

Building Resilience for Hard Places

Keeping the Big Picture and our Humanity in Mind

- Our human vulnerability is the vessel in which God's power is revealed
- It is normal, human, to "get out of shape" and resilient to "get back into shape" over time

Characteristics of Resilient People – Assess and Train

1. Personal and Relational Characteristics (Mind)
 - a. Sense of purpose or calling
 - b. Actively (collaboratively) coping with distress (rather than passively suffering or waiting)
 - c. Flexibility, adaptability
 - d. Connecting well with others (at least two close relationships)
 - e. Established social support (personal, and fostered in the organization and team continually)
 - f. Organizational or team culture is graceful (accepting, supportive) towards distress
2. Spiritual Characteristics (Spirit)
 - a. Sound theology of suffering, personally wrestled through
 - b. Ability to forgive, including an awareness of the forgiveness process (not: Excusing)
 - c. Knowing and receiving grace from God and others (in our human vulnerability)
 - d. Ability to accept and deal with difficult feelings (share, journal, lament)
 - e. Practical support and prayer provided by our community, and organization
 - f. Ability to reconnect with God despite distress and questions, e.g. in lament, and using the senses (songs, images, items, stories, memorized texts, communion)
3. Healthy Resilience Practices (Body)
 - a. Exercise (most days, at least ½ hour aerobic exercise), sufficient sleep, healthy diet
 - b. Regenerative activities (relaxation, joy, play)
 - c. Downtimes (evening downtime, Sabbath, vacation)
 - d. Regular times away from the hard place
 - e. Finding a regenerative space in our inner world or imagination
 - f. Restorative extended downtimes
4. Security Training as necessary for a particular area (resources at www.cricon.org)

Frauke & Charlie Schaefer, April 2015

Barnabas International

Authors of "Trauma & Resilience: A Handbook – Effectively Supporting Those, Who Serve God"

Characteristics of Resilience (Personal and Relational):

Personal

Sense of purpose and meaning

- Satisfaction with their work
- Commitment, determination, not easily shaken from core beliefs
- Faith: Relationship with God provides a sense of calling and duty
 - Knowing we are part of the big picture of what God is doing

Sense of collaborative control

- Sense of efficacy and influence over their circumstances
- Faith: Locus of control is centered in the relationship between the person and God

Ability to actively cope with stress rather than repress, deny, and attempt to avoid it

- Emotional health
 - Helpful: Positive and active coping styles; stress management skills; relaxation
 - Harmful: Affective D/O, previous posttraumatic stress
- Tolerance of distressing affect – not easily discouraged by problems
 - Seeing stress as a challenge or an expected aspect of accomplishment
- Biologically healthy: good sleep, aerobic exercise, sunshine, nutrition
- Faith: Healthy Theology of Suffering

Flexibility and adaptability

- Adapts well to new circumstances and stressors
- Faith: openness to God's work
 - Able to adapt to a new ministry opportunity, if needed

Relational

Interpersonal ability/sociability/social competence

- Ability to connect, know, and relate well to others
- Warmth, security, closeness, sturdy relationships
- Interpersonal history that bodes well for healthy relationships
 - FOO stability/instability with close family relationships (parents stay together)
 - Ability to handle conflict
 - No childhood abuse
- Faith: Knowing and relating to God well and personally (including Theology of Suffering)

Social support is in place

- Marital satisfaction
- A role model they can look up to
- Faith: Community of believers with shared devotion, beliefs, caring for each other

Culture (organization) that is graceful toward distress

- Allows room to accept and respond to distress in a visible and social manner
- Organization provides resources and takes initiative to respond to need
- Hearing testimonies from others who have survived trauma
- Faith: Accepts that healthy, faithful, God-loving people can be affected by stress and trauma

SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE CHECKLIST

(Trauma & Resilience: A Handbook, eds. Schaefer and Schaefer, 2012;
www.TraumaResilience.com)

Sound Theology of Suffering

- Has the person (have I) grappled with his or her (my) theology of suffering and are the resulting assumptions biblical?
- Does our (my) organization encourage and promote a sound theology of suffering?

Intrinsic Religious Motivation

- Does the person (do I) have a habit of attending community worship and prayer?
- Does the person (do I) have at least two close Christian friends for mutual support and sharing openly and deeply?
- Does the person (do I) have a regular habit of personal prayer and studying the Bible?
- Does the person (do I) have a regular practice of participating in spiritual retreats, contemplative prayer, and receiving spiritual direction?

Ability to Face and Share Uncomfortable Feelings

- Is the person (am I) authentically and honestly talking about difficult life experiences and surrounding feelings?
- Does our (my) organization support honest sharing of uncomfortable feelings, or are there indirectly communicated messages that "good Christians" should not have certain feelings?

Knowing and Extending Forgiveness

- Does the person (do I) have experiential knowledge of receiving forgiveness from God and from others?
- Is the person (am I) aware of the forgiveness process and able to distinguish forgiving from excusing or glossing over injuries?
- Does our (my) organization encourage and promote giving, experiencing, and knowing forgiveness?

Knowing and Receiving Grace

- Does the person (do I) have a deep experience of being loved and valued by God?
- Is the person (am I) accepting of human brokenness as a common experience and able to love others (myself) when the brokenness is visible, rather than being overly condemning?
- Does our (my) organization encourage a culture of openness, vulnerability, and support as its members deal with their brokenness?

Supportive Relationships with Other Believers

- Does this person (do I) have at least two close Christian friends?
- Does this person (do I) give growing and maintaining close relationships a measure of priority over ministry work?