



Make Resilience Matter  
for Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence Symposium

# Welcome

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1



Make Resilience Matter  
for Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence

*Safe, non-violent families and  
communities are the bedrock of  
healthy child development.*

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2

## Make Resilience Matter for Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence

What does resilience  
mean to you in the  
context of working with  
children affected by IPV?

3

## Literature Review

What can the literature tell us?

- Much research has been done on resilience
- Little has focused on children's exposure to IPV
- Most often, resilience has been looked at in relation to:
  - other adversities (e.g. natural disaster, war)
  - co-occurring forms of child maltreatment
- Given the negative effects, it is critical to zero in on IPV exposure

4

## Literature Review - Method

- Investigated quantitative and qualitative research studies in scholarly journals, 2005 – 2015
- Used key words associated with child exposure to IPV, resilience:  
e.g. domestic violence, exposure to violence, risk, coping, positive adaptation, turning points ...
- Five databases were searched
- 34 studies located; 18 scientific studies analyzed after exclusion criteria applied
- Social ecological lens used to interpret the findings

5

## What is Resilience?

Successfully navigating through  
significant threat

- Significant Threat ... adversity
- Navigate ... get through...using  
internal and external resources
- Positive Outcome ... success... adaptation

Reaching In Reaching Out, 2010

6

## What is Resilience?

- Resilience is:
- ✓ more than personality characteristics
  - ✓ dynamic process
  - ✓ interplay between the individual, family, community and society

7

## What is Resilience?

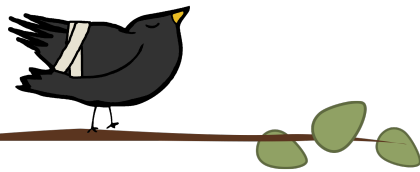
- Exposure to IPV sets children down a difficult path
- Affects child development—more likely to experience:
  - Difficulties managing and expressing emotions
  - Relationship problems
  - Aggression and/or depression
  - Trauma effects
  - Problems in academic achievement

Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008

"Take These Broken Wings and Learn to Fly"

8

## What is Resilience?



"Take These Broken Wings and Learn to Fly"

Lennon and McCartney 9

## Literature Review - Findings

- Resilience is defined **inconsistently**
- Samples are **mixed** using **various forms of violence**
- **Intrapersonal** and **interpersonal** factors dominate; little focus on contextual and cultural factors
- **Outcomes** dominate; leaving processes and pathways less clear

10

## Findings – Child's Qualities

1. Easy temperament, agreeable
2. Socially competent
3. Self-confident, independent
4. Intelligent, academically successful
5. Emotionally regulated, self-controlled
6. Positive, optimistic
7. Motivated, goal focused
8. Good problem solver, resourceful
9. Skills, talents, humour
10. Can retreat and distract self—sports, reading
11. Accurately assigns abuse responsibility
12. Committed to breaking cycle of violence



11

## Findings – Child's Relationships

13. One secure attachment
14. Access to one safe adult
15. Protective mother with warmth, sensitivity, good mental health
16. In-home social network
17. Peer and social support



12

## Findings – Child's Context and Culture

- 18. Safe haven, accessible community resources
- 19. Exit options—post-secondary education
- 20. Educated mother with stable employment
- 21. Bi-cultural exposure, influence



13

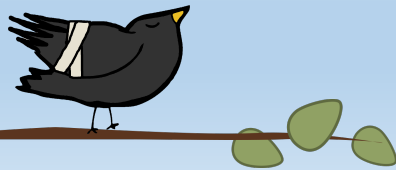
## Recommendations

1. Move beyond focus on individual characteristics; do more work using social ecological lens—"person in environment"
2. Acknowledge study samples will likely include co-occurring victimizations—"polyvictimization"
3. Learn more about adaptation, recovery
4. Make use of life course model—"turning points"
5. Adopt trauma-informed lens; bring to the forefront of research
6. Be more developmentally informed: infants, toddlers, pre-school and emerging adult (18-24)



14

Thank you



15

## Break out Groups



1. How can we develop tools for assessing resilience?
2. Who else needs to know about this research? How do we engage them?  
e.g. educators, school social workers
3. How to balance context/relationship/individual resilience factors in practice?
4. How to work with parents (moms, dads, caregivers, etc.) around resilience?
5. What are some harm reduction strategies (short and long term) for working with children whose environments are NOT amenable to change?
6. What else might we think about as we take the MRM Project forward?  
e.g. what is missing like more emphasis on culture, gender, etc.
7. Another topic not listed?

16