

Resilience and Posttraumatic Growth: A Comparison

Resilience

Resilience in children exists prior to exposure to trauma or a stressful life experience. Resiliency is described as the ability to recover or return to the level of functioning present before adversity occurred with only minimal reactions following that exposure (Bonanno, Papa, & O'Neill, 2001). While resilient individuals may experience challenges in normal functioning such as restless sleep, overall they have healthy functioning including positive emotions despite their experience. In short, resilient individuals have a high level of coping after trauma.

The following factors are associated with resilience in children (Cloitre, Martin, & Linares, 2005; Rice & Groves, 2005):

- Above average communication skills, cognitive abilities, and problem-solving abilities
- Positive beliefs about self and future
- Talents, hobbies, and/or special skills
- Ability to self-regulate behavior
- Able to ask for help from adults
- Stable, nurturing parent or caretaker and extended family and supportive, positive school experiences
- Consistent family environment such as family traditions, rituals, and/or structured routines
- Strong cultural connections and cultural identity

Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic growth in children develops as a result of lessons learned from exposure to trauma or crisis (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Posttraumatic growth is manifested in several clearly defined behaviors and thought patterns not necessarily present prior to exposure (Turner & Cox, 2004). Experiences that children and adolescents may have that are associated with posttraumatic growth include (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Ungerleider, 2003):

- Feeling more compassion and empathy for others after personal trauma or loss
- Increased psychological and emotional maturity when compared to age-related peers
- Increased resiliency, the ability to “bounce back”
- A more complex appreciation of life when compared to age related peers
- A deeper understanding of one’s personal values, purpose, and meaning in life
- A greater value of interpersonal relationships