

majority of participants reported less emotional and relationship distress, and individuals whose partner had participated in the affair reported greater forgiveness toward their partners.

Couple-based treatment for both alcoholism and drug abuse produces more abstinence and fewer substance-related problems, happier relationships, fewer couple separations, and lower risk for divorce than does individual-based treatment. Behavioral Couple Therapy has also been shown to be effective in relieving depression when provided to distressed couples with a depressed partner. Finally, recent findings have supported the effectiveness of couple therapy in treating patients suffering from anxiety disorders, chronic pain, cancer, terminal illnesses in general, obesity, coronary artery disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Although research shows that paraprofessionals (e.g., clergy) can effectively implement structured relationship education programs (e.g., PREP), there has been little empirical study of this issue as applied to couple therapy for serious relationship problems.

Conclusion

One of the more idealistic (and unhelpful) beliefs that people sometimes voice about long-term committed relationships is that conflict should occur rarely or not at all, problems should be inconsequential, and that the trajectory over time should proceed more or less smoothly and effortlessly. The need for repair, under this belief, is seen as a sign of fundamental flaws in the relationship, in the individuals involved, or in both, rather than as part of the natural life cycle of relationships. Such stigmatizing beliefs, aside from the fact that they are not grounded in reality, may contribute to the worsening of problems by postponing the engagement of potentially helpful repair processes until problems have progressed too far. Repair behaviors and processes, both formal and informal, are a normal and critically important part of the evolution of relationships. When properly engaged, they contribute in a significant way to making relationships fulfilling and enjoyable for all concerned.

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See also Accommodation; Communication Skills; Couple Therapy; Extradyadic Sex; Forgiveness; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples; Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programs (PREP)

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RESILIENCE

Intimacy, betrayal, trust, jealousy, attachment, love, and loneliness are terms that point to the salience of relational processes in both human suffering and striving. In cases of pronounced adversity, the primary developmental threat may be a distorted or

malevolent relationship, as in child abuse and neglect. Yet interpersonal relationships, such as those with supportive, caring adults, are similarly powerful conduits of positive developmental pathways in the wake of adversity. Early relationships with caregivers are especially salient contexts within which core relational experiences occur (e.g., trust, love, connection), primary relational abilities develop (e.g., perspective-taking, regulation, empathy), and influential expectations of self and others are internalized. This entry focuses on relational processes in resilient adaptation and *why* relational processes are central to understanding *how* individuals achieve positive developmental outcomes, especially in adverse contexts.

Resilience Defined

Resilience is a dynamic developmental process wherein the individual is able to utilize resources in and outside of the self to negotiate current challenges adaptively and, by extension, to develop a foundation on which to rely when future challenges occur. In contexts of prior or current adversity, resilience reflects *both* the absence of psychopathology and the presence of competence wherein the individual is able to negotiate age-salient issues effectively. In infancy, these issues center on the challenge of negotiating a consistent pattern of relating to caregivers, whereas the emphasis shifts toward the negotiation of peer relationships and the challenge of self-regulation in the toddler and preschool periods. Thus, resilience is a multidimensional, culturally embedded, and developmentally anchored process.

Resilience is a feature of development, not of individuals. Resilience follows from the operation of normal developmental processes despite extraordinary circumstances, rather than from exceptional individual capacities. To the extent that typical developmental processes are protected or enabled despite adverse experience, resilience is fostered. Relational processes are central among these developmental capacities: relationships between different developmental systems such as biology and psychology; relationships among different levels of the environment such as families, schools, and communities; and, as discussed here, relationships between people.

Resilience-Fostering Relationships

Interpersonal relationships have been a key focus of resilience research since its inception. Pioneers of this field, such as Norman Garmezy, Lois Murphy, Sir Michael Rutter, and Emmy Werner, were the first to document the powerful and positive impact of a supportive, caring, and connected relationship with an adult on developmental trajectories of high-risk youth. In childhood, caregiving relationships are of primary significance, but relationships in other arenas increase in salience over time. Relationships with teachers, coaches, spiritual leaders, mental health providers, and peers take on increasing importance across childhood, whereas adolescence and adulthood bring romantic relationships, employee-employer, and collegial connections to the fore. Yet the nature and quality of these later relationships are uniquely influenced by early patterns of sensitivity and reciprocity in the caregiving milieu. Evidence clearly points to the unique importance of the early caregiving environment for the development of basic capacities, such as self-regulation, perspective taking, and self-esteem, which shape individuals' responses to current and future developmental challenges.

From the earliest days of life, interpersonal relationships influence developmental trajectories, for better or worse. Associations with deviant peers, for example, may engender disruptive, antisocial behaviors among high-risk youth. Yet prosocial peer connections may provide opportunities for high-risk youth to apprehend and practice positive, rule-abiding behaviors. Having documented the importance of relationships for both typical and atypical developmental trajectories, contemporary resilience research has shifted toward delineating processes by which such relationships, particularly early relationships, engender positive adaptation despite exposure to significant developmental threat. Although initially conceptualized at the level of dyads and later families, these relational processes have since been examined at group and cultural levels, as well as at biological, social, and cognitive levels.

Relational Processes in Resilience

Across populations and developmental periods, relational processes take on disproportionate salience in adverse or traumatic contexts. In the

framework of resilience, positive interpersonal relationships operate as protective factors because they decrease the strength of the association between adverse experience and negative outcomes. Across settings and levels of risk and adversity, assets operate as resources that increase the probability of positive outcomes for all individuals, whereas risks undermine adaptive functioning. As complements to assets and risks, respectively, protective and vulnerability factors are disproportionately influential in conditions of adversity moderating the relation between adverse experience and negative developmental outcomes.

Of the myriad factors associated with positive development in adverse contexts, relationships take on unique significance. Trusting, consistent, and supportive interpersonal relationships foster positive development for all people, yet their protective and restorative capacity is magnified in conditions of adversity. Thus, positive human relationships are a protective factor engendering better-than-expected outcomes in the context of adverse life experience. The presence of a supportive mentor may help all youth, but it takes on a unique importance when provided to a youth whose life is otherwise devoid of positive influences, role models, and nurturance.

How, why, and for whom such relationships exert their developmental impact is of great interest to researchers. Relational processes underlying resilient adaptation span cognitive, emotional, and biological systems. Positive relationships with others provide social, moral, instrumental, and emotional support, as well as opportunities for learning and practicing new skills. Further, growth-fostering relationships engender positive self-regard and heighten individuals' regard for others, thereby increasing self-efficacy and the motivation to pursue additional interpersonal connections. At other levels, positive relational processes may activate protective or restorative biological systems and engender adaptive socio-emotional regulation. Yet the impact of relationships on human development is not uniform. As the mechanisms by which relationships exert their protective influence in risk contexts come into focus, efforts to understand individual differences in responsiveness to these processes grow stronger.

Implications

The study of resilience holds important implications for understanding and fostering human development. Resilience follows from a coherent and cumulative developmental pattern wherein key relational capacities are supported, protected, or restored. These capacities operate at biological, psychological, and social levels to enable individuals to develop and sustain growth-fostering connections with other people. Individuals who are able to achieve the developmental expectations of their culture despite adverse experience (i.e., whose development typifies resilience) have been able to develop or sustain necessary capacities to build positive, reciprocal connections with others. Research is needed to identify factors that enable individuals to develop or sustain these abilities despite adversity.

Interventions that aim to promote resilience must introduce the potential for new relationships (e.g., mentors) while supporting core cognitive, biological, and regulatory systems that enable such connections in the first place (e.g., stress reactivity, emotion regulation, relational expectancies, and beliefs). As discussed previously, early childhood is an especially important context for the development of these systems. Thus, applied efforts to support resilient adaptation must identify and protect key processes that enable sensitive and responsive caregiving to infants and young children. In turn, these interventions foster relational processes that are critically important for resilient adaptation.

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See also Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mentoring Programs; Socialization; Social Support, Nature of; Trust

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