BUILDING RESILIENCE IN MISSION

Session Outline

1. The Roots of Resilience
2. Voice of Resilience I
3. Emotional & Spiritual Resilience
4. Voice of Resilience II
5. Training for Resilience...

1. THE ROOTS OF RESILIENCE

A. Some Biblical Insights...

“...We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.” 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

“They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, ...” Psalm 105:18

“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:17-18

B. Some Definitions...

“...is like a twig with a fresh green living core. When twisted out of shape, such a twig bends but it does not break; instead it springs back and continues growing.” Vaillant (2002), 285.

“...is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats and even significant sources of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stresses...” American Psychological Association Help Centre.

“The concept of resilience is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional... [Reich et. al.] understand resilience as the process of recovery, sustainability and growth.” Windle, Bennert, & Noyes (2011).

“...is merely the skill and the capacity to be robust under conditions of enormous stress and change. [It] is a reflex, a way of facing and understanding the world, that is deeply etched into a person’s mind and soul.” Coutu (2002).

C. Describing a Resilient Person...

“...[one] having a good track record of positive adaptation... one, ‘who loves well, works well, plays well, and expects well.” Werner and Smith (1992), 192.

“Assets and resources within the individual, their life, and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and ‘bouncing back’ in the face of adversity.” Windle, Bennert, & Noyes (2011).
“Though the resilience concept remains controversial, and the indicators uncertain, there is growing evidence that many adults who encounter challenges still thrive. Arguably, their success is an interactive, complex process that requires sensitivity to the risks they face, their internal and external assets, and the culture and context in which coping occurs.” Unger (2008) 419.

“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways.” Unger (2008), 225.

D. Resilience through Missional Eyes...

"Human resiliency is the ability to face reality: to engage with and grow through life's challenges and adversities via inner strength, social support, coping skills, and core beliefs/values including life purpose and spiritual meaning.” Kelly and Michèle O'Donnell

“...is the quality that enables a person to face and endure the ‘blows of life’, the catastrophes, the trauma, the enormously difficult situations that many people face whilst engaged in mission.” Mae Gardner (2015), 42.

“...is having strength to fulfil the call God has given us, even when it will be painful and difficult. Resilience is staying fixed on a higher purpose, motivated by love of God, our neighbour, and the world, and supported by friends.” Carr [in Shaeffer and Schaeffer] (2012), 93.

“Resilience in the Christian sense is a kind of lived hope, a way to keep getting up again that has its roots in God’s permanent faithfulness...” Rowe (2012).

E. Towards a Model of Resilience...

“Resilience is manifested when two conditions are met: (a) the presence of some risk or adversity, and (b) the presence of resistance or positive outcome in spite of risk. However, for each individual, the presence of such risk factors depends on the presence of protective resources and the appraisal of threat or danger.” Wong & Wong (2011), 587.
The Principles of Resilience...

1. Resilience is both an innate quality and a learned skill.
2. A resilient response requires both internal and external adaptation.
3. The level of personal resilience fluctuates over one’s life-span.
4. The possibility of "Success Cascades" [so-called "Steeling Effect"] and "Risk Accumulations".
5. Expression of resilience varies by individual and circumstances.

“Resilience is complex, multidimensional and dynamic in nature. When faced with adversity, people tend to be more competent in some domains of their lives than in others, and during some, but not all, phases of their lives.

For example, an individual may be remarkably sturdy in responding to adversity at work, but not so much in handling family or other interpersonal stresses. Or a person may demonstrate resilience to stress at a young age, but not as he or she grows older.

It is important to note that healthy adaptation to stress depends not only on the individual, but also on available resources through family, friends and a variety of organizations, and on the characteristics of specific culture and religions, communities, and governments – all of which, in themselves, may be more or less resilient.” Southwick and Charney (2012), 7.

F. A Taxonomy of Resilience[s]?

“A resilient response to adversity engages the whole person, not just aspects of the person, in order to face, endure, overcome and possibly be transformed by the struggle.” Grotberg (2003), 4.

Definitions adapted from Wong and Wong (2011), 591-593.

i. Cognitive Resilience: How we interpret events that happen to us determines how we cope. Use of ‘attribution’ and ‘appraisal’ in reacting to negative events.

ii. Transactional Resilience: Refers to how we negotiate changing circumstances and daily stressors that allows us to survive and flourish.

iii. Behavioural Resilience: Refers to the habit of persistence and endurance in the face of failure and obstacles. It is a habit acquired... through a history of reinforcement and practice.

iv. Motivational Resilience: Refers to whether you have a clear sense of purpose, and whether you are fully committed in pursuing a life goal.

v. Existential or Spiritual Resilience: Motivational resilience becomes existential or spiritual resilience when one considers the ultimate meaning and purpose of human existence. Existential resilience become spiritual resilience when the person resorts to religious or spiritual perspectives to answer life’s big questions.

vi. Relational Resilience: [Refers to] secure attachment during childhood..., bonding or close relationships between adults..., [and] self-transcendence and altruism.

vii. Emotional Resilience: [Refers to] one’s ability... to tolerate rejection and negative emotions..., maintain self-confidence, hopefulness, and emotional stability through mental toughness or hardiness..., and confront and overcome existential anxieties.”
G. The “10 Commandments” to Building Resilience?

Explanations adapted from Southwick & Charney (2012).

1. **Foster [Realistic] OPTIMISM**: “Serves as a fuel that ignites resilience and provides energy to power the other resilience factors. It facilitates an active and creative approach to coping with challenging situations... Optimism is a future orientated attitude, involving hope and confidence that things will turn out well.” [p25]

2. **Face FEARS**: “Fear is ubiquitous. No one escapes its grip. But what is the best way to deal with it? The bottom line: the best way around fear is through it. To conquer fear one must face fear. That’s what resilient people do.” [p62]

3. **Train MENTALLY & EMOTIONALLY**: [Being] mentally sharp... helps [us] to focus on the problem, process information quickly, remember what we already know about coping with related challenges, find strategies to solve the problem, make wise decisions, and learn new information. [Also] to regulate our emotions; to control them rather than being controlled by them.” [p143]

4. **Enhance COGNITIVE and EMOTIONAL**: Flexibility: People who are resilient tend to be flexible – flexible in the way they think about challenges and flexible in the way they react emotionally to stress. They are not wedded to a specific style of coping. Instead they shift from one coping strategy to another depending on the circumstances. Many are able to accept what they cannot change; to learn from failure; to use emotions like grief and anger to fuel compassion and courage; and to search for opportunity and meaning in adversity.” [p165]

5. **Solidify MORAL COMPASS**: “We found that many resilient individuals possessed a keen sense of right and wrong that strengthened them during periods of extreme stress and afterwards, as they adjusted to life following trauma. Also altruism – selflessness, concern for the welfare of others, and giving to others with no expectation of benefit to the self – often stood as a pillar of their value system, of their “moral compass”. [p64]

6. **Practice RELIGION and SPIRITUALITY**: “In our interviews with highly resilient individuals, time and again we were told about the powerful effects of spirituality or religion, particularly during times of high stress.” Faith as a means of dealing with unforgiveness and guilt. [p81, 91-92]

7. **Find MEANING, PURPOSE and GROWTH**: “Psychological... studies have found that having a clear and valued purpose, and committing fully to a mission can dramatically strengthen one’s resilience. ...the ability to see one’s work as a calling may enhance resilience.” [p185]

8. **Attract and Give SOCIAL SUPPORT**: “Forming relationships may not seem important when times are good... However, close relationships build strength and help to protect us during times of stress and danger. Far from signifying weakness, interdependence with others can provide a foundation for resilience.” [p100]

9. **Imitate Resilient ROLE MODELS**: “…all of the resilient individuals we interviewed have role models whose beliefs, attitudes and behaviours inspire them... Imitation and modelling [the lives of others] can be used to increase resilience.” [p115, 125]

10. **Train PHYSICALLY**: “Many of the resilient individuals we interviewed have a regular habit of exercise and believe that staying fit has helped them, both during their traumatic ordeals and during their recovery. ...some of them credit physical exercise with saving their lives.”
H. Towards Resilient Outcomes...?

“The forces of fate that bear down on man and threaten to break him also have the capacity to ennoble him.” Victor Frankl (1984).

“And the God of grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” 1 Peter 5.10.

“The missionary is called to minister to the traumatized, but our shared humanity means that she is also in danger of trauma, and the missionary calling increases the danger Perhaps a measure of trauma, or, at least, the experience of traumatic events, is a necessary equipment for mission.” Glaser (2008), 4, 22.

2. Voice of Resilience I

Reflections on what is being shared.
3. Emotional and Spiritual Resilience.

A. “Trauma, Migration and Mission”

Trauma (Gk. Word): ‘Wound’ that can result from experiencing, witnessing or hearing about traumatic events. **Traumatic Event**: Situation of acute danger which a person is powerless to resist.

“[An] [e]vent that overwhelms the person’s coping skills, so they feel powerless, helpless. Ordinary systems of care that gives people a sense of control, connection and meaning are overwhelmed.

B. Resiliency Protective Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</th>
<th>ANTHONY</th>
<th>GARMEEZY</th>
<th>RUTTER</th>
<th>WERNER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of personal worthiness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Believes in her/his self-efficacy</td>
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<td>Delays gratification</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Internal locus of control</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Manages range of emotions</td>
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<td>Positive social orientation</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Communicates effectively</td>
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<td>Ability to have close relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal sensitivity</td>
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C. Post-traumatic Growth Features

- Self-Perception
- Relating to Others
- Philosophy of Life
- Spiritual Change

D. Emotional Resilience

“Emotional Resilience** is about your ability to adapt to setbacks and stressful situations by managing your emotions in a helpful and positive way.” Webb (2013), 32

**Emotional Resilience**: The ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences

*Studies have shown that highly resilient people:*

- Have an optimistic, zestful and energetic approach to life.
- Are curious and open to new experiences.
- Experience high positive emotions in the midst of stress.
- Have a broader thought-action repertoire for behavior.
- Have a positive appraisal of situations.
- Are proactive in cultivating positive emotionality
**Question:** “Why do certain individuals have the capacity to monitor their own and others’ emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide their thinking and action?” Salovey & Mayer (1980).

6 Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

**Intrapersonal**
- Emotional Self-Awareness: Discern stress levels
- Emotional Expression: Overt channels
- Emotional Self-control: Coping behaviours
- Emotional Self-management: Induce +ve moods

**Interpersonal**
- Emotional Awareness of others
- Emotional Management of others

3 Classes of Distress
- **Vulnerable** (29%): Ongoing –ve affect of one/two past events correspond with current distress levels within the moderate clinical symptom range
- **Average** (44%): Ongoing –ve affect of one/two past events correspond with normal present functioning. 5 events correspond to mild clinical symptoms
- **Resilient** (27%): Normal functioning despite greater reported distress and greater number of events.

Differentiating between the dimensions...

E. Spiritual Resilience

“**Spiritual resilience** is determined by the probability that one’s connection with God will be restored and even strengthened after an impact.” Schaeffer (????), 136.

“**Spiritual resilience**... the ability to move through adversity, stress, and trauma by using spiritual resources.” Manning (2014).

Connecting Spirituality and Resilience

*Studies that have found that spirituality:*
- Provides a framework that guides individuals through painful and joyful events, often facilitating positive discoveries amidst negative experiences
- Contributes to life quality and meaning
- Is a powerful coping mechanism, providing ability to adapt to changing individual needs
- Provides people with a source of hope, comfort and resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIT</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL COMPONENTS THAT SUPPORT TRAIT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>Mechanism for explaining the world: provide drive to find meaning</td>
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<td>Independence</td>
<td>Transcendence of daily living through rituals and experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Caring, compassionate, affirming community comparable to family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Transforming self and world: service to help, heal, save and reconcile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative/Humour</td>
<td>Spiritual source, inspiration to create beauty: Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Multiple systems for integrity with values, ethics and social justice</td>
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3 Essential Components of Spiritual Resilience
- Relationship with God provided them with **DIVINE SUPPORT** which enabled self-control, self-determination, experience a sense of mastery, positive self-concept and psychological well-being
- **SENSE OF PURPOSE**: belief in God gives them meaning, make sense of who they are, enabled them to give up the need for control and surrender to the ‘messiness of life’
- Able to reframe their hardships from being an obstacle to an opportunity to **PRACTICING GRATITUDE**

### Building Spiritual Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>Brown</th>
<th>Gardner</th>
<th>Rowe</th>
<th>Schaeffer</th>
<th>Carr</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theology of Suffering</td>
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<td>Sense of Call</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship with God: He is trustworthy, sovereign and good</td>
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<td>Building community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facing, sharing &amp; processing uncomfortable feelings &amp; grief</td>
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<td>Knowing &amp; extending forgiveness &amp; grace</td>
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Questions Concerning Emotional & Spiritual Resilience

**Q1:** Emotional/Spiritual resilience or emotional/spiritual resources that enhance resilience?

**Q2:** Can we build emotional and spiritual resilience independently?

**Q3:** What contribution does relationship/community make to spiritual and emotional resilience?
4. Voice of Resilience II

Reflections on what is being shared.

5. Training for Resiliency

Discussion Questions...

Q1: What role does the Mission Agency/NGO/Supporting Church play in building resilience?

Q2: What role do you think training plays in building resilience?

Q3: What approach/key topics should be incorporated into a training programme that aspires to build Resilience?

CONCLUSION: Building Resilience ≠ Building Strength

“...I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses... But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12.9-10.
Bibliography: Resilience, Risk and Mission


Carr, Karen. Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Missionaries. Mobile Member Care Team. EMQ.


