress and facing challenges, shift from . . .
  - Focusing primarily on their problems and the services they need
- To recognize, tap, and strengthen
  - Their internal resources and capacities
  - Their web of relationships
  - Their capacity to might contribute
- All of which are key to growing amid challenges

10 Strategies for Supporters (1)

1. Reinforce, don’t replace, family’s strengths
   - Reinforce their capacity and self-efficacy
   - Maintain a sense of agency or autonomy
2. Give them time to talk things through (when ready)
3. Be proactive (not pesky) in offering support
4. Help family connect with people they trust
5. Walk alongside (more than giving advice)
10 Strategies for Supporters (2)

6. Offer practical, specific support
7. Connect family to networks, resources
8. Advocate on the family’s behalf, when needed
9. Encourage them to take breaks (and make it possible)
10. Let families make meaning in ways that work for them (not necessarily for you)

Questions?
NEW Search Institute Workshops

Discovering Your Family’s Strengths
A workshop for parenting adults

Engaging the New American Family
Relationship-based strategies for nurturing families’ strengths

More Info on these and other workshops:
CALL: Mary Shrader: (800) 888-7828 ex. 526
VISIT: www.search-institute.org/presentations-workshops
Discovering Your Family’s Strengths: A Five-Part Webinar Series

Next Webinar: May 14

Routines Don’t Have to Be Ruts
Meaningful Routines for Today’s Complicated Families

Thank you for joining us!

VISIT AND COMMENT:
www.parentfurther.com