

# At-risk Youth & Resilience Factors

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[www.visionrealization.com](http://www.visionrealization.com)

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presentation in order to benefit fully

# Goals of this session

- Who are at-risk youth?
- Why do some at-risk youth make it while others do not?
- Very brief overview of how camps can foster resiliency
- Provide resources for further information

# Realities / Caveats

- Better to have fuzzy whole picture than a small, clear piece of it
- Focus is on understanding nature of at-risk status and resiliency
- How to increase resiliency domains would be a session for each one in itself

# Outline

- 1) Defining at-risk youth
  - i) Characteristics
  - ii) Continuum of risk
  - iii) Outcomes for at-risk youth
  - iv) A few statistics
- 2) Resiliency
  - i) Thinking about resiliency
  - ii) Studies that examine resiliency
  - iii) Resiliency characteristics by the 5 domains
- 3) Fostering resiliency at camp
- 4) Benchmarking
- 5) Useful web sites
- 6) Book shelf

*What are your  
expectations?*

*Why are you here?*

# Who are at-risk youth?

You tell me

# Some characteristics of at-risk youth

- **Chronic poverty**
- **Single parent**  
(Stress, excessive work load, long hours, depression, lack of social support, etc.)
- **Poor parenting skills**  
(family discord, negative role models, lack of structure and rules, etc.)
- **Large family**
- **Poor schools**
- **Bad grades**
- **Bad neighborhoods**  
(drugs, lack of things to do, lack of community support, violence, etc.)
- **Negative peer influence**
- **Minority status**
- **Low birth weight**
- **Drug use by self or caregiver**
- **Poor social skills**

# Risk along a continuum



Minimal Risk	Remote Risk	High Risk	Imminent Risk	At-risk Behavior
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High SES</li> </ul>	<i>Less positive</i>	<i>Depression</i>	<i>Smoking</i>	<i>Hard drugs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few psychosocial stressors</li> </ul>	<i>Some stressors</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Early sexual activity</i>	<i>Teenage mother</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good schools</li> </ul>	<i>Single parent</i>	<i>Aggression</i>	<i>Alcohol</i>	<i>Been in prison</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive peers</li> </ul>	<i>Bad crowd</i>	<i>Hopelessness</i>	<i>Legal trouble</i>	<i>Dropped out of school</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good family</li> </ul>	<i>Minority status</i>	<i>Poor school grades</i>	<i>Severe school problems</i>	
		<i>Bad crowd</i>		

# Potential outcomes for at-risk youth

- Teenage pregnancy
- Drug use
- Criminal or antisocial behavior (violence, theft, etc.)
- High school education or lower
- Marriage that ends in divorce or is unhealthy
- Low socioeconomic status
- Shorter life span
- Mental health problems
- Lower IQ

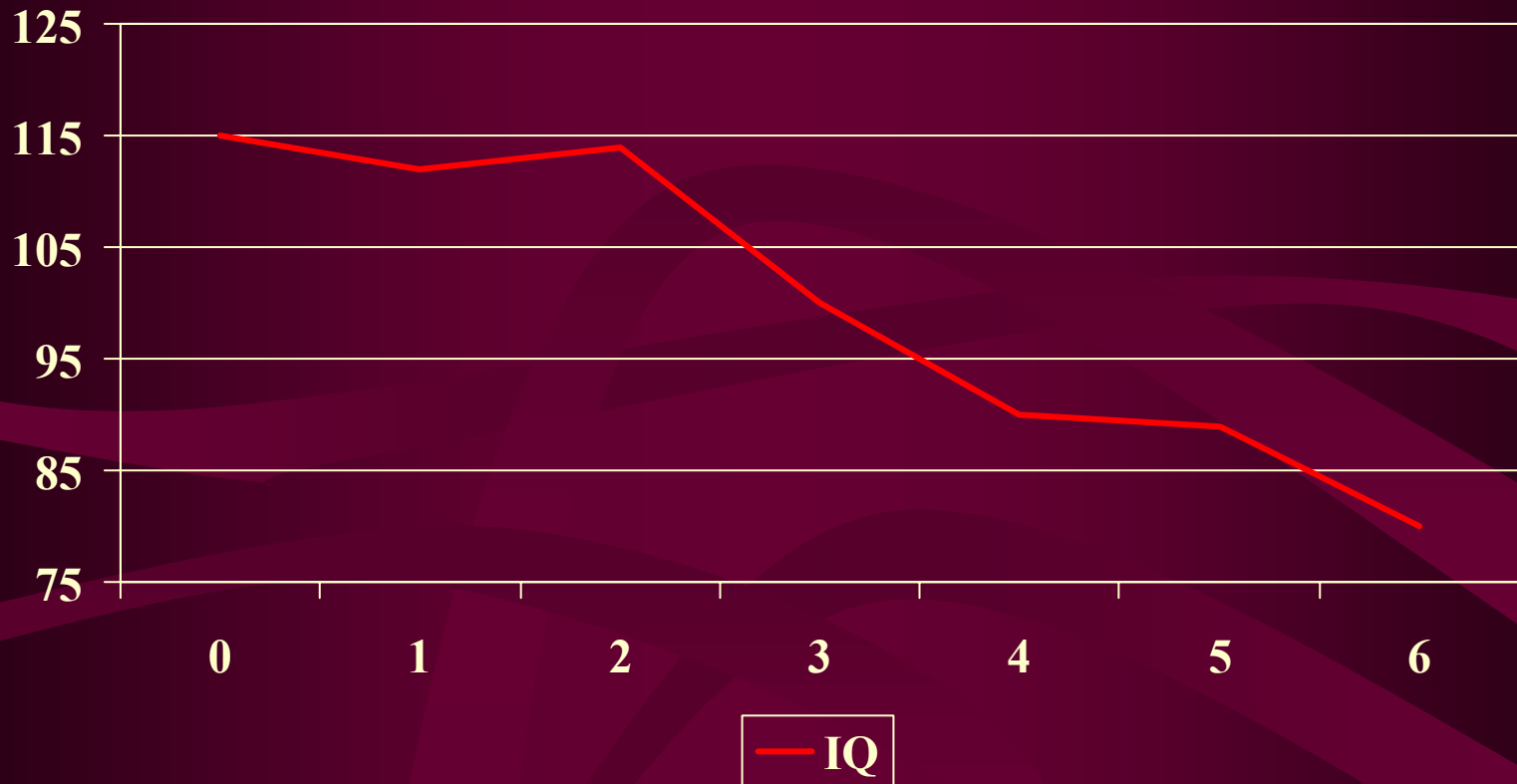
# A few statistics (1 of 3)

- 1 in 4 children under 6 lives below the poverty line
- Each year spent in poverty reduces by 2 percentage points a child's chance of graduating from high school
- Students from low income, low skill, low education families are twice as likely to drop out as students from affluent families
- 77% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders report having used alcohol. 13.5% have had more than 5 drinks in the last two weeks.

# A few statistics (2 of 3)

- 2/3 of all high school seniors have used illegal drugs
- 30% of young adolescents have had sex by age 15
  - Only 60% use any contraception at first intercourse
  - Teenage girls typically don't use contraception until 6-9 months after they have become sexually active  
Of those, 1/2 are already pregnant
- Teenagers who become pregnant
  - Have fewer social resources
  - Lower educational attainment
  - Reduced potential earnings
  - Children are underweight and less healthy than older mothers

# A few statistics (3 of 3)



The average IQ scores for 13-year-olds decrease markedly when their development is affected by more than two risk factors

# A quandary

*About 2/3 of high risk children experience one or more negative life outcome*

*But, that means that 1/3 beat the odds. . . .*

*Why do some at-risk youth make it while others fall by the wayside?*

Family

Peers

Genetic

Personal

School &  
Community

*Review a few studies of risk and resiliency to offer a flavor of how researchers figure out which are the most important things to target*

# Studies of risk and resilience (1 of 4)

## Kauai Longitudinal Research

- Design
  - All children born on Kauai (Hawaii) in 1955. Follow 32 years.
  - Measures from family, child, community, & doctor
- Results
  - Of high risk children, 2/3 developed learning or behavior problems by the age of 18
  - Resilient children had several things in common
    - Easy temperament
    - Independent, autonomous, and internal locus of control
    - Good communication and social skills
    - Good problem-solving skills
    - Positive self-concept
    - Good school achievement
    - At least moderately intelligent
    - At least one positive care giver – in home, community, or with peers

# Studies of risk and resilience (2 of 4)

## Search Institute 40 Asset Survey

- Design
  - 100,000 children surveyed at one point in time – convenience sample with an uncertain measure
  - All assets measured at one time – prevents recycling variance
- Results
  - Children who avoided drug use, violence, depression, suicide, school problems, and antisocial behavior had 6 assets in common
  - Positive peer influence
  - Restraint / delay gratification / self-control
  - Peaceful conflict resolution / problem-solving
  - Achievement motivation
  - Self-esteem
  - Sense of future / Future sense of self / Hope

# Studies of risk and resilience (3 of 4)

## National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health

- Design
  - Random selection of 12,118 adolescents from 80 schools
  - Interview and survey child, parents, and school
- Results
  - Family and school connectedness were central
  - Having a strong basis of support was protective against every negative outcome except pregnancy

# Studies of risk and resilience (4 of 4)

## Review of Over 100 Resiliency Studies

- Design
  - Qualitatively reviewed over 100 resiliency studies
- Results
  - Individual level / Personal
    - Good social skills including empathy, communication, and prosocial behaviors
    - Problem-solving skills
    - A sense of control and self-esteem
    - Future sense of self / Hope
  - Families, schools, and community
    - Any could be protective as long as there were positive, caring people
    - High expectations also needed to be part of supportive context
    - Opportunities for meaningful participation

# In summary, resilience is:

Encompassed by ALL five domains

Key is to target as many domains as possible and to target the ones that make the most difference

- Family
- Personal
- Genetic
- Friends and mentors
- School and community

# Resilience is: (1 of 6)

## Key Family Characteristics

- Warmth
- Cohesion / Family as group
- Presence of a caring adult
- Absence of stress and conflict
- Authoritative / emotion-coaching parenting style  
(Mixed with authoritarian if the environment is dangerous)

# Resilience is: (2 of 6)

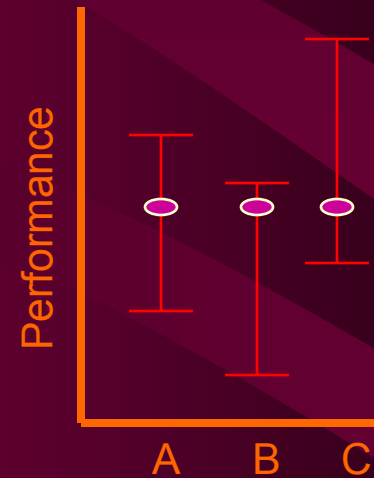
## Key Personal Characteristics

- Hope (future sense of self)
- Self-confidence and independence  
(Also known to psychologists as General Self-efficacy)
- Social skills  
(Responsibility, Empathy, Cooperation, Assertiveness, & interpersonal skills)
- Delay gratification / impulse control / restraint
- Stress tolerance
- Problem-solving
- Self-esteem

# Resilience is: (3 of 6)

## Genetic influences

- Roughly 50% of most personality characteristics is inherited, including:
  - E.g. self-control, happiness, assertiveness, stress tolerance
  - Intelligence (perhaps even more)
- Range of reaction
  - Upper and lower bound
  - Nutrition, prenatal care, & environment as enriching, average, or poor
- Gene-environment interaction
  - Propensity does not equal behavior
  - Story of Good Griselle



# Resilience is: (4 of 6)

## Friends and Mentors

- Positive peer influence
  - The Nurture Assumption
  - Search Institute survey – 41% of the variance
- Role in group of children
  - Popular
  - Average
  - Neglected
  - Rejected
  - Controversial
- Mentor – one person who is crazy about the child and will be a positive role model and base of support

# Resilience is: (5 of 6)

## School

- High expectations of student achievement
- Emphasis on basic skills
- An orderly climate
- Regular evaluation of students' progress w/ clear feedback
- Provide social support (counselors, homeroom teachers, etc.) Ample use of praise of good performance
- Smaller school and classroom size
- Homework assigned regularly
- Firm, but not severe discipline
- Widespread opportunities for children to take responsibility
- Higher proportion of teacher time interacting with class as a whole
- Active involvement in the learning process

**K.I.P.P. and East Harlem School**

# Resilience is: (6 of 6)

## Community

- **Connectedness**
  - Sense of place / culture / identity / pride
  - Sense of communities – neighborhoods and neighbors
  
- **Opportunity for positive activity**
  - Religious community
  - After school programs
  - Safe, enjoyable activities

# Fostering resiliency at camp (1 of 2)

- Parent education and enrichment – enormously boosts chance of success because more than one environment
- Year-round, long term services (continuity)
  - Short term interventions tend to have little or no effect – needs to last several months if not years
  - Mentor program
  - After school tutoring and activities
- Focus on youth development, not specific problems and have a framework (resiliency, 40 assets, or . . .)
- Camp builds personal resiliency characteristics

# Fostering resiliency at camp (2 of 2)

- Maintain a highly trained staff which utilizes positive counseling / behavior management skills
  - Emotion-coaching framework (See EQ)
  - Reality therapy / Success Counselor (problem-solving coaching)
- Understand your campers' needs and, as best as possible, treat the whole person and the whole situation
- Camp as a positive place where the child receives connectedness and positive mentors
- Camp as prevention: children are not at home or in risky neighborhoods with little positive to do

*Changing personal characteristics at camp should be a prime focus, but camps likely already have a process for impacting the key traits*

*"How-to" would be a whole session for each one*

# Benchmarking

- *Benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else is better at something, and being wise enough to learn how to match or even surpass them at it*
- *Trail Blazers*
- *Morry's Camp*

# Web sites related to at-risk youth

- <http://www.search-institute.org/>
- <http://www.americaspromise.org/>
- <http://www.at-risk.com/>
- <http://www.nydic.org/>
- <http://www.resiliency.com/>

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*Questions*  
&  
*Discussion*