

What Counsellors Need to Know About Resiliency in Adolescents

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Abstract In this paper, the authors provide an overview of the research literature on resiliency in adolescents. We explore the history of resiliency as it relates to the health and well-being of adolescents, identify common themes, provide a description of resilient youth, and introduce the developmental assets framework. To provide counsellors with an increased understanding of the concept of resiliency as well as to encourage the application of resiliency to practice, a visual model is provided from which counsellors can organize ‘resiliency’ as a construct. The role of parents, families, schools, communities, and non-family adults are discussed with regard to asset development. Lastly, we examine developmental assets in relation to counselling practice, including how counsellors can effectively incorporate the concept of resiliency into their professional practice in working with adolescents.

Keywords Resiliency · Adolescents · Developmental assets framework

Introduction

The intent of this manuscript is to provide counsellors with essential information about resiliency in adolescents with a particular focus on the practical application of this construct in the context of a counselling relationship. The paper includes three major sections. First, an overview of resiliency will provide definitions and explore major themes from the literature. In the second section, the major building blocks to resiliency will be taken up and will include a discussion of the role of parents, families, schools, communities, and non-family adults in asset development. Finally, there will be a discussion of developmental assets in relation to counselling practice.

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The paper refers to the main model of resiliency identified in the literature, the developmental assets framework (Leffert *et al.* 1998). Although this framework identifies three main age groups, the focus will be on literature that pertains to adolescents aged 12–18, and the terms young people, youth, and adolescents will be used interchangeably.

Until recently, resiliency has remained an elusive construct to those in the field of counselling, with traditional methods to enhance the health and well-being of young people centering on a problem-focused paradigm (Leffert *et al.* 1998). However, with an increased understanding of the processes related to resilience, as well as an increased understanding of the relationship between environmental contexts and adolescent development, there has been a shift towards the identification of strengths and protective factors (Benson 1997; Masten *et al.* 1990; Pittman and Cahill 1991; Rutter 1985; Werner and Smith 1992). Accordingly, the concept of resiliency not only provides counsellors with a framework to conceptualize adolescent development, it elicits opportunities for counsellors to incorporate a focus on strengths and capacities.

A major theme identified as imperative for counsellors to attend to in working with adolescents is the notion that all youth possess strengths and assets (Richardson 2002). In order to better understand the construct of resiliency as it relates to counselling practice, the following section will provide: (a) a definition of resiliency, (b) a brief overview of the concept, (c) an outline of the resilient adolescent, (d) a definition of the developmental assets framework, and (e) an outline of the asset categories. Each of these elements will be examined in order to provide context and focus on what counsellors need to know in working with adolescents.

Resiliency

Defined as “the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” (Richardson 2002, p. 308), resilience is a complex phenomenon that focuses on protective factors that contribute to positive outcomes despite the presence of risk, and seemingly devastating disadvantages in life (Benard 1995; Dent and Cameron 2003; Mancini and Bonanno 2006). Acting more as a concept than an applied theoretical model, psychologists have studied resiliency since the 1970’s, producing an abundance of literature that focuses on childhood and family history, as well as on environment and social capital as predictors of success in adult life (Kitano and Lewis 2005; Masten and Coatsworth 1998; Runyan *et al.* 1998). The study of resiliency is important because little has been done in order to solidify the concept, yet research findings indicate that without significantly changing the environments in which youth live, attempts to enhance resilience will be met with limited success (Armstrong *et al.* 2005; Eccles and Gootman 2002).

A Brief Overview of Resiliency

The premise of resiliency is that people possess selective strengths, which are often referred to as protective factors that help them survive adversity (Richardson 2002). Resiliency can be viewed as a developmental process, whereby experience in successfully overcoming adverse situations increases self-efficacy and confidence in one’s ability to influence the environment (Kitano and Lewis 2005; Werner 2000).

The first influences to be explored with regard to resiliency were the psychological and social relationships of young people who did well despite poverty, mentally ill parents, abuse, neglect, and community and family violence (Harvard Mental Health Letter 2006).

Research identified that youth were protected by their connections to competent and caring adults in the family and community, as well as by cognitive and self regulation skills, positive views of self, and motivation to be effective in the environment (Harvard Mental Health Letter). As knowledge of the processes related to resilience and our understanding of the relationship between community contexts and adolescent development have accumulated, intervention and prevention efforts have developed around these concepts in an attempt to alter the developmental pathways of young people (Kitano and Lewis 2005).

The Resilient Adolescent

While it is difficult to summarize or define what constitutes a resilient adolescent, a resilient youth can be described as an emotionally healthy individual who is able to successfully confront and negotiate a multitude of challenges, and effectively cope with obstacles, barriers, or setbacks (Brooks and Goldstein 2001). Overall, resilient adolescents appear to possess certain qualities or characteristics that differentiate them from youth who are not able to successfully meet challenges or effectively deal with personal setbacks (Brooks & Goldstein). Qualities that are found in resilient youth include: (a) the ability to self-regulate, (b) a sense of hope, (c) self-worth, (d) the ability to establish realistic goals and expectations, (e) problem-solving skills, and (f) the presence of effective interpersonal skills and coping strategies (Brooks & Goldstein; Gardner *et al.* 2008). Resilient youth have a strong sense of self, whereby they are more likely to view personal mistakes or obstacles as challenges that they have the ability and skills to successfully manage, as opposed to viewing themselves as incapable of coping. Although they are aware of their vulnerabilities or weaknesses, they are also able to identify their individual strengths (Brooks & Goldstein). Resilient youth are future-oriented and appear to possess an internal locus of control, defining and focusing their energy on those aspects of their lives that they have control over, as opposed to focusing their attention on factors beyond their control (Brooks & Goldstein; Feinstein *et al.* 2008; Seginer 2008).

Resiliency is a concept that incorporates the absence of problem behaviours, as well as indicators of healthy adolescent development (Scales *et al.* 2006). While risk refers to a youth's susceptibility to adversity, resilience reveals a youth's capacity to retain equilibrium after encountering substantial adversity. Therefore, the emphasis on thriving not only indicates the absence of problem behaviour, but also points toward signs of healthy development (Edwards *et al.* 2007; Scales *et al.*). In other words, resiliency is more than the absence of risk factors; it is also the presence of protective factors, referred to as developmental assets.

Developmental Assets Framework

The main model of resiliency identified in the literature is the developmental assets framework. Developed by the Search Institute (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>), the developmental assets framework is grounded in empirical studies of child and adolescent development, with a focus on prevention, resilience, youth development, and protective factors (Benson *et al.* 2004; Leffert *et al.* 1998). Under the direction of Peter Benson (1997), the Search Institute conducted surveys of more than 350,000 sixth and twelfth grade students in over 600 communities between the years 1990 and 1995. The results of these surveys were used to identify 30 developmental assets that youth need to function optimally in life. After continued studies conducted by the same researchers, the number of developmental assets was increased to 40 (Richardson 2002).

Asset Categories

For the purpose of communication, the Search Institute grouped the 40 assets into eight broad categories (Scales *et al.* 2006), which are outlined in the [Appendix](#). These categories reflect both external, as well as internal factors. External assets are identified as those assets that enhance the relationships and opportunities that adults and peers provide for young people, while internal assets include the values, skills, and self-perceptions that young people develop in order to guide and regulate themselves (Scales *et al.*).

When present, developmental assets enhance developmental outcomes and provide a common language for communities and social systems. They also play an important role in the healthy development of young people across varied life circumstances and in the face of multiple challenges (Leffert *et al.* 1998; Mannes *et al.* 2005). Developmental assets have a key role in the prevention of a range of high-risk behaviours and set practical benchmarks for positive adolescent development (Mannes *et al.*). The more assets young people possess, the less high-risk behaviour they engage in and the more they thrive (Benson 1997; Leffert *et al.*; Scales *et al.* 2000). Risk affects adolescents at multiple levels with regard to their environment; therefore, efforts to enhance resilience must take place at multiple levels (Brooks 2006). This is accomplished by generating positive environmental contexts within parents, families, schools, and communities (Benard 1991; Benson 2002). Non-family adults can also impact resilience (Scales *et al.* 2006). For example, an extensive longitudinal study of resilience in urban youth in the United States found that parent support was a strong predictor of resilience, including self-reliance, lower substance abuse, lower school misconduct, and decreased depression (O'Donnell *et al.* 2002). Scales *et al.* identified that young people with increased support from non-family adults from middle school to high school experienced higher levels of thriving in high school than other students.

Summary

While traditional methods to enhance the health and well-being of young people have focused on a problem-focused paradigm, resiliency provides counsellors with a framework with which to view healthy adolescent development and offers a new and unique way to conceptualize client concerns. Through increased understanding of the role of resiliency and the identification of strengths and protective factors, counsellors have the opportunity to work with young people in a manner that allows them to build upon the individual's internal resources, as well as to help them access external resources that exist within their immediate family and community environments.

The Sum is Greater than the Parts: the Building Blocks of Resiliency

Figure 1 presents a systematic approach to the concept of resiliency, including the basic premise behind what counsellors need to know in order to increase resiliency in young people, through the utilization of internal as well as external resources. One way to assist counsellors in conceptualizing resiliency is to provide a visual framework, which they can use to incorporate the concept of resiliency into their practice in working with adolescents. The following figure is a representation of a framework that counsellors can use to understand the relationship between resiliency and positive environmental contexts with parents, families, schools, communities, and non-family adults.

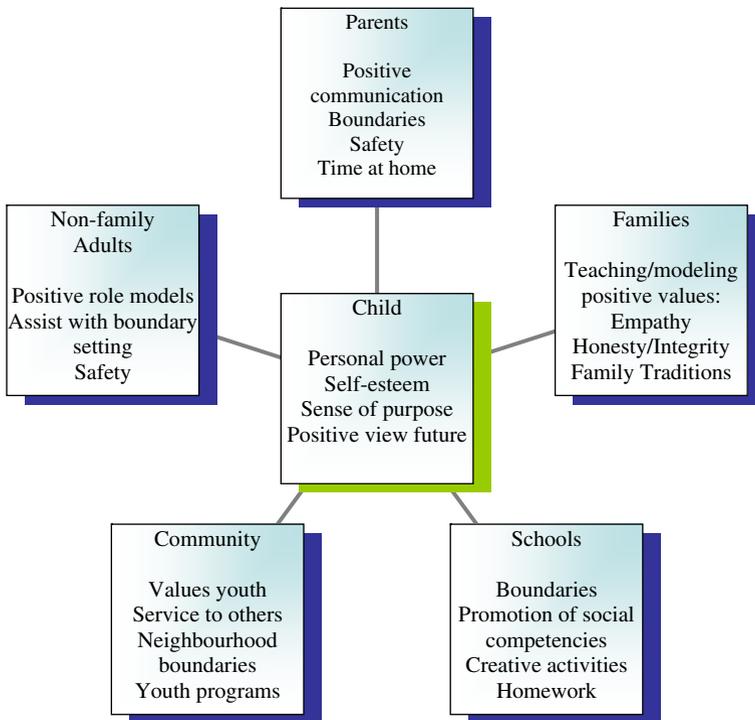


Fig. 1 The relationship between resiliency and positive environmental contexts with parents, families, schools, communities, and non-family adults.

The Role of Parents in Resiliency and Asset Development

Not only are parents primary sources of support, caring, and values for adolescents, they are also young people's first educators (Gleason 2007; Rice and Mulkeen 1995; Steinberg *et al.* 1991). Several studies on resilience demonstrate a significant relationship between the quality of parental caregiving and an adolescent's ability to adapt to adversity (Masten *et al.* 1990; Werner 1993; Werner and Smith 1992). Therefore, while parents may not be able to protect their youth from adversity, they have the ability to engage in parenting in a manner that prepares youth to cope with, and effectively meet the challenges and demands placed upon them. Parents can foster resilience in their adolescents by teaching and conveying empathy, modeling effective communication, and providing unconditional acceptance (Brooks and Goldstein 2001).

Empathy

The majority of resilient youth experience unconditional acceptance from at least one significant individual in their lives (Goldstein and Brooks 2002). As empathy is identified as a means for individuals to demonstrate unconditional acceptance, one way that parents can foster resiliency in their young people is to teach and convey empathy (Goldstein & Brooks). This can be accomplished by having the parents serving as positive role models for their youth, whereby they create an atmosphere where their children feel loved and

accepted for who they are. In return, the adolescent will experience increased self-esteem, which is another quality found in resilient youth (Goldstein & Brooks).

Communication

Helping adolescents develop effective communication skills enhances resiliency by providing skills necessary to function within the community as active participants. Effective communication assists youth in establishing meaningful connections and interpersonal relationships, which will serve as protective factors and help them cope in the face of adversity (Goldstein and Brooks 2002). One way that parents can help their children develop effective communication skills is to practice active listening (Goldstein & Brooks).

Unconditional Acceptance

Parents display acceptance through collaboration, a willingness to compromise, and efforts to support their child in exploring their own personal goals and endeavors (Goldstein and Brooks 2002). For example, engaging the youth in a discussion about their interests, and then working to help them explore these interests would be one way to show evidence of acceptance, as would helping the youth focus on their strengths, as opposed to pointing out their deficits.

The Role of Families in Resiliency and Asset Development

Recently, the focus of resilience has been extended to include the family unit (Simon *et al.* 2005). As the most immediate care-giving environment, the family has great impact on the development of resilience in adolescents (Brooks 2006). Therefore, one of the key aims of counselling is to discover and apply the family's unique resources and capabilities in ways that are useful to the family unit as a whole, assisting them in utilizing their inherent capacity for growth and change (Simon *et al.*). For example, coping mechanisms known to help promote resiliency include: good marital communication, increased problem-solving skills, satisfaction with quality of life, financial management skills, family celebrations, family hardiness, family time, family routines, and family traditions (McCubbin and McCubbin 1988; Shortt *et al.* 2007).

Resilient families use a combination of individual, family, and community strengths (Simon *et al.* 2005). The literature also identifies the presence of greater resilience in those families who reach out to others in their social environment, including extended family, friends, and community members (McCubbin *et al.* 1995). In addition to social support received from schools, churches, and neighbourhood resources, the effective utilization of health care and mental health services appears to strengthen family resilience (McCubbin *et al.* 2002; McCubbin *et al.*).

One of the ways in which families can increase resiliency in adolescents is to create routines and traditions unique to their own family unit (Brooks and Goldstein 2001). This can be accomplished within the immediate family environment through engagement in activities like family dinners, or through time spent together such as a scheduled recreation day. These types of routines and traditions can also be extended to include the larger family unit. For example, families can work together to form traditions and routines with extended family members with regard to special holidays or other important events. The establishment of traditions and routines helps foster resiliency in adolescents by providing

support and positive family communication, which are identified as qualities unique to the resilient youth (Brooks & Goldstein).

The Role of the School in Resiliency and Asset Development

The school is viewed as an environment where adolescents must succeed in order to develop competencies in adulthood (Brooks 2006): “Restructuring the school environment is one means of strengthening resilience in children—minimizing negative outcomes for youth and promoting positive youth development” (p. 69). Asset-rich schools are those in which teachers and other significant adults attempt to understand youth’s perspectives, consistently inform youth that they are loved and valued, encourage their success, and communicate about their questions, concerns, and challenges (Aspy *et al.* 2004). Furthermore, relationships with teachers are important assets that enhance opportunities for positive developmental outcomes, including improved quality of life and cognitive outcomes (Aspy *et al.*).

Strengthening protection within schools provides a buffer for risk experienced in families and communities and contributes to positive youth development among adolescents (Brooks 2006). There is empirical evidence that the school environment impacts student outcomes (Brooks). For example, perceived school connectedness is associated with reduced levels of emotional distress, suicidal involvement, violent behaviours, alcohol and drug use, as well as with a later age for sexual involvement (Resnick *et al.* 1997). Teachers who establish appropriate personal relationships with their students can improve their chances for a successful school experience (Baker *et al.* 2003).

In addition to providing appropriate personal relationships, schools have the ability to work with youth and their families to increase resiliency on several other levels. One way that schools can foster resiliency in youth is to include the youth, as well as their families, in the decision-making process, providing effective communication and ensuring that all parties are actively involved in the decisions that are going to impact them with regard to the adolescent’s education (Brooks and Goldstein 2001). In the classroom, teachers can enhance resiliency by taking a hands-on approach working with their students to develop concrete assets such as effective problem-solving skills, time management skills, and coping strategies. They can also work with youth around ways to set personal boundaries, and establish realistic goals and expectations (Brooks & Goldstein). As the school is a place where adolescents begin to explore their own personal identity, teachers become role models for students, helping them develop a strong sense of self, celebrating their successes, and supporting them through their mistakes and challenges (Brooks & Goldstein). The school is a place where teachers and other professionals can work to instill a sense of community in youth by teaching them the skills necessary to ensure that they are able to enter into the larger community as healthy and productive individuals (Brooks & Goldstein).

The Role of the Community in Resiliency

The role communities’ play in adolescent development is a recent advance, facilitated by the rising incidence of problem behaviours, as well as an interest in the role that contextual factors play in influencing developmental outcomes for youth (Leffert *et al.* 1998). Driven by the notion that by building external assets in communities, adolescents will develop internal assets to guide them for the rest of their lives; the developmental assets framework

is aimed at building and strengthening community capacity through individuals, organizations, and networks (Benson *et al.* 2004; Scales 1999). Accordingly, the foundation of asset-building communities is the mobilization of public power, capacity, and commitment that creates a normative culture in which all residents are expected to contribute to the healthy development of adolescents in order to improve and maintain the well-being of the community (Benson *et al.*; Mannes *et al.* 2005). The assets are useful in that they suggest ways community residents can realistically build these connections, enhance the environment, foster the norms, and establish the competencies that are essential to building a community committed to the healthy development and well-being of adolescents (Mannes *et al.*).

As with the school system, the community has the power to unite and connect individuals, impacting healthy development and increasing resiliency in adolescents on multiple levels. Therefore, communities can also enhance resiliency by creating their own traditions and routines. This can be accomplished by creating after-school programs designed in a manner that neither excludes youth based on age, race, sexuality, ethnicity nor the ability of their families to pay for these services. In addition to creating structured opportunities to actively engage youth, communities can incorporate activities designed to showcase a multitude of talents, ranging from athletic ability to more creative endeavours such as art competitions or theatre productions, with the goal of creating a sense of identity, pride, and belonging in adolescents within the community. Another way that communities can foster resiliency is to provide youth with opportunities to contribute. This can be accomplished by hosting events such as fundraisers, community cleanups, barbecues, and other social events. Such events would not only benefit the individuals involved, but also the community as a whole.

The Role of Non-family Adults and Resiliency

The literature speaks to the ability of non-family adults to successfully contribute to the well-being of young people with whom they have contact, by providing evidence that a significant relationship with an adult mentor contributes to resilience in youth (Simon *et al.* 2005). Caring and supportive relationships with trusted adults are essential to healthy development. Research supports the idea that relationships with adults outside of young people's families that are characterized by empathy, trust, attention, understanding, affirmation, respect and virtue, play significant roles in providing adolescents with a number of developmental assets (Brooks 2006; Scales *et al.* 2006).

A relationship with a non-family adult provides opportunities for youth to establish positive supports and connections outside their families, affording them the luxury of being able to find natural connections or bonds with individuals whom they trust, look up to, and feel comfortable with, or those who share common interests. For example, coaches, family friends, employers, or youth workers are all identified as individuals who have the ability to connect with youth. The impact of non-family adults in relation to resiliency is especially important for single parents, or families who either do not have extended families, or are simply not able to connect with family members due to finances, proximity, or other barriers.

Summary

With the shift from a problem-focused paradigm to healthy adolescent development comes the understanding that parents, families, schools, community, and non-family

adults all have the ability to have a positive impact on youth development. Regardless of their affiliation to the young person, individuals can all contribute something. The benefit of working to increase resiliency within adolescents is that everyone will benefit as these individuals move forward as healthy, productive adults within their communities.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The developmental assets framework provides structure and focus for counsellors in terms of how they can foster resiliency in adolescents as well as how they can educate parents, families, schools, communities, and non-family adults on the benefits of enhancing resiliency in youth. Specifically, the developmental assets framework has several important implications for counselling practice.

First, emphasizing prosocial expectations, the developmental assets framework is a strength-based approach to adolescent development that identifies positive relationships, opportunities, and personal characteristics that impact and shape adolescents' healthy development (Edwards *et al.* 2007; Mannes *et al.* 2005; Sesma *et al.* 2003). This moves away from a problem-focused paradigm, and provides counsellors with a way to identify an individual's strengths, as opposed to targeting weaknesses, or areas of concern with regard to development. The framework also provides a tool for responding to the emerging understanding of the ecology of human development, thereby promoting a sense of responsibility and social trust, as well as a means of identifying and articulating the common good of adolescents (Mannes *et al.*; Sesma *et al.*).

The first step in utilization of the developmental assets framework is identification of specific assets that are unique to the individual. Identification of specific assets is important because it allows counsellors to focus on what they have to work with, as opposed to focusing on existing problems and deficits. Identification of assets can be accomplished through an intake screening or questionnaire, or gradually over the course of several counselling sessions. Ideally, this process would be done in conjunction with the youth's parents or primary caregiver in order to provide a more comprehensive perspective and understanding of the assets present.

Second, developmental assets enhance important developmental outcomes, conceived as both the reduction of health-compromising behaviours and the increase of school success and other indicators of positive outcomes (Leffert *et al.* 1998). For example, several studies identify that youths' sense of belonging such as feeling connected to school and being valued by classmates and teachers is positively related to liking school, enjoying class, demonstrating a concern for others, and having conflict resolution skills; and negatively related to depressive symptoms, social rejection, peer victimization, delinquency and drug use (Anderman 2002; Battistich and Hom 1997; Hagerty *et al.* 1992; Solomon *et al.* 2000). As such, developmental assets establish a set of benchmarks for positive adolescent development (Leffert *et al.*). This information is important for counsellors because it provides them knowledge of how to work with adolescents to develop their own skills and resources in order to minimize the effects of health-compromising behaviours.

Third, developmental assets not only set benchmarks for positive adolescent development, they provide a taxonomy of developmental targets that require both family and community engagement to ensure their acquisition (Leffert *et al.* 1998). Research indicates that the more young people experience a variety of developmental assets, the less high-risk

behaviour they engage in and the more they thrive (Benson 1997; Leffert *et al.*; Scales *et al.* 2000). For example, the more developmental assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in substance use (Benson *et al.* 2004). Studies also indicate that adolescents possessing greater numbers of assets are consistently more likely to be successful in school, be leaders, value diversity, resist danger, and maintain good health (Benson *et al.*). This is important, as communities not only have the ability to contribute or enhance resiliency in adolescents, but will benefit from increased resiliency in their youth, thereby strengthening the community itself.

Fourth, the developmental assets framework can be utilized with diverse populations provided that counsellors adopt a multicultural approach to counselling that takes into account individual client needs. Research supports this notion by identifying the positive effects of developmental assets across a wide diversity of young people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, both genders, low and higher socioeconomic status, grade in school, and type of community (Benson *et al.* 2004). The developmental assets have also been shown to produce positive effects in all regions of the United States, in several Canadian communities, and in all types of cities, including rural counties, suburban towns, and urban centers (Benson *et al.*).

Fifth, one of the most important aspects of the developmental assets framework, and the assets themselves, is that they provide a common language for communities and social systems (Leffert *et al.* 1998). This is largely due to the fact that the Institute's framework of developmental assets identifies a set of interrelated experiences, relationships, skills, and values that are associated with reduced high-risk behaviours and increased thriving behaviours (Mannes *et al.* 2005). As previously mentioned, all young people can benefit from utilization of this framework, which seeks to help identify what can be done to foster resiliency on multiple levels through the incorporation of an individual's identified strengths.

Practical Application

In order to apply the concept of resiliency, the following hypothetical case study will be used to highlight ways in which counsellors can utilize the developmental assets framework and the Figure provided in this paper.

Hypothetical Case Study

Samuel is the youngest of three siblings of Latin American descent. At age 13, Samuel currently lives at home with his mother and two older brothers, aged 15 and 17. They immigrated to Canada from Honduras four years ago. With no formal education and a substantial language barrier, Samuel's mother works two full-time custodial jobs in order to support the family who live in low-cost housing. As both Samuel's older brothers also have part-time jobs, Samuel often spends after school and weekends alone. Samuel's parents divorced when he was seven years old. There has been no contact with the children's biological father since the family immigrated to Canada.

Utilizing Figure 1 in Practice Setting

In reading through Samuel's case, it is easy to identify all of the factors or variables that have the potential to negatively impact Samuel's development. However, this mindset not

only goes against a strength-based approach, but also is counterproductive in working with adolescents. Therefore, identification of several of the developmental assets such as positive family communication, achievement motivation, honesty, responsibility, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose will allow counsellors to work with, and engage Samuel on multiple levels. For example, the Figure provided in this paper allows for a more systemic view of the types of supports that counsellors can help facilitate placing into the adolescent's social system.

Parent

Mom works hard at two jobs and has obvious strengths in bringing her three sons to a new country. She also appears to be resourceful with a strong work ethic and sense of family. As a counsellor, it would be important to explore mom's values and beliefs and to identify and explore ways in which she could model, convey, and communicate these values and beliefs to her children in a positive way. It would also be important to ensure that Mom's expectations and boundaries were effectively communicated to Samuel and his brothers. A conversation around safety may also be helpful, in conjunction with a discussion about what it is that Samuel feels he might need and is not getting. An atmosphere of open communication, where everyone could voice their opinion and feel heard would be essential in working with this family, as would the use of creative interventions that build upon the family's own unique strengths.

Family

As both of Samuel's older brothers are working, they could well be brought into the counselling in order to provide positive male role models for Samuel. In doing so, the values of integrity, honesty, accountability, and teamwork could be highlighted. It would also be important to explore the ways the family members support one another, to identify each of their roles within the family, and to address their unique contributions. As a counsellor, it would be valuable to know what role Samuel plays in this family and what he contributes to it. This would be fundamental in providing Samuel with a sense of purpose, as well as a positive view of the future. Given that Mom works two jobs, it would also be important to discuss how the family could make the most of their time together.

Non-family Adult

In working with Samuel, it would be imperative to identify any current relationships with non-family adults. It may be helpful to look at community resources that offer a positive non-family adult to help with time spent alone, or to explore resources from the cultural community that the family could draw upon. Regardless of the source, connection to at least one non-family adult would provide a positive role model for Samuel that could teach and model positive values and help foster a sense of integrity and self-esteem.

School

In utilizing the school system, it would be essential to examine how the school can and does support this family, as well as to identify the resources available at the

school. For example, does the school have a lunch program or after-school program that Samuel could participate in? As a counsellor, one would also want to know what kind of connections Samuel has with his teacher(s). Is the school able to engage him in some way through cultural exploration, or could they assist him in fostering friendships?

Community

In accessing and activating community supports, a counsellor would want to know how the family defined community, as well as the kinds of things it did in Honduras that contributed to their sense of connection to the community. It would be important to identify Samuel's interests, find out what he is good at, and look for ways that he might be able to contribute to the community. Sports involvement or participation in volunteer opportunities would be a great way to connect Samuel and provide him with a sense of belonging, empowerment, and positive peer influence.

Incorporation of the framework into treatment plans can assist counsellors in not only identifying areas of concern or growth, but also highlighting and identifying the youth's individual strengths, which can be extended to help foster resiliency in the child. This can be accomplished through the development of treatment goals that help youth cultivate their own assets, while assisting them in exploring and developing a support system in the family, community, or school.

In working with Samuel, incorporation of one or more of his assets into a treatment plan would provide structure and focus for counselling sessions, and outline ways in which his assets could be used to foster his strengths outside of the counselling process. For example, establishment of a goal that builds upon his interpersonal competence may include things like having him open his own bank account, explore volunteer opportunities within the community, or become a mentor to a younger student within the school system. Also, the focus on individuals in Samuel's immediate circle of influence acknowledges and accounts for the fact that Samuel exists within a social system that might also require change/intervention.

Conclusion

For years counsellors have been guided by a pathological approach to client concerns. However, the construct of resiliency offers an innovative approach to counselling. Not only does resiliency reveal a youth's capacity to retain equilibrium after encountering substantial adversity, and focus on protective factors that contribute to positive outcomes in adolescent development despite the presence of risk (Benard 1995; Dent and Cameron 2003; Edwards *et al.* 2007), resiliency provides counsellors with a means to work with clients from all walks of life through the utilization of their own unique assets and strengths.

The developmental assets provide a tool for responding to the ecology of human development and help identify ways in which counsellors can foster resiliency in young people regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. The idea that developmental assets have a positive effect on adolescents regardless of their life circumstances and personal variables is important because it highlights the fact that no one is exempt from the positive impact of the assets, as each individual will benefit from increased resiliency.

Appendix

Developmental Assets

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Support

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. Caring neighborhood
5. Caring school climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment

7. Community values youth
8. Youth as resources
9. Service to others
10. Safety

Boundaries and Expectations

11. Family boundaries
12. School boundaries
13. Neighborhood boundaries
14. Adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations

Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities
 18. Youth programs
 19. Religious community
 20. Time at home
-

INTERNAL ASSETS

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement motivation
22. School engagement
23. Homework
24. Bonding to school
25. Reading for pleasure

Positive Values

26. Caring
27. Equality and social justice
28. Integrity
29. Honesty
30. Responsibility
31. Restraint

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making
33. Interpersonal competence
34. Cultural competence
35. Resistance skills
36. Peaceful conflict resolution

Positive Identity

37. Personal power
 38. Self-esteem
 39. Sense of purpose
 40. Positive view of personal future
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