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## Group Counseling for Middle School Students And Effectiveness at Increasing Social Resiliency

Dewey Lawrence

*The College at Brockport*, [dlawrence79@gmail.com](mailto:dlawrence79@gmail.com)

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Running head: GROUP COUNSELING

Group Counseling for Middle School Students  
And Effectiveness at Increasing Social Resiliency

Dewey Lawrence

The College at Brockport

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## Abstract

Whether group counseling for middle school students (grade 6) increases resiliency is investigated. Two groups were studied with a total of four students in each group. One experimental and one control group facilitated by investigator. Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP) given as both the pretest and post-test. Experimental group was provided set session topics chosen by investigator while control group was allowed to choose group topics. Differences between experimental and control group studied and whether student's resiliency increased investigated throughout all two groups. Study found that experimental group's average measure of resiliency increased from pre to post-test  $+0.78$ . Control group's average measure of resiliency decreased  $-0.37$ . Strengths, limitations, and effect on school counseling research discussed.

## Group Counseling for Middle School Students and Effectiveness at Increasing Social Resiliency

Two children raised in similar environments, one becoming a well-adjusted adult and the other following a path of personal destruction. What makes one student resilient to life circumstances while the other seems to be negatively influenced by his or her environment? This question was the impetus resulting in the author deciding to do a study on resiliency. However, the author's study did not measure what makes one child more resilient versus another. The author's intent was to study the effect of group counseling on middle school students' perception of their resilience. The population studied in this project was middle school students because they are at a critical transition period in their lives. The dynamics of middle school become more focused on peers and particular membership to peer groups. Furthermore, middle school students begin to feel more empowered in their own lives and begin the responsibility of making personal decisions that will impact their lives. Therefore, the author thought group counseling geared towards increasing student's competence during this transition would be beneficial to the student's academic and social life.

With very limited research in the way of group counseling for middle school students and its effectiveness at increasing resiliency, the author intended on starting a trend of implementing group counseling to help middle school students begin to understand that they do not have to let their lives be negatively effected by life circumstances that are out of their control. With research explaining that group counseling can be effective in increasing middle school student's resiliency, school counselors can begin implementing a program of group counseling that gives students the

tools to cope effectively with life's challenges. With these tools, students will be better prepared to grow into competent, productive adults.

What is at stake for our future if our young children are unable to grow up and become productive adults? Well, Masten and Coatsworth (1998), stated that it is "critical to the future of our society that its children become competent adults and productive citizens" (p. 2). So what makes some children resilient over others? According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), "one of the most important questions about the development of competence is whether there is something unique or special about resilient children that enabled them to overcome adversity to achieve competence when other children have floundered" (p. 4).

Brendtro and Larson (2004) discussed that early thoughts of resiliency in children were that this trait was only found in a few invulnerable children (p. 194). As humans are the descendents of survivors, it is now thought that humans are by nature resilient (Brendtro & Larson, p. 194). Therefore, it should be no surprise that children are capable of rising up against the most unlikely situations to be productive adults. A natural environment to cultivate this resiliency is in the school environment where students spend a considerable amount of time. School counselors and their training in group counseling can provide important ingredients to students in forming resilient behaviors that will assist them throughout life. Peer relationships become increasingly important in middle school so group counseling is a natural environment for children to test behavior, learn about themselves, and discover how they relate to their peers.

Children have the ability to become resilient despite risk from several different areas within their lives. If children are given the opportunity to learn how to cope

effectively with stress, then they are more likely to respond in a constructive way to stress and problems in life. The school, and in particular the school counselor, must provide children the opportunity to fine-tune the skills to be resilient and competent in response to troubles. If schools do not provide this service, then they are doing a disservice to the student and the community. The school is in the perfect place to make a difference.

### Literature Review

#### *Risk*

It is important to note, according to Richters and Weintraub (1990), that throughout the literature there is often blurred distinctions between the concepts of risk, vulnerability, and maladjustment, and between risk reducers and protective factors. As a result, when using these terms it is key to maintain conceptual clarity (Richters & Weintraub, 1990, p. 67). Therefore, in the following literature review of the many factors associated with resiliency, the author attempted to weed out the differences and similarities between all concepts associated with resiliency.

When defining risk, Dryfoos (1990) pointed out to define risk for a young person, one must look at the individual's demographic, personal, or social characteristics that result in the person being vulnerable (p. 5). Dryfoos (1990) pointed out that risk of problem behaviors in children can be anticipated through observation of individual attributes because individuals with these characteristics are more susceptible to problem behaviors (p. 79). According to Dryfoos (1990), there is a specific list of factors that put students at risk of problem behaviors (p.5). The thought is that these factors influence a teenager in a negative way and put the child at risk of negative behavior. For adolescents, an

exploration of these areas can bring together the risk factors for any given teenager.

Dryfoos (1990) pointed out a summary of the following predictors:

1. Age: An early development of any behavior often results in that behavior occurring more frequently through development (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).
2. Education expectations and school grades: Not performing well in school and having the expectation to do poorly are associated with problem behaviors (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).
3. General behavior: Such as antisocial behavior, conduct disorders and a general acting out (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).
4. Peer influence: Showing no opposition to negative peer influences and having friends participate in similar behavior (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).
5. Parental role: A significant lack in relationship with parents and parents who do not supervise, guide, or communicate well, and parents who are either too authoritarian or permissive (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).
6. Neighborhood quality: Poverty, dense populated areas and urban areas are predictive of risk in youth (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5).

While the above factors may put a teenager at substantial risk, there is always the possibility that a teenager defies the odds and becomes successful. Fisher et al (1987) pointed out that despite the presence of significant risks for individuals, there are a substantial percent of individuals at risk for disorder that “overcome their ‘handicaps’ and emerge with no diagnosable pathology” (p. 212). Nonetheless, according to Richters and Weintraub (1990), maladjustment does not have to reveal a genetic or environmental produced vulnerability, and a lack of childhood maladjustment does not necessarily mean

there was no presence of vulnerability (p. 90). Thereby, the child can not have any of the risk factors but still participate in negative behavior and vice versa. Not every adolescent is going to react the same way to the lack or presence of risk factors. Why is it important to make these distinctions? Richters and Weintraub (1990) stated that pointing out these distinctions has important consequences in our ability to improve risk classifications and move towards understanding the origins of deviance in affected high-risk children from a process orientation (p. 90). There seems to be a natural desire to predict who is at risk and to classify individuals into different risk classifications. However, Richters and Weintraub (1990) concluded that classifying individuals is a tentative process in which individuals can be reclassified into different classes of higher or lower rates depending on the additional risk-related information (p. 77). Rutter (1990) stated that understanding the individuals risk mechanisms is key to understanding resiliency because without that understanding, it will mean no more than that the individual has not experienced the crucial risk factor (p. 184).

### *Risk versus vulnerability*

Richters and Weintraub (1990) stated that the vulnerability model assigns a dual role to stress where certain environmental stressors may have a substantial role by increasing their vulnerability to a disorder while other vulnerabilities may actually trigger the onset of an episode (p. 70). According to Richters and Weintraub (1990), the concepts of vulnerability and risk are not one and the same. “Finally, factors that are associated with reduced probabilities of negative outcomes among high-risk offspring are not necessarily protective factors in any meaningful (scientifically productive) sense of the word. They may instead be signaling an absence of the proximal stressors that are

causally related to negative outcomes in other high-risk offspring” (Richters & Weintraub, 1990, p.90).

### *Invulnerability*

What do we call a child who despite a negative environment or negative life circumstances defies all odds and is successful? Lawrence et al. (1987), while looking at competence in children at risk, defined invulnerability “as the display of competent behavior in spite of deleterious circumstances (i.e., being an offspring of seriously disturbed parent) (p. 215). After further review of the concept of invulnerable to define children who are competent despite of challenging situations, Lawrence et al. (1987) concluded that the use of this term may be both “unrealistic and potentially misleading” (p. 224). Furthermore, Lawrence et al. (1987) stated that “the term brings with it a series of myths and expectations that may reflect a hypothesized but nonexistent state of excellence and invincibility more applicable to myth than reality” (p. 224). According to Brendtro and Larson (2004), there is no such thing as an invulnerable human because if our basic needs are disrupted, all humans are at risk (p. 194). Rutter (1985) stated that the resistance to stress in one’s life is based on both environmental and constitutional factors, the extent of resistance is not a permanent quality, but rather resistance to stress is relative (p. 599). Therefore, Rutter (1985) concluded that because of these reasons most people use the concept of resilience, rather than the absolute notion of invulnerability (p. 599). However, there are still researchers that do not use the concept of resilience. Radke-Yarrow and Sherman (1990) referred to children that have no identified psychiatric disorders, perform well at their grade level, relate well to peers and adult figures in school and at home, and think positively about themselves as being

survivors (p. 100). However, throughout the majority of the literature reviewed, the term resilience has become the most prominent of used terms.

### *Competence*

Similar to other terms like invulnerable or resilient, another term that is important to define is competence and the factors that contribute to competence in children. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) stated that competence shows that an individual has a record of capable performance and that an individual has the ability to perform similarly in the future. Furthermore, Masten and Coatsworth (1998) stated that competence is an evolving organism that changes as a child grows up and the context in which the child faces different environmental factors changes. Competence depends on the developmental stage and various other environmental influences that may be interacting with the child in the moment.

How do we determine if a child is doing well? Masten and Coatsworth (1998) answered this question by stating that evaluations of how children are doing is based on pooled knowledge of expectations that are culturally passed from one generation to the next (p. 4). An important question may be how do we help a community of students become more resilient if all students come from different cultures that value different competencies in their children? Masten and Coatsworth (1998) agreed that deciding whether a child is competent is difficult if the child lives in a community that obviously strays away from the larger society in which the smaller community is buried (p. 7). However, Masten and Coatsworth (1998) stated that there is a small set of competence criteria that are common among parents, communities, cultures, and cover the span of development. These criteria have come to be called developmental tasks (Havighurst, p.

2). According to Havighurst (1972), “a developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks” (p. 2).

According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), “when large numbers of a society’s children must overcome hazards or disadvantage to become competent, it becomes particularly important to understand how competence is achieved in the context of adversity” (p. 205). According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), policies and programs that promote successful student development are built through research on competence (p. 205). Masten, Garmezy, and Tellegen (1988) studied school based competence in reaction to stress exposure in students aged 8-13 and results suggest that the relation of competence to stress exposure in childhood varies based on attributes associated with the child, family background, and according to the measure used to define competence (p. 759). Thus, it appears that the ability of children to continue competence often depends on that child’s particular exposure to stress.

#### *In Early Development*

Achenbach (1991), while summarizing development, stated that from birth to maturity there are several biological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes that occur and that it is obvious that these developmental changes have a huge impact on the challenges that individuals face as they pass through the various developmental stages (p. 46). While the child’s reaction is dependent on their developmental stage, there is some thought that common factors consistently effect a child’s reaction to negative life events.

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) explained that it is becoming increasingly important to recognize the early childhood years as an important time to establish foundation competence that will continue through life (p. 207). If a child can establish the base for competence early, then he or she will be more likely to succeed as he or she progresses through life. Werner (1990) pointed out that prospective studies on resilience in infants show that “babies with good coping abilities under adverse conditions tend to have predictable temperamental characteristics that elicit responses from other people” (p. 100). Furthermore, according to O’Grady and Metz (1987), stresses related to birth, environmental stresses related to care giving, a lack of social support, and other stresses incurred place a child at considerably greater risk for adjustment problems (p. 19). It is important to note that the risk is significantly smaller when each risk is taken into account individually (O’Grady & Metz, 1987, p. 20). Sameroff and Seifer (1991), stated that early patterns of incompetence in children will result in the child being more vulnerable to disturbances in caretaking endured later in life; thereby not having the skills nor the resilience to navigate troubled times and becoming more vulnerable to developing psychopathology (p. 61). Werner and Smith (1989) stated that it is increasingly clear that in order to predict developmental outcomes it is important to consider both the child’s constitutional composition and the quality of his or her relationships within his or her environment (p. 4).

This vulnerability can then transfer over to the school context. Dryfoos (1990) expounded that a strong link between early childhood experiences and social behavior is well recognized and that early school failure is a critical component of the onset of conduct disorders, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors (p. 132). “The early

development of motor skills, language, self-confidence, play, and problem solving abilities, for example, are relevant for understanding competence in the school years” (Masten & Coatsworth, p. 207, 1998). Resilience is an approach to competence, according to Sameroff and Seifer (1991), which seeks out specific factors that will explain the successful development of individuals in high risk situations (p. 53). Werner and Smith (1989) pointed out that risk, stressful personal events, and protective factors have a relative effect depending on stages of life cycle, gender of the child, and the cultural environment in which he or she is raised (p. 5). As a result, different students having varied success in the school environment.

Adolescents, as stated by Dryfoos (1990), is a clear time for change – biologically, emotionally, and cognitively – where each child experiences a unique pattern of growth and development shaped by their genetics, family experiences, and the social environment in which they reside (p. 26). Flach (1988) described four events or objectives that each adolescent must go through that will set the stage for how things will follow in his/her life:

- 1) “The experience of loss as we say good-bye to the persons we were and to the familiar conditions of childhood” (Flach, 1988, p. 63)
- 2) “The physical and psychological aspects of sexual maturation” (p. 64)
- 3) “Individuation and the attainment of autonomy” (Flach, 1988, p. 63)
- 4) “An expansion of social relationships, involving people in authority, such as teachers and, particularly, peers” (Flach, 1988, p. 63)

Sameroff and Seifer (1991), pointed out that the developmental approach has contributed greatly to the viewpoint on resiliency and competence (p. 64). Prior to the

developmental approach, Sameroff and Seifer (1991) stated that it was believed that each disorder had an underlying natural origin with a direct link between cause and symptoms; whereby this is not true because it was discovered that children could have the same symptoms as adults but very different disorders (p. 64). The factors that provide children with resiliency and competence are very complex and seem to vary from one child to the next. When accounting for resiliency in adolescents, there is a need to look at the child in his or her current context to assess how he or she will react to natural school stressors.

### *Resiliency*

Bernard (1995) estimated that based on longitudinal studies that have been done, that between half and two-thirds of children become resilient that grow up with mentally ill, alcoholic, abusive, or criminally involved parents or in poverty or war-torn communities (p. 2). Furthermore, according to Benard (2004), a consistent finding over the last two decades of research is that children and youth do manage to make respectable lives for themselves despite high stressed families or communities with little available resources (p. 7). Hurtes and Allen (2001) thought that in the social science research and popular culture there is a focus on weaknesses and failures, rather than strengths one may possess (p. 334). A focus on weaknesses versus strength may result in a negative image of people whom are making positive gains to become competent. This has resulted in recent research being more focused on positive attributes versus negative attributes in adolescents at-risk. Benard (1995) asserted that “we are all born with an innate capacity for resilience, by which we are able to develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose” (p. 2). “Ultimately, each child has a unique mix of abilities. But regardless of natural variations and

limitations in how they learn, all children have strengths and resilience. All children have brains designed to solve problems, in school as in life.” (Brendtro & Larson, 2006, p. 82).

Benard (2004) stated that one misconception present in the research is the idea that resilience is a quality that some people have and others do not (p. 9). Cowen, Work, and Wymann (1992) make a contradictory statement when they position that:

Resilience is not a quality born into children. Rather, resilient outcomes seem to depend, like the flowering of a delicate blossom, on a combination of felitous conditions that include qualities of the child, a favorable family milieu, and positive interactions between these elements (p. 165).

In the case of whether being resilient is innate or environmentally based, there appears to be some inconsistencies in the research.

### *Resiliency Defined*

Hurtes and Allen (2001) stated that the study of resiliency started in the field of developmental psychopathology (p. 334). Through a qualitative measure of resiliency from both teachers and students, Dryden, Johnson, Howard and McGuire (1998) determined that “resiliency is a multi-faceted construct with critical contextual and perceptual dimensions” (p. 31). Considering the complexity of the concept, it is a challenge to place one known definition on the concept. Throughout the research, there are several varying definitions on resiliency. According to Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990), “resilience refers to the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.” (p. 426). Masten et al. (1990) stated that according to this definition of resiliency, critical or persistent major life stressors are the risk factors and the focus is on short term functioning in response to the

stressor(s). Flach (1988) pointed out that “resilience depends on our ability to recognize pain, acknowledge it’s purpose, tolerate it for a reasonable time until things begin to take shape, and resolve our conflicts constructively” (p. 29). Flach (1988) stated that resilience is defined as the strengths individual’s require to “master cycles of disruption and reintegration throughout our lives” (p. 49). Werner and Smith (1989) studied a whole population of children in a community in Kauai, an island in the northwest end of the Hawaiian chain, for decades of their lives (p. 2). As a result of the study, Werner and Smith (1989) defined resiliency as “their capacity to cope effectively with the internal stresses of their vulnerabilities and external stresses” (p. 4). For this particular study, Masten and Coatsworth’s (1998) following definition of resiliency seems to fit best: resilience “generally refers to manifested competence in the context of significant challenge to adaptation or development of competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development” (p. 4).

As described by Brown and Rhodes (1991), what appears to be missing in the resiliency research is a satisfactory understanding of how at-risk children incorporate resiliency factors to promote resiliency (p. 174). Brown and Rhodes (1991) conjectured that the resiliency’s sum is a result from a combination of the life experiences that children have to choose from (p. 174). This creates various options for each child depending on the specific situation the child finds him or herself. “Some children are insulated by positive family experiences; others are not. Some children are protected by strong personal characteristics, others are not. Some children are bolstered by intervening environmental circumstances; others are not” (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p.

174). As a result of no known theory of resilience, Brown and Rhodes (1991) proposed a “process of integrating and adapting to factors that promote resiliency” (p. 175).

According to Brown and Rhodes (1991), the first step in the process is the child is exposed to stressors (p. 176). Brown and Rhodes (1991) stated that childhood is filled with stressful situations; some children are quick to master such stressors and are able to sufficiently handle such stresses while some children face too many stressors at one time or are overwhelmed by one particular event (p. 176). Brown and Rhodes (1991) thought that these are the times that children are most vulnerable (p. 176). The second step in the process is the child does an evaluation of factors (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 176).

Brown and Rhodes (1991) stated that a child faced with severe adversity perceive the personal importance of the situation and evaluate the options available to assist them in coping (p. 176). According to Brown and Rhodes’ (1991) process, the family experiences, personal characteristics, and environmental circumstances are all factors that shape the child’s response to stress (p. 176). Brown and Rhodes (1991) stated that family experiences are highly important to how a child responds to one situation. The child relies on the importance they place on past, present, and current family experiences (Brown & Rhodes, p. 176). Furthermore, personal characteristics such as “age, level of maturity, gender, health, physique, intelligence, self-esteem, mental state, personality, special needs, individual strengths, and weaknesses work in combination to help determine options” (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 176). Brown and Rhodes (1991) stressed that environmental circumstances, especially for older children, that occur outside the home become increasingly important and effect how children think and act as they are constantly assessing their self worth in response to environmental influences (p. 176).

*Adaptation:* As a result of the family experiences, personal characteristics, and environmental circumstances, the child responds in a constructive way which is called adaptation (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 176). The evaluation of past, present, and current family experiences, and environmental conditions are combined to express how each child responds to his or her unique situations (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 176). Brown and Rhodes (1991) contended that invulnerable children find reasons and execute ways to succeed despite an abundance of risk factors (p. 176). This reaction by children may include many different combination of protective processes but whatever the factors may be, they are “supportive mechanisms through which these children are able to implement ways to cope” (p. 176-177). For dysfunctional children, the factors of dysfunction outweigh the supportive mechanisms that the child possesses that could have promoted resiliency (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 176). As a result, the child will give way to dysfunctional reactions to the severe risks presented in life. The last process oriented step, according to Brown and Rhodes (1991), is the child shows resiliency. Brown and Rhodes (1991) concluded by pointing out that the resilient child first experiences the dysfunction but at some point, the child experiences something that changes the balance and promotes resiliency (p. 177). Some of the factors that may have resulted in this change are the experiencing of a more stable home environment, changing residences, maturation, an intervention by a therapist, etc. (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 177). Consistent with this model, Rutter (1990) pointed out that resilience is concerned with how each individual responds to variations of risk factors and for meaning to apply to the concept it must focus on different responses to a given dose of risk factor (p. 184). Ultimately, each child chooses to react differently to various risk factors and protective

factors present in their life. In addition, according to Benard (2004), it is a common misconception that results from resiliency research only focus on high-risk adolescents (p. 9). Benard (2004) concluded that protective factors that contribute to the success of high-risk youth also apply to all other young people (p. 9).

### *Resiliency Identified*

According to Rutter (1990), it is important to note that resilience is not a fixed trait of an individual because if circumstances change then risk can alter and result in a different individual response (p. 184). How do we identify whether an individual is resilient?

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) identified two factors required to identify resiliency: first, there must be a substantial threat to an individual, examples are poverty, trauma, etc, and second is a quality adjustment to the stimulus continues natural development (p. 4).

Miller (2003), pointed out that in research and clinical settings, resilient behavior is associated with whether a person experiences a negative life event and exhibits a psychopathology as a result (p. 240). However, Miller (2003) wondered whether resilience should be defined through an individual's response to a negative event or maybe resiliency should be defined by considering the role of "searching for meaning" in therapy and coping. (p. 241).

### *Reaction to Crisis*

According to Brown and Rhodes (1991) "such factors as age, gender, intelligence, personality, special needs, individual strengths and weaknesses help determine the relative 'vulnerability' of children to specific types of crisis situations" (p. 171).

However, when looking at the most important factor in how children respond to crisis, Brown and Rhodes (1991) stated that the most critical factor is the support and

communication of family members in times of crisis (p. 173). According to Rutter (1985), an important piece of how successful one's response is to an event is the timing of the event; an increase or decrease of sensitivity based on maturity at the time of the event or because timing effects the meaning of an event (p. 601). Robson (1991), when speaking about children's adjustment to divorce in their family, stated that the reaction from the child depends greatly on the time of separation between the parents (p. 19). From one day or week to the next, what a child values or other circumstances interrelated may have an effect on the child's reaction.

### *Tools to Measure Resiliency*

Considering there may be very different criteria in different cultures for establishing a child's competence, it is difficult to find a good measure of resilience. When looking at measuring resiliency, Hurtes and Allen (2001) stated that "operationalizing and measuring resiliency has proven problematic" and that while simply observing resilient individuals may have value, a need is present to "establish a clear operationalization of resiliency and to develop a method of measuring the construct (p. 335). According to Hurtes and Allen (2001), to be helpful, a measure must be "simple, easy to administer and interpret, appropriate for the target population, and relevant to the intended benefits of the intervention" (p. 333). Wolin and Wolin (1993), after using quantitative analysis, identified the following characteristics of people who are resilient: insight, independence, creativity, humor, initiative, relationships, and values orientation (p. 335). This was an attempt to determine specific factors that make one resilient across all cultures. Furthermore, Hurtes and Allen (2001) pointed out that the Wolins' "perspective focuses on the strengths of individuals rather than on the risks faced

by or needs of individuals” (p. 336). Hurtes and Allen (2001) commented on the fact that the work of Wolin and Wolin (1993) was the basis for creation for the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP) (p. 336). The creation of the RASP was an attempt at creating one assessment that measures the resiliency of individuals utilizing the seven different resiliencies, as established by Wolin and Wolin (1993).

### *Principles of Resilience*

Rutter (1985) stated that the key element to establishing resilience is a person’s cognitive set, which includes self-esteem and self-worth, while helplessness increases the chances that one adversity will lend itself to another (p. 603). Rutter (1985) pointed out that resilience does not come through avoidance; instead, resilience comes about by encountering stress at a time when confidence in self and competence socially are present to increase the likelihood of mastery of the situation (p. 608). The key is for individuals to first be able to face the stress and then to use the competence they possess both personally and socially to handle the stress in a constructive manner.

Wolin (2003) was interested in putting strengths into seven different categories called resiliencies: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and morality (p. 19). Wolin (2003) broke down these seven resiliencies into behaviors associated with the principle and the function of the resiliency. *Insight:* Wolin (2003) described the behavior of insight as asking the difficult questions and giving honest answers to oneself when faced with many different situations (p. 19). The function of insight, as stated by Wolin (2003), is to dismiss any rejection or confusion concerning the situation and acts as a starting point in making necessary decisions to solve problems (p. 19). *Independence:* Wolin (2003) stated that independence, as related to resilience, is

the distancing, both emotionally and physically, from trouble that may come from family, friends, and during situations one may find him or herself (p. 19). The function of independence, as stated by Wolin (2003), is to provide oneself with both physical and emotional safety (p.19). *Relationships*: Wolin (2003) stated that relationships are forming a connection to people that matter in one's life (p. 19). The function of relationships is it "provides friendship, understanding, material and emotional support, and sometimes even love" (Wolin, 2003, p. 19). *Initiative*: Initiative is taking control of problems and searching for solutions (Wolin, 2003, p. 19). The function of initiative, as stated by Wolin (2003), is to solve problems which generates mastery and competence in solving problems in the future (p. 19). *Creativity*: The behavior associated with creativity is using one's imagination and the function involves expressing one's difficult feelings in a positive way that is helpful for the individual (Wolin, 2003, p. 19). *Humor*: The behavior involved with humor is the ability to determine what is funny even in the presence of pain and being able to laugh at oneself (Wolin, 2003, p. 19). The function of humor, as stated by Wolin (2003), is to introduce liveliness and the ability to look at the positive in dismal situations (p. 19). *Morality*: Morality, as described by Wolin (2003), is the thinking of the effect of ones actions on others and using ones conscience before making decisions (p. 19). A sense of morality, as described by Wolin (2003), gives a sense of being good even when situations surrounding are difficult (p. 19). These seven different resiliencies for children show that children are able to cope with varying stressors if they are able to find from within the strength to rise above adversity. It is important to look further into each resiliency to understand the effects on resilient individuals.

*Insight:* “Insight is the mental habit of asking searching questions and giving honest answers” (Wolin & Wolin, 1993, p. 67). Wolin and Wolin (1993) spoke of insight as the ability to sense trouble is at hand within their family, and that sensing does not necessarily give children the power to change the circumstances. However, according to Wolin and Wolin (1993), sensing trouble does allow the child to counteract any perceptions of self, notice that it is the other person’s problem and not theirs, reduce anxiety by making the situation predictable, and by removing yourself from the other person’s “line of fire” (p. 76). Wolin and Wolin (1993) continued by saying that while parents do have some effect on their children, for the most part, children have an active role in their own lives (p. 71). Ultimately, the child chooses whether to have their actions be effected by their parents. Furthermore, Wolin and Wolin (1993), pointed out that three children can be reared with the same parents and given the same message but each child can interpret that message in very different ways (p. 73). The insight perspective of resilience focuses on the child’s ability to control his or her reaction to life through insight versus letting others control their lives. *Independence:* Wolin and Wolin (1993) defined independence in relation to trouble parents as the best possible compromise between competing needs resulting in safe boundaries between the resilient person and troubled parents (p.88). *Relationships:* Wolin and Wolin (1993) stated that “relationships are intimate and fulfilling ties to other people” (p.111). However, if the child’s parents are unable to give them the relationships that they need, then relationships can be formed with others. Wolin and Wolin (1993) pointed out that relationships just do not happen for survivors, instead, resilient children become proactive in finding a meaningful relationship (p.116-117). *Initiative:* According to Wolin and Wolin (1993) initiative is

defined as the resolve to assert yourself and master your environment (p. 136). *Humor and Creativity*: Wolin and Wolin (1993) described humor and creativity as opportunities for an individual to take safe harbor to reorganize the details of your life to your own liking and to turn reality inside out (p. 163). Flach (1988) stated that “psychological testing of creative individuals has clearly shown a close connection between creativity and our ability to deal with stress” p. 161. Humor, according to Fach (1988), promoted a dramatic change in how one perceives a situation or event, even if only momentarily (p. 198). *Morality*: Morality (1993), according to Wolin and Wolin (1993), is different from the other resiliencies because while the others aim to repair an injured self, morality accomplishes that goal and sets to improve the world as well (p. 184). Morality involves dedicating oneself to others in order to restore themselves and by dedicating themselves to outside causes (p. 184). While Wolin and Wolin view specific factors that contribute to resiliency, others have found other various factors that contribute.

Brendtro and Larson (2006) laid down the following as principles of resiliency for adolescents: trust, talent, promoting power, and instilling purpose. *Trust*: According to Brendtro and Larson (2006), trust exists with those people we feel comfort, with those who show us respect, and with those who assist us to meet important needs (p. 57). “The road to resilience, you might say, is paved with trust” (Brendtro & Larson, 2006, p. 4). Brendtro and Larson (2006) stated that the need for trust is accomplished by frequently occurring positive interactions with people who have shared concerns (p. 47). *Talent*: Brendtro and Larson (2006) described talent as involving skills present to solve problems, learning styles that are unique to an individual, and individual abilities present in all of us (p. 79). *Power*: Powerful children are able to apply self-control over their

emotions, stand firm against possible negative influences from others, and act responsible (Brendtro & Larson, 2006, p. 51). Furthermore, according to Brendtro and Larson (2006), “they are the pilots of their lives, rather than passengers.” (p. 51).

Flach (1988) posed the question of what should one’s expectations be of themselves when a significant stressor occurs in one’s life (p. 12)? When speaking of a healthy response to stress, Flach (1988) stated that disruption and in some cases dysfunction are both truly healthy responses to stress (p. 38). Through his own personal experience, Flach (1988) explained that “significantly stressful events, by their very nature, must shake up and often disrupt the structures of the world around us...” (p.14). Using an example of a friend’s response to stress, Flach (1988) stated that if each of us knows how to activate it, we all have the ability to restructure ourselves after significant stressful events and establish new and different levels of order and rationality (p. 20). Thus, it is unlikely for anybody, in response to stress, to act like the stress is unable to penetrate their personal armor. For adolescents, it is important to look at individuals who react to an array of risk factors in their life.

A number of different high-risk behaviors accumulate to create a vulnerable state for teenagers but what also causes a high-risk situation is a number of antecedents (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 40). As stated by Dryfoos (1990), “one of the factors may make little difference, but for a child who lives in a crime-ridden community, surrounded by delinquent peers, who also have low academic skills and attends an inadequate school...the chances are high that delinquent behavior will follow” (p. 40). Often times adolescents have a lot of factors working against them so it is natural then that they are

more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviors. Nonetheless, there are still some that find the strength to succeed despite the accumulation of stress.

### *Protective Factors*

Protective factors are important to resiliency because, Brendtro (2004) pointed out, they predict positive outcomes in anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of adolescents that are considered high-risk (p. 8). According to Brendtro and Larson (2006) children in pain have more than internal strengths to be resilient; they also have external supports called “protective factors” (p. 34). Richters and Weintraub (1990) defined protective factors as the “environmental resources available to and the adaptive strengths characteristic of those high-risk children who do not show early signs of deviance” (p. 67). Rutter (1985) illustrated that protective factors refer to “influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person’s response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome” (p. 600). According to Richters and Weintraub (1990) there is both a descriptive and inferential definition of the term protective factor (p. 79). In its descriptive form, protective factors refer to a child who is at high risk of deviant behavior and his or her’s personal or environmental attributes that are associated with reduced rates of deviance in cognitive, emotional, and/or social functioning (Richters & Weintraub, 1990, p. 79). In its inferential form, according to Richters and Weintraub (1990), the term protective factor provides an explanation to why these factors are associated with a decreased likelihood of negative outcomes for individuals who are at risk (p. 79).

Particular attention is paid to the role of an adult in the research. Masten, Best, and Garnezy (1990) stated that the most reliable and important protective factor is an

adult that cares for children after or during a significant life stressor (p. 431). Similarly, Brendtro and Larson (2006) stated that the strongest protective factor is when a caring adult is present for the child (p. 34). Rutter (1985) was careful to not classify protective factors with a positive experience: 1) A protective factor may actually be an unpleasant and potentially dangerous event that toughens an individual. 2) In contrast to a positive experience, a protective factor has no detectable effect without the presence of a stressor. 3) A protective factor may not even be a specific life occurrence, but rather may be a quality of the person (p. 600). Rutter (1990) explained further by describing that a protective factor is not something that makes the individual feel good (p. 186). Instead, according to Rutter (1990), protection occurs when an individual successfully engages in small dose of the risk factor. (p. 186).

Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) stated that “protective factors” lessen the effects of environmental dangers or personal vulnerabilities so that the ability for individuals to adapt is more likely than if these factors were not present (p. 426). While stating that protective factors can contribute to resiliency, Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) pointed out that the presence of “protective factors” does not necessarily generate resilience because these protective processes may not be sufficient if the individual’s vulnerability is too great or the adversity is too severe to surmount (p. 426). Along the same lines, Masten and Coatsworth (1998) pointed out that “protective factors do not necessarily yield resilience” because “vulnerability of the individual or the severity of the adversity is too great to overcome” (p. 426).

According to Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990, p. 431), “self-efficacy increases as a result of mastery experiences; in turn, feelings of self-efficacy increase the

likelihood of instrumental behavior. Resilient children may enter a situation more prepared for effective action by virtue of their self-confidence; subsequently, successful mastery of a difficult situation would be expected to increase self-efficacy and reinforce efforts to take action”.

It is inevitable that some children succeed despite the odds being against them and it can be related to three primary factors that these children rise above the odds:

experiences within the family, personal, and environmental characteristics (Brown & Rhodes, 1991, p. 172). In general terms, these seem to be the factors that influence whether a child is resilient to challenges in his or her life. Masten, Morison, Pellegrini, and Tellegen (1990) contrived that there is no general “immunity” to stress. Instead, according to Masten et al. (1990), “there may be different patterns of stress responding that are more or less adaptive, depending on context, the circumstances, and the developmental stage of the child” (p. 249). Furthermore, according to Rutter (1990) most protective processes do not concern long term experiences but instead, are simply key turning points in one person’s life (p. 187).

The research points to several varying protective factors and therefore it is a challenge to summarize all the different protective factors that can contribute to resiliency in adolescents. Rutter (1979) initiated the following as protective factors: development of self-esteem, an array of available opportunities, environmental structure and control that is reasonable, the presence of intimate relationships and personal bonds, and the achievement of coping skills (p. 70). Masten and Coatsworth (1998) pointed out that several protective elements promote competence for children in both favorable and unfavorable environments but the three most crucial processes are having adults that care,

higher IQ, and the increasing ability to manage their own behaviors, emotions, and attention (p. 22). In a more recent article, Masten and Powell (2003), based on their work in Project Competence and the extending literature on protective factors, have developed a “short list” of protective factors (p. 14). *Individual differences:* Masten and Powell (2003) described the following individual differences: “cognitive abilities, self-perceptions of competence, worth, confidence, temperament and personality, self-regulation skills, and positive outlook on life” (p. 14). *Relationships:* Relationships, as stated by Masten and Powell (2003), consist of “parenting quality, close relationships, and connections to prosocial and rule-abiding peers” (p. 14). *Community resources and opportunities:* The following, as stated by Masten and Powell (2003), are community resources that enable resilient behavior: “good schools, connections to prosocial organizations, neighborhood quality, and quality of social services and health care” (p. 14).

One factor that the research stressed as one of the most important protective factors was the presence of a significant relationship for the child. According to Flach (1988), the intimate relationship between parent and child in the earliest years of life is what establishes hope for that individual (p. 27). Brown and Rhodes (1991) stated that of utmost importance to children is that they experience two-parent homes where there are secure relationships, good communication, fitting role models, regular expectations, and support (p. 172). However, if a two parent home is not an option, Benard (1995) depicted that at least one caring person in the child’s life can provide support for learning and healthy development (p. 3). When considering how children best adapt to divorce of parents, Robson (1991) stated that a continued relationship with both parents is

important; if relationships with both parents is not possible, then a positive relationship with one parent seems to result in a better adaptation for the child (p. 19). Furthermore, Howard and Johnson (2000), in their study asked 9-12 year olds in disadvantaged areas of South Australia what is was that made the difference between “kids with tough lives who do O.K.” and “kids with tough lives who don’t do O.K.” (p. 321). As a result of this study done by Howard and Johnson (2000), both children and teachers stressed that the family, particularly supportive relationships within the family, as having a significant role in promoting resilient behavior among children that are experiencing a “tough life” (p. 326). In this study, children were specific about the type of support in that parents should talk and listen to children, give attention, and encourage the children (Howard & Johnson, p. 327).

Sameroff and Seifer (1991) stated that “relationship disorders are defined as major disturbances in the process by which individual parents and children develop affective bonds, communication patterns, and social interaction patterns that impact on the child’s development of generalized competent behavior” (p. 63). Furthermore, according to Sameroff and Seifer (1991), this concept is not antithetical to the vulnerability and protective models put forth by Garmenzy and others. (p. 63). Sameroff and Seifer (1991) pointed out that without categorizing all measures into either risk or protective factors, it examines a set of variables and how they impact the competence in children (p. 63). Instead of categorizing all risk and protective factors, it may be valuable to examine all the variables that affect each child.

According to Flach (1988), the critical aspect of a resilient personality is the ability to be flexible: to be able to summon specific strengths that are needed in

specifically challenging situations, to be logical when it is called for, and to sometimes be illogical when trying to discover varying possibilities (p. 120). Werner (1990) stated that resilient individuals can choose or restructure something that they need from an environment in order to use it to meet their needs (p. 105).

Autonomy, according to Flach (1988), is a reoccurring goal throughout each person's life cycle that starts with one's own family, broadens to teachers and playmates, until ultimately reaching a state of maturity (p. 147). Flach (1988) continued to say that autonomy must be flexible because at times it is important to ignore other's input to protect one's creativity while other times one must reach out to others for advice (p. 155). According to Flach (1988), being resilient is not just an interior quality but is also reliant on the people that fill the space around us and the balance between us and the outer world (p. 209). Benard (1995) illustrated autonomy as being able to exercise control over one's environment, having a sense of one's identity, and being able to act independently (p. 2). Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) stated that external protective factors are assets from three primary systems of the child's world: family, school, and community (p. 312).

*School Counselor's role:*

According to Rose-Gold (1991) as school counselor's client loads continue to rise, that counselors have found groups as highly effective in providing services to several students (p. 3). Group work is increasing in importance within the field of school counseling. According to Paisley and Milsom (2007) group work is an important piece of the new vision for school counseling and if school counselors intend on satisfying the academic, career, and social development of students then they must acknowledge the potential benefits of group counseling (p. 16). In particular, according to Rhodes and

Brown (1991), professionals would be in a position to prevent dysfunction in children if they could identify factors that place children “at risk” for social, emotional, or psychological difficulties (p. 1). Group counseling, according to Webb and Brigman (2007), allows school counselors to work with small groups of students on academic and social skills beyond what teachers and counselors can perform in the classroom (p. 190). While professionals like school counselors are in a perfect position to provide services like group counseling, it is noted that better reporting of the benefits of group counseling is important. According to Myrick & Dixon (1990) there is an increasing need for school counselors to report their data on effectiveness of counseling programs and to make sure the data comes from carefully designed experimental studies (p. 330). In turn, providing better credibility to the programs and interventions created by school counselors to help students meet their needs.

A study by Taylor (2002), who stated that schools offer the perfect setting to address resiliency with large number of children, explored which resiliency factors elementary and secondary school counselors most often address and what particular interventions school counselors used to build resiliency with students in schools. The counselors’ responses within the survey show that the essential intervention used at both the elementary and secondary levels were “positive language approaches (emphasis on strengths and successes, positive comments, encouragement and affirmation) (Talyor, 2002, p. 63). Furthermore, according to Taylor (2002), the benefits of positive language are two fold: 1) school counselors can use this technique to build positive relations and connection with the students 2) due to time restriction put on school counselors, positive language can be applied within a brief interaction with a student. Brendtro and Larson

(2006) stated that “one can have a potent impact in short teaching moments by developing consistent and intentional positive connections” (p. 59). Curiosity, rather than judgment, is a more effective way to treat children and responding to children to connect and gain understanding versus simply reacting to whatever they are throwing our way (Brendtro & Larson, 2006, p. 59). Cowen, Work, and Wyman (1992) stated that while an intervention focusing on the children is appealing, if the intervention focuses solely on the children without any focus on other factors then it may have major limitations (p. 165). One of these factors may be the school environment in which children spend a majority of their days.

#### *School's role*

According to Rutter (1979), while children's development is shaped by experiences within the family, it is noted that the school environment has been shown to be very important to children's development (p. 58). Benard (2004) affirmed that school's ability to engage each child's intrinsic motivation is key (p. 68). Rutter (1979) posed that answers within school do not lie with factors such as size, staff-student ratio, or the quality of buildings. Instead, Rutter (1990) stated that the crucial difference is the atmosphere created within the school and their worth as a social institution (p. 60). In schools, teachers are a major component of the environment. Krovetz and Speck (1995) stated that when they asked experienced teachers if they believe students can succeed, most teachers were unsure (p. 111). Krovetz and Speck concluded that the belief that “all students can succeed” should be the driving strength behind all schooling, but after looking at the success rates of schools across the country, this does not appear to be a reality (p. 111). According Dryden, Johnson, Howard, and McGuire (1998), the school

emerges as one place that protective factors can be put to use to help students increase resiliency (p. 6). In a study performed by Masten, Garmezy, and Tellegen (1988) 205 children aged 8-13 were studied to determine the associations of stress exposure to school based competence and how the following attributes moderated stress: sex, IQ, environmental factors of socioeconomic status (SES) and family attributes. In result of the study, Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen et al. (1988) found the following:

In this study, children with more assets, both personal and environmental, demonstrated greater competence in the school environment; they were more engaged, more achieving and less disruptive or aggressive. When exposed to high levels of stressful events, such children may maintain high levels of achievement but the quality of their engagement with their peers and in classroom activities may be reduced. (p. 760)

While children's current assets may be important in being competent in school, Shakoor and Fister (2000) stated that resilience should be viewed as a dynamic process that is constantly changing and not a fixed trait; once this is accepted, intervention causing change becomes a possibility (p. 272). A child's ability to be resilient depends on various mechanisms working internally and externally for the child.

Kirst and Kelley (1995) pointed out there are strong benefits of teachers and support staff always assessing student's needs for "school-linked services" and creating solid relationships between teachers, staff, and outside agency resources (p. 40). One concern that Kirst and Kelley (1995) presented is that some teachers may start to think of themselves as social workers instead of teachers; however, over time teachers may begin to see the student benefits of having such collaborative relations (p. 40). Furthermore,

according to Benard (2004), caring relationships with peers and teachers can provide students the trust and respect they deserve that will assist students keep interest when school is difficult or boring (p. 68). Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) continued to say that it is important for existing resources within the school to coordinate with community resources for ensuring that school programs address more than just instructional programs (p. 317). Implying that there are other issues besides academics that are important in regards to children in the school. In Howard and Johnson (2000) assessment of school's role with children, social/emotional supports were very important factors identified by children and in particular the creation of special relations and a caring school environment are important for at-risk youth (p. 331). Howard and Johnson (2000) concluded that it is important to realize that the factors that can make a difference for children at-risk is well within the capacity of most members and groups that constitute society (p. 336). Benard (1995) asserted that when schools meet the basic human needs for support, respect, and belonging that motivation for learning will be furthered in schools (p. 4). Meeting the needs for children may not look the same in each school district. Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) established that it is important to not become specific on what will be enacted from one school to the next because different cultures in different historical and social contexts will meet these needs of children differently (p. 317). Each school must look within its own walls and to the community to effectively meet the needs of the children.

Rodman (2007) stated that professionals too often take positive action only after a student is identified to be at risk or actually has committed self-harming behavior such as dropping out of school, truancy, criminal activity, etc. are actually taking place (p. 48).

Benard (1995) affirmed that schools that institute high expectations for all children, and give them the support necessary to meet these expectations, have a high rate of academic success (p. 3). Benard (1995) continued by saying that children start to believe in themselves and their futures once it is conveyed to them that high expectations are expected (p. 3). Furthermore, Benard (1995) stated that critical resilience traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, autonomy, and optimism can result (p. 3). The school sets the stage to produce resilient children by valuing the students and their needs.

Masten and Powell (2003) positioned that utilizing a resilience framework can assist in conceptualizing changes in missions, interventions, and model programs that are geared towards increasing resilience (p. 16). Masten and Powell (2003) stated that the following framework for policies and practice should be implemented to increase resiliency (p. 16). First, Masten and Powell (2003) concluded the mission must be one of “promot[ing] competence [and] shift[ing] developmental course in more positive directions (p. 16). Secondly, Masten and Powell (2003) stated that there must be models that include positive planning and models of change in place (p. 16). The models should be focused on “competence or health as well as problems of psychopathology, developmental tasks, assets as well as risk factors, and protective factors as well as vulnerabilities” (Masten & Powell, 2003, p. 16). Thirdly, measures are used to assess the positive and the negative (Masten & Powell, 2003, p. 16). The measures, according to Masten and Powell (2003) “assess strengths in the child, family, relationships, school, [and] community” and evaluate any change, whether positive or negative (p. 16). Lastly, according to Masten and Powell (2003), the methods of policy and practice should be focused on multiple strategies based on resilience models (p. 16). The methods must be

risk focused by reducing exposure to risk, asset focused by boosting resources or enhancing assets of child's life, and process focused by utilizing the power of "human adaptational systems" (Masten & Powell, p. 16). Masten and Powell (2003) concluded that the understanding of resilience has led to the potential to create prevention programs, interventions, and to better inform policy to help increase the mechanisms for children to succeed and become competent (p. 2). Utilizing the above framework, schools can make changes that better prepare their students to succeed.

Benard (2004) pointed to the following elements within a school to promote student's innate resilience: all students have caring relationships at his or her school, the school environment feels like a community, schools make use of "small group process", schools are small in size, relationships between the school staff are encouraged to be caring, early intervention services like counseling and support groups are available, mentoring programs link students with community volunteers, and partnership between family and the community is encouraged (p. 71-73). With the above characteristics in place at school, student's natural ability to be resilient will most likely present itself.

### *Group Counseling*

Dryfoos (1990) talked about the many prevention strategies that do not work to prevent delinquency in teens. The following is the list of preventative mechanisms that do not work to prevent delinquency in teens, as stated by Dryfoos (1990): preventative casework, pharmacological interventions (except for violent behaviors), work experience, vocational education, probation officers, traditional "street corner" workers, social area or neighborhood projects, "scaring straight" programs, and most notable for this research project, group counseling (p. 145). While Dryfoos (1990) pointed out that group work

does not work as a preventative measure in teens, more recent research stated otherwise. Shakoor and Fister (2000), who presented a group process for intervening with adults coping with the impact of astonishing and ongoing stress, stated that small groups could provide at-risk adolescents a place to establish relationships, reduce personal isolation, and increase necessary interpersonal skills (p. 285). Shakoor and Fister (2000) administered a small group curriculum that took place over the course of 2 weeks and was totaled to 40 group hours (p. 277). The groups consisted of adults who live in Bosnia, which at the time was a war-torn country, where “resilience meant being alive in circumstances that were designed to make one prefer being dead” (Shakoor & Fister, 2000, p. 277). As a result of Shakoor and Fister’s (2000) study they stated that while there is a strong belief that resilience is established long term and developmentally, their adult group members showed noticeable progress in 40 contact hours (p. 284). Thus implying that interventions in school can be short but still effective.

When thinking about what causes school failure, Dryfoos (1990) discussed that it is important to see school failure as a process and not a single event (p. 79). This idea gives hope to the presumption that school counselors or other school personnel can step in with the necessary interventions for the child to succeed in school. Shakoor and Fister (2000) contrived that the establishment of small groups for adolescents has the potential to provide adolescents whom are at-risk with an environment in which to shape relationships, decrease isolation, and develop necessary interpersonal skills (p. 285). Brendtro and Larson (2006) pointed out that educators and caregivers can help children in trouble develop resiliency by meeting their four basic emotional needs: “belonging, build trust; to satisfy the need for mastery, recognize talent; to satisfy the need for

independence, promote power; to satisfy the need for generosity, instill purpose” (p. 45). With these emotional needs met through school, there will be a greater likelihood of success versus failure for adolescents.

## Method

### *School Information*

The author interned at a middle/high school in the Northeast United States as a school counselor. The following is a percentage representation of the student racial/ethnic origin for this schools middle school in 2004-2005: American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander, 0.4%; Black (not Hispanic), 4.3%; Hispanic, 0.7%; and White (not Hispanic), 94.6% (“*University*”, A). The annual attendance rate for the middle school for the 2003-2004 school year was 96.3% and the total number of suspensions was 13 or 4.6% (“*University*”, A). Furthermore, the following is an expression of the student socioeconomic and stability indicators for the middle school 2004-2005 in percent of enrollment: reduced lunch, 8.9%; public assistance, 11-20%; and student stability 92% (“*University*”, A). The average class size for the 2004-2005 school year are as follows for the eighth grade: English, 19; Mathematics, 19; Science, 18; Social Studies, 19 (“*University*” A). The breakdown for fall enrollment per grade level in 2004-2005 is as follows: Sixth, 97; Seventh, 88; and Eighth, 95 (“*University*”, A).

The following is a percentage representation of the student racial/ethnic origin for this schools high school in 2004-2005: American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander, 0.3%; Black (not Hispanic), 1.9%; Hispanic, 0.5%; and White (not Hispanic), 97.3% (“*University*”, B). The annual attendance rate for the high school for the 2003-2004 school year was 93.6% and the total number of suspensions was 28 or 7.7%

(“*University*”, B). Furthermore, the following is an expression of the student socioeconomic and stability indicators for the high school 2004-2005 in percent of enrollment: reduced lunch, 3.8%; public assistance, 11-20%; and student stability 98% (“*University*”, B).

The author’s project began August 2007 with the author discussing the idea of facilitating a group that is geared towards increasing middle school student’s resiliency. The author was interested in learning about what makes middle school students resilient and discovering if group counseling would make a positive change in self-perceived resiliency. The author found that the middle school’s principal was also interested in this topic so it was decided this project was worthwhile to pursue further. The author created a proposal for Institute Review Board (IRB) review. The proposal was reviewed December of 2007 and ultimately accepted by the IRB by January 2008.

### *Research Process*

There were two separate groups for this project. The control and experimental groups respectively consisted of four sixth grade students. All sixth grade names were written out and cut into equal squares, placed into a hat and drawn randomly. As the names were drawn, the student’s name was placed into either the control or experimental group randomly. The author then called each student down individually and read a description of the research project and asked permission from the student’s to join the project. The following description of the project was read to potential members of the experimental group:

“As you may know, I am a school counseling intern and you may have seen me around the school or you may have met with me on an individual or group basis. For my

graduate studies to become a school counselor, part of my degree is to complete a project resulting in a thesis. For my project, I have decided to facilitate a group with students for five sessions that will be geared towards increasing social resiliency in students.

Resiliency is a student's ability to 'bounce back' from daily troubles. You have been randomly selected to be in my experimental group for this project. I want you to know that you are under no obligation to enter this group or if you do decide to be in the group, you can back out at any time. Even if mom, dad, family member or a friend says that you should be in the group, the ultimate decision is up to you on whether you want to be included in the group. Each group session will have different topics. For example, during one session we explore different listening skills and during another session we look at how the group members handle stress. You are not obligated to talk about anything personal within the group or do not have to talk about anything you do not want to. You can step out of a group at any time if you need a break. One rule created within the group with the group members will be that everything that is said in the group will be confidential. Meaning that what is said in the group stays in the group. Each group member will be asked to abide by this rule and other rules that are agreed upon by the group. Do you have any questions at this time?" If student had questions, the author answered them as clearly and precisely as possible. "Would you like to be included in this group? If you need time to think about your decision, please get back to me by the end of today." If the student agreed to be in the group, the author stated the following: "Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this group. I have a form called a consent form for minors that I want you to take home to read and review. Please sign this form and bring it back to me as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the form, I will

be happy to answer them for you. I also need permission from your mom, dad, or guardian for you to be included in this group. Would you be able to bring this consent form (provided form to student) and get it signed by one of your parents as soon as possible? After you provide me with the signed consent form, I will be able to give you further information on when our first group session will be. As a reminder, you will not be receiving any academic credit for this group and you will not be graded on the group. If you have any questions at this time or in the future, please do not hesitate to ask me.”

Upon random selection of twelve 6<sup>th</sup> graders for the control group, each student was called to the counseling center and the principal investigator explained the following to the students:

“As you may know, I am a school counseling intern and you may have seen me around the school or you may have met with me on an individual or group basis. For my graduate studies to become a school counselor, part of my degree is to complete a project resulting in a thesis. For my project, I have decided to facilitate a friendship group with students for five sessions that will be geared towards increasing social resiliency in students. Resiliency is a student’s ability to bounce back from daily troubles. You have been randomly selected to be in my control group. I want you to know that you are under no obligation to enter this group or if you do decide to be in the group, you can back out at any time. Even if mom, dad, family member, or a friend says that you should be in the group, the ultimate decision is up to you on whether you want to be included in the group. Each group session’s topic will be selected by consensus of the group. If I find the topic to be inappropriate, I will ask for the group to consider other topics. You are not obligated to talk about anything personal within the group or do not have to talk about

anything you do not want to. You can step out of a group session at any time if you need a break. One rule created within the group with the group members will be that everything that is said in the group will be confidential. Meaning that what is said in the group stays in the group. Each group member will be asked to abide by this rule and other rules that are agreed upon by the group. Do you have any questions at this time?" If student had questions, the author answered them as clearly and precisely as possible. The author continued: "Would you like to be included in this group? If you need time to think about your decision, please get back to me by the end of today." If the student agreed to be in the group, the author stated: "Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this group. I have a form called a consent form for minors that I want you to take home to read and review. Please sign this form and bring it back to me as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the form, I will be happy to answer them for you. I also need permission from your mom, dad, or guardian for you to be included in this group. Would you be able to bring this consent form (provide form to student) and get it signed by one of your parents as soon as possible? After you provide me with the signed consent form, I will be able to give you further information on when our first group session will be. As a reminder, you will not be receiving any academic credit for this group and you will not be graded on the group. If you have any questions at this time or in the future, please do not hesitate to ask me."

Once the students returned with the signed consent forms, he/she was advised that he/she will be given a slip during their first block class that will explain when they are to come to the counseling session for their first group session and that each group thereafter the same procedure would be followed. The RASP pre-test was administered by the

principal investigator during the first group counseling session. Prior to the beginning of the project, the author randomly assigned each group member a number from 1 to 24. The random assignment was accomplished by placing equal size pieces of paper from 1 through 24 in a hat. Each student was paired with a number from 1 to 24. Each RASP was then identified with a number from 1 to 24. The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with each student's name and assigned number was printed and immediately placed in the lock box located within the principal investigator's office. The principal investigator was the only person to possess the key for this lock box. Prior to the first group, the principal investigator took out the list that details which number is associated with which student in the group and placed this information in a folder that is to only be in the possession of the principal investigator. The principal investigator passed each student the RASP pretest that had the number associated with that student on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. After completion of the pretest by each group, both experimental and control, the principal investigator collected all completed RASP forms. The principal investigator placed the tests neatly in a folder, placed the folder in front of him, and kept the document in his possession at all times during the first session. After the first group counseling session was complete, the principal investigator went to the intern office, which is shared with the other counseling intern, and placed completed pretests in the lock box. The only time any information was taken out of the lock box was for evaluation for the principal investigator's thesis. The post-test was administered by the principal investigator in the last group counseling session and the same safeguards were used with the post-test as were used with the pre-test to ensure confidentiality.

Each counseling session took approximately 45 minutes in length, with a total of five counseling sessions for both the experimental and control groups. The experimental group's sessions was created by the author through research explaining examples of group sessions. The control group's topic for each session was chosen by the students from a list of topics created by the author.

### Results

The RASP was designed to measure seven different factors: creativity, humor, independence, initiative, insight, relationships, and values orientation. Specific questions from the RASP combined together provided the measure for each different factor. The following is a depiction of the average scores for both the experimental group and control group in this study. That Alpha score was the average increase or decrease from posttest for each question in the RASP. The following Table is a depiction of the average scores for each question, pretest and posttest, and the difference between both the pretest and posttest expressed in Alpha.

Table 1

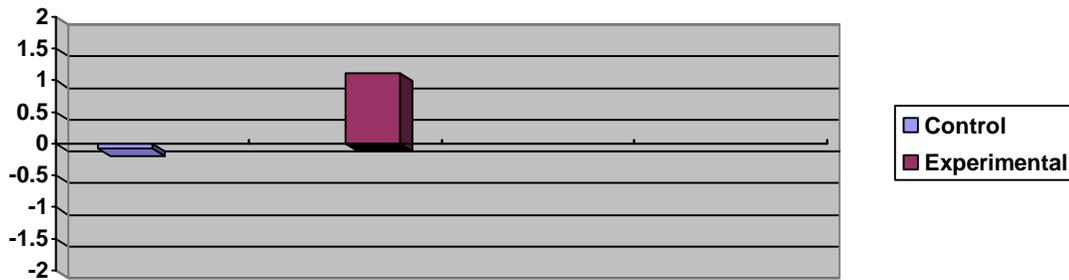
Difference between Pretest and Posttest Average Scores:

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
1. When my work is criticized, I try harder the next time.	4.25	2.15	5.0	4.0	+0.75	+1.85
2. I can deal with whatever comes in the future.	2.0	3.25	3.0	5.0	+1.0	+1.75
3. Once I set a goal for myself, I don't let anything stop me from reaching it.	4.75	3.75	4.75	5.25	0	+1.5
4. I learn from my mistakes.	5.0	4.75	4.0	5.25	-1.0	+0.50
5. I notice small changes in facial expressions.	4.25	3.5	5.0	4.75	+0.75	+1.25
6. I can imagine the consequences of my actions.	5.25	4.75	4.25	5.50	-1.0	+0.75
7. I know when I'm good at something.	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.50	-1.0	+0.50
8. I'm prepared to deal with the consequences of my actions.	4.0	4.75	4.25	5.25	+0.25	+0.50
9. I say "no" to things that I don't want to do.	5.0	4.75	5.0	5.25	0	+0.50

10. I can change my behavior to match the situation.	4.75	4.3	4.75	6.0	0	+1.7
11. My sense of humor makes it easier to deal with tough situations.	3.75	4.25	4.5	4.5	+0.75	+0.25
12. My friends know they can count on me.	4.25	4.75	4.0	5.75	-0.25	+1.0
13. I can change my surroundings.	3.75	4.5	5.25	5.0	+1.5	+0.50
14. My family is there for me when I need them.	5.0	4.75	4.75	5.75	-0.25	+1.0
15. When something goes wrong, I can tell if it was my fault.	3.0	4.5	3.5	5.0	+0.50	+0.50
16. Its OK if I don't see things the way other people do.	4.0	4.75	3.5	5.75	-0.50	+1.0
17. Lying is unacceptable.	4.75	4.0	3.75	5.25	-1.0	+1.25
18. I avoid people who could get me into trouble.	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.25	0	+1.25
19. Its OK if some people do not like me.	5.25	4.75	5.0	6.0	-0.25	+1.25
20. I am comfortable making my own decisions.	4.0	4.5	4.75	6.0	+0.75	+1.50
21. I can sense when someone is not telling the truth.	4.75	4.5	5.25	4.75	+0.50	+0.25
22. When I'm faced with a tough situation, I come up with new ways to handle it.	3.5	5.0	4.25	4.5	+0.75	-0.50
23. I can come up with different ways to let out my feelings.	4.5	4.25	3.5	5.6	-1.0	+1.35
24. I choose my friends carefully.	4.5	5.0	3.25	6.0	-1.25	+1.0
25. I look for the "lighter side" of tough situations.	4.25	3.75	3.25	4.25	-1.0	+0.50
26. I control my own life.	5.0	3.75	3.75	5.75	-1.25	+2.0
27. I can tell what mood someone is in just by looking at him/her.	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.25	+1.0	+0.75
28. I try to help others.	4.75	2.6	5.5	4.5	+0.75	+1.9
29. I stand up for what I believe is right.	5.25	5.0	5.30	5.75	+0.05	+0.75
30. I try to figure out things that I don't understand.	4.75	4.25	4.5	6.0	-0.25	+1.75
31. I'm good at keeping friendships going.	4.25	3.6	4.25	5.75	0	+2.15
32. I have friends who will back me up.	4.3	4.25	3.75	5.50	.58	+1.25
33. Laughter helps me deal with stress.	4.75	4.0	4.25	5.75	-0.50	+1.75
34. I avoid situations where I could get into trouble.	3.75	4.25	3.75	5.25	0	+1.0
35. I can be myself around my friends.	3.75	4.6	3.75	5.75	0	+1.15
36. When I'm in a bad mood, I can cheer myself up.	3.25	3.0	3.75	5.50	+0.50	+2.50
37. When something bad happens to me, I don't give up.	4.75	3.75	4.75	6.0	0	+2.25
38. I share my ideas and opinions even if they are different from other people's.	4.25	5.25	4.25	5.5	0	+0.25
39. I can entertain myself.	5.0	4.25	4.75	5.75	-0.25	+1.50
40. I make friends easily.	5.75	4.0	4.75	5.0	-1.0	+1.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>5.35</b>	<b>-0.07</b>	<b>+1.12</b>

Note. Maximum score = 6 for each question. EG = experimental group. CG = control group.

Figure 1. Average Distance between Pretest and Post-test



Tables 2 through 9 and Figures 2 through 9 are the groupings of questions within the RASP associated with one of the factors measured: creativity, humor, independence, initiative, insight, relationships, and values orientation.

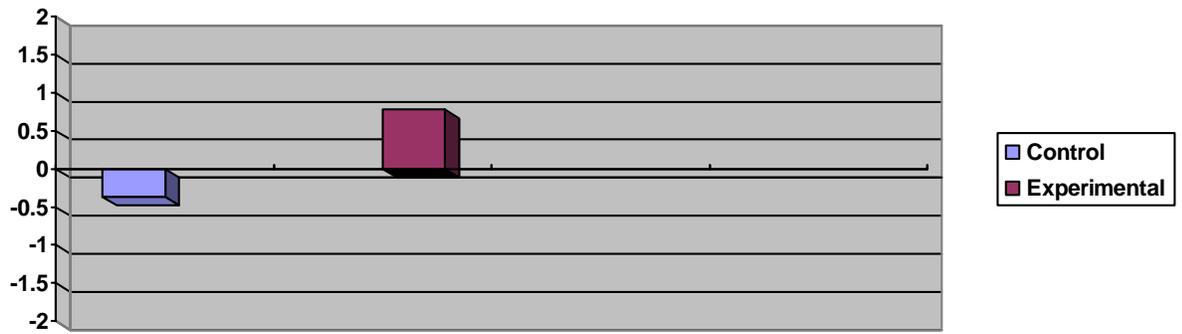
Table 2

Average Creativity Scores for Pretest and Posttest and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
6. I can imagine the consequences of my actions.	5.25	4.75	4.25	5.50	-1.0	+0.75
22. When I'm faced with a tough situation, I come up with new ways to handle it.	3.5	5.0	4.25	4.5	+0.75	-0.50
23. I can come up with different ways to let out my feelings.	4.5	4.25	3.5	5.6@	-1.0	+1.35
39. I can entertain myself.	5.0	4.25	4.75	5.75	-0.25	+1.50
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>5.34</b>	<b>-0.37</b>	<b>+0.78</b>

Figure 2

Average Difference between Pretest and Post-test for Creativity



The average change from the pretest to posttest for creativity was -.37 for the control group. While the average change from pretest to posttest for creativity was +.78 for the experimental group.

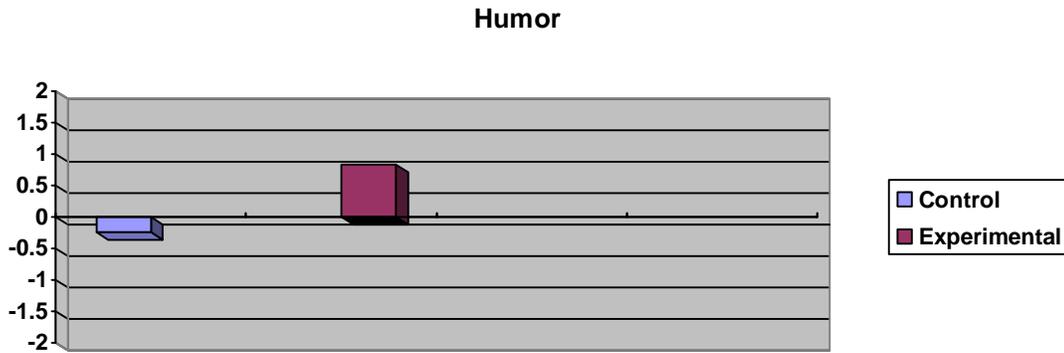
Table 3:

Average Humor Scores for Pretest and Post-test and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
11. My sense of humor makes it easier to deal with tough situations.	3.75	4.25	4.5	4.5	+0.75	+0.25
25. I look for the “lighter side” of tough situations.	4.25	3.75	3.25	4.25	-1.0	+0.50
33. Laughter helps me deal with stress.	4.75	4.0	4.25	5.75	-0.50	+1.75
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>-0.25</b>	<b>+0.83</b>

Figure 3

Average Difference between Pretest and Post-test for Humor



The average change from the pretest to posttest for humor was -.25 for the control group. The average change from the pretest to posttest for humor was +.83 for the experimental group.

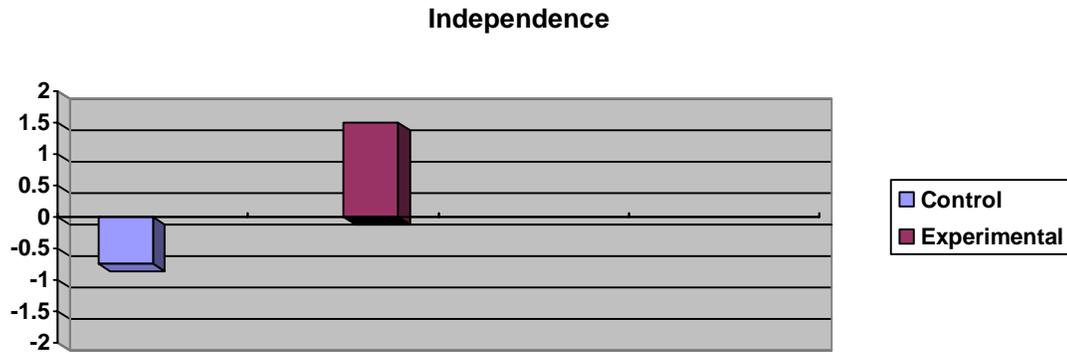
Table 4

Average Independence Scores for Pretest and Post-test and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
2. I can deal with whatever comes in the future.	2.0@	3.25	3.0@	5.0	+1.0	+1.75
9. I say "no" to things that I don't want to do.	5.0@	4.75	5.0	5.25	0	+.50
16. Its OK if I don't see things the way other people do.	4.0	4.75	3.5	5.75	-.50	+1.0
19. Its OK if some people do not like me.	5.25	4.75	5.0	6.0	-.25	+1.25
20. I am comfortable making my own decisions.	4.0	4.5	4.75	6.0	+.75	+1.50
26. I control my own life.	5.0	3.75	3.75	5.75	-1.25	+2.0
34. I avoid situations where I could get into trouble.	3.75	4.25	3.75	5.25	0	+1.0
38. I share my ideas and opinions even if they are different from other people's.	4.25	5.25	4.25	5.5	0	+.25
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>5.56</b>	<b>-.03</b>	<b>+1.15</b>

Figure 4

Average Difference between Pretest and Posttest for Independence



The average change from the pretest to posttest for independence was -.03 for the control group. The average change from the pretest to the posttest for independence was +1.15 for the experimental group.

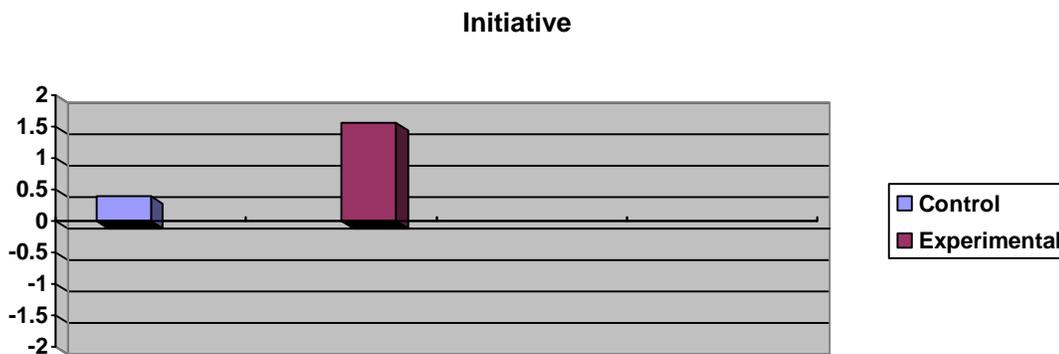
Table 5:

Average Initiative Scores for Pretest and Post-test and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
1. When my work is criticized, I try harder the next time.	4.25	2.15	5.0	4.0	+0.75	+1.85
3. Once I set a goal for myself, I don't let anything stop me from reaching it.	4.75	3.75	4.75	5.25	0	+1.5
13. I can change my surroundings.	3.75	4.5	5.25	5.0	+1.5	+0.50
30. I try to figure out things that I don't understand.	4.75	4.25	4.5	6.0	-0.25	+1.75
37. When something bad happens to me, I don't give up.	4.75	3.75	4.75	6.0	0	+2.25
<b>Average:</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>+0.40</b>	<b>+1.57</b>

Figure 5

Average Difference between Pretest and Posttest for Initiative



The average change from pretest to posttest for initiative was +.40 for the control group. The average change from pretest to the posttest for initiative was +1.57 for the experimental group.

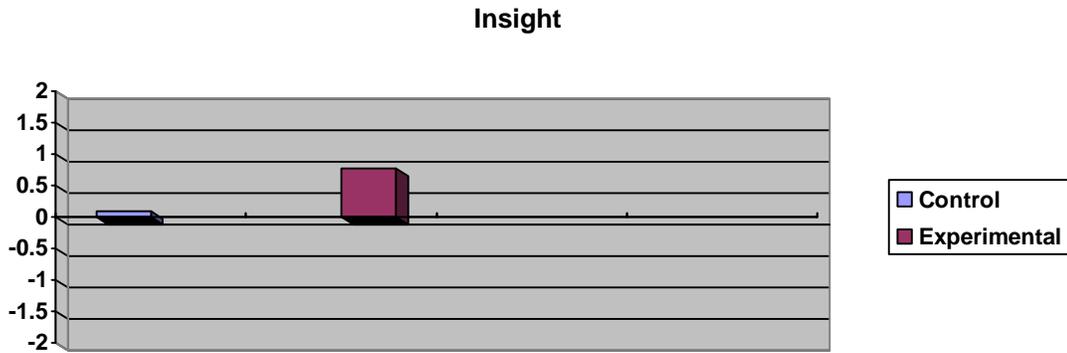
Table 6

Average Insight Scores for Pretest and Post-test and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
4. I learn from my mistakes.	5.0	4.75	4.0	5.25	-1.0	+.50
5. I notice small changes in facial expressions.	4.25	3.5	5.0	4.75	+.75	+1.25
7. I know when I'm good at something.	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.50	-1.0	+.50
10. I can change my behavior to match the situation.	4.75	4.3 @	4.75	6.0	0	+1.7
15. When something goes wrong, I can tell if it was my fault.	3.0	4.5	3.5	5.0	+.50	+.50
21. I can sense when someone is not telling the truth.	4.75	4.5	5.25	4.75	+.50	+.25
27. I can tell what mood someone is in just by looking at him/her.	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.25	+1.0	+.75
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.55</b>	<b>4.44</b>	<b>4.64</b>	<b>5.21</b>	<b>+.09</b>	<b>+.77</b>

Figure 6

Average Difference between Pretest and Posttest for Insight and Difference



The average change from pretest to post-test for insight was +.09 for the control group. The average change from pretest to the posttest for insight was +.77 for the experimental group.

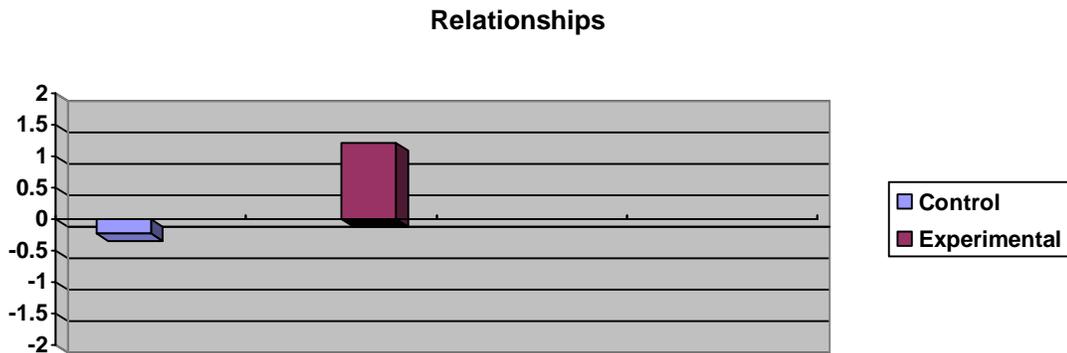
Table 7:

Average Relationships Scores for Pretest and Posttest and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
12. My friends know they can count on me.	4.25	4.75	4.0	5.75	-.25	+1.0
14. My family is there for me when I need them.	5.0	4.75	4.75	5.75	-.25	+1.0
18. I avoid people who could get me into trouble.	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.25	0	+1.25
24. I choose my friends carefully.	4.5	5.0	3.25	6.0	-1.25	+1.0
31. I'm good at keeping friendships going.	4.25	3.6 @	4.25	5.75	0	+2.15
32. I have friends who will back me up.	4.3@	4.25	3.75	5.50	.58	+1.25
35. I can be myself around my friends.	3.75	4.6 @	3.75	5.75	0	+1.15
40. I make friends easily.	5.75	4.0	4.75	5.0	-1.0	+1.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>4.37</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>5.59</b>	<b>-.23</b>	<b>+1.22</b>

Figure 7

Average Difference between Pretest and Post-test for Relationships



The average change from pretest to posttest for relationships was -.23 for the control group. The average change from pretest to posttest for relationships was +1.22 for the experimental group.

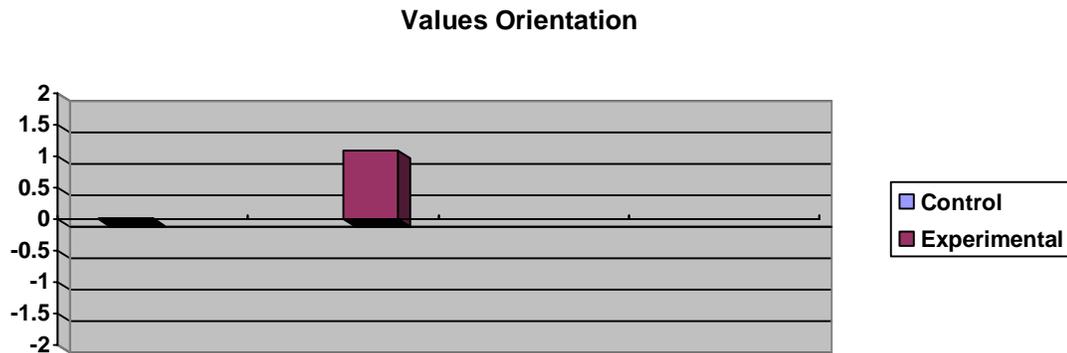
Table 8:

Average Values Orientation Scores for Pretest and Post-test and Difference

Question	Pretest		Posttest		Alpha	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
8. I'm prepared to deal with the consequences of my actions.	4.0@	4.75	4.25	5.25	+0.25	+0.50
17. Lying is unacceptable.	4.75	4.0	3.75	5.25	-1.0	+1.25
28. I try to help others.	4.75	2.6@	5.5	4.5	+0.75	+1.9
29. I stand up for what I believe is right.	5.25	5.0	5.30	5.75	+0.05	+0.75
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>4.70</b>	<b>5.19</b>	<b>+0.01</b>	<b>+1.1</b>

Figure 8

## Average Difference between Pretest and Posttest for Relationships



The average change from pretest to posttest for values orientation was +.01 for the control group. The average change from pretest to posttest for values orientation was +1.1 for the experimental group.

### Discussion

#### *Strengths*

From the results, one strength is that for most resiliencies measured using the RASP, the general rate of resiliency increased. In particular, the rates for the experimental group had a dramatic increase. The total resiliency for the control group went down slightly. According to Yalom (1995), success in a group is present when a “cognitive map” is present for group members (p. 28). This cognitive component was essential so the group members can frame the experience in a manner that makes sense to them. This may support the significant difference between the experimental and control group in perceived resiliency from pre to posttest. For the experimental group, the cognitive piece was all ready mapped out for the students because each session was geared towards increasing factors associated with resiliency. The control group was given different options for discussion each week.

According to Yalom (1995), “successful therapy is mediated by a relationship between therapist and patient that is characterized by trust, warmth, empathic understanding, and acceptance” (p. 48). The researcher in this study thought that a relationship was in the beginning processes at the end of the fifth group session. Furthermore, the researcher thought that in these groups all of the above characteristics were present to assist with the formation of a therapeutic relationship. However, it could be possible that the group was too short to intensify this cohesiveness.

Both the experimental and control group would have benefited, in the author’s opinion, from more group counseling sessions. More group sessions may have allowed more opportunity for cohesiveness within the group. According to Yalom (1995), cohesiveness within the group is essential for other therapeutic factors to activate (p. 49). The groups done for this study lasted less than 5 hours with a total of 5 group sessions each. As a result of Shakoor and Fister’s (2000) study they believed that their group members showed noticeable progress in resilience in 40 contact hours (p. 284). Thus, if the researcher increased the group length for both experimental and control, there may have been a more significant opportunity to increase cohesiveness and thus the resilience of the group members.

For both subsections of initiative and insight within this study, there was an increase in both areas from pre to posttest. Wolin and Wolin (1993) stated that initiative is defined as the resolve to assert yourself and master your environment (p. 136). According to Wolin (2003), insight is the ability to ask yourself tough questions and provide yourself honest answers about yourself (p. 19). Furthermore, according to Yalom (1995), insight occurs when someone discovers something important about one’s

behavior or what motivates (p. 45). These two concepts are similar because to be able to take a look at oneself and to ask oneself the tough questions there must be some initiative involved. More research may be helpful to look at these concepts of insight and initiative and how they are related to the group experience.

### *Limitations*

One striking limitation of this study is that based on the number of students studied, a total of eight for both experimental and group, it is difficult to make generalizations as a result of the data. Furthermore, if one student's results were misleading, this could skew the results because all scores were averaged and compared. In this researcher's study, one student from the experimental group had an average of very low resiliency scores for the pretest and for the post-test had dramatically increased resiliency scores. With a small sample, this one score had a dramatic increase on the average increase from pre to posttest for the experimental group. However, it could be said that this student's resiliency did in fact increase significantly as a result of the group. However, while other student's resiliency did increase, this student's increase was significantly larger. Therefore, it seems likely that this student's score were misleading.

Yalom (1995) stated that there are three stages of group therapy: the initial stage is characterized by orientation where the group searches for structures and goals, the secondary stage being where conflict occurs when interpersonal boundaries become more established, and thirdly the group goes through a stage of cohesiveness (p. 294). For both groups in this study, the author feels that neither group made it much out of the first stage of groups as described by Yalom. A possible reason for this is that both the experimental group and control group may have still been searching for the goals of the group. When

prescreening for students, it was explained the intent of the group was to increase resiliency. However, it is possible that the group as a whole did not feel established in a concrete goal. For future research, it may be helpful to find group members that have a particular interest in accomplishing a particular goal because the group may spend less time in the initial stage of group, as described by Yalom.

During the group process for both the experimental and control group, there was a sense of a need to rush by the researcher. This was mainly due to the time restraints that the researcher placed on the group of successful completion of one group in 45 minutes. Some group members were late and others were not focused on beginning the group once everyone was present. According to Yalom (1995), norms are established relatively early in the life of a group and once they are established, they are difficult to change (p. 112). In the groups run by the researcher, it is possible that the researcher did not set the proper norms of punctuality and rules early enough in the groups. If the researcher set these norms early, the group may have been able to start earlier and therefore the group members may have received more from the group experience.

The author noted that his groups may have been more effective if the author had more experience with facilitating group experiences. Outside of coursework emphasizing groups and a small set of experiences within the school setting, the author was a novice when facilitating the group. According to Yalom (1995), “the neophyte therapist’s first group is a highly threatening experience. Without an experienced clinician as guide, the student, however eager to remain open to learning, tends to grasp for the safety of a highly structured clinical approach” (p. 515). For this research project, the author was still considered a graduate student and had very limited experience. While the author did

not establish a clinical approach in reaction to limited supervision, it may have been helpful for the author to have some supervision for this group. Furthermore, Yalom (1995) stated that experience with groups is not enough to make a group counselor effective (p. 516). Therefore, it would be recommended for future research that beginning counselors have supervision for the group experience to enhance the experience for all participants.

One inconsistency found in the research is whether a negative event must occur for someone to show resiliency. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) stated that to identify resiliency there must be a substantial threat to an individual and a quality adjustment as a result (p. 4). Miller (2003) pointed out, however, that resiliency should be defined by considering the role of an individual searching for meanings in his or her life to enhance coping (p. 241). For this particular study, the researcher did not select at risk or vulnerable children so therefore followed the presumption that all children can show resiliency. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there is some dissenting opinions on whether to show resilience, whether one must experience a negative life event.

#### *Implications for School Counselors*

The field of school counseling, from this study, should continue studying the effectiveness of school counseling on increasing student's resiliency. Myrick & Dixon (1990) stated that there is an increased need for school counselors to report their data on effectiveness of counseling programs and to make sure the data comes from carefully designed experimental studies (p. 330). Through research, school counselors will be able to show what works and what does not work when it comes to increasing resiliency for children in the school.

Benard (1995) asserted that when schools meet the basic human needs for support, respect, and belonging that motivation for learning will be furthered in schools (p. 4). The results of the study expressed that for both the experimental group and control group there was an increase in insight and initiative. This result may be an important factor because with increased insight and initiative, children in our schools may become more proactive in getting the support that they need. Whether it is from the school counselor, school nurse, teacher, or custodial workers, it is important for students to have their basic needs met so they can become competent individuals in our society. Our society's future is relying on our young being productive and competent adults.

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Appendix 1

## Experimental Group Sessions

**SESSION 1:**

1) Welcomed the students to the group and discussed why the group is called “Resilient Kids”. Explained to the students that there are going to be 5 sessions and each session is going to be approximately 45 minutes in length.

2) Thoroughly discussed confidentiality: What is said and done in the group stays in the group. Author gave a few examples of what peers or adults may say outside of the group in an attempt to gain information about what is happening in the group. (Smead, 2000, p. 59) Explained that as the leader of the group, the author was “required to tell about what goes on in the group if you think someone will do harm to self or others, if someone says anything about child abuse or criminal activity going on, or if a judge orders you to turn over information” (Smead, 2000, p. 59).

3) The author explained that he has created some basic ground rules for the group to follow and requests the group’s input in developing a few more that would increase their comfort in sharing with others in the group. (Smead, 2000, p. 59) Stated the following guidelines and asked if all the students agree that these guidelines are fair.

- a) “Group members listen to and respect each other” (Wolin, Desetta, & Hefner, 2000, p. 6).
- b) Everyone is welcome to share thoughts and feelings, but not everyone has to share (Wolin, Desetta, & Hefner, 2000, p. 6).
- c) “Everyone in the group should feel valued and accepted. All points of view are welcome. There are ‘no’ wrong answers” (Wolin, Desetta, & Hefner, 2000, p. 6).

4) The author wrote the above rules down on a piece of paper and included the additional rules agreed upon by the group. The author stated that he would put them on a poster board for next group session. The author confirmed with the group that they agree to follow the posted rules.

6) Author had students take Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP) and hand in the measure upon completion.

7) The last ten minutes of the first session were used as “processing time” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

a) Asked: “*What kinds of thoughts and feelings were you having today while in the group?*” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

b) “Thank[ed] group members for coming; remind them of the next session’s day and time...” (Smead, 2000, p. 61)

## **SESSION 2:**

1) The author asked the group what they remember about the last meeting. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121)

2) The author asked the “students to write down typical problems either they have had with other students at school that they notice lots of other students have with each other at school. Ask[ed] them not to put their names on the list. Tell them you will collect everyone’s ideas in a moment and the group will discuss: (a) if they agree that the problem is typical and (b) some possible solutions.” (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121)

3) “Collect[ed] list of problems. Read each one and ask[ed] if it is a typical problem for this age group. List[ed] on a flip chart all the agreed-upon typical problems. Ask[ed] the

group members to rank the top three problems in terms of how interested they would be in having the group discuss possible solutions.” (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121).

3) “Lead a discussion on possible solutions for the top three problems selected. Use[d] a brainstorming technique. List[ed] all offered solutions on chart paper or blackboard/white board. Then [went] back and [had] the group code each one as ‘H’, helpful, or ‘HA,’ harmful to self or others. Note: Some will be rated as both. [Had] the group decide if the helpful side outweighs the harmful side” (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121).

6) The last ten minutes of the second session were used as “processing time” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

a) Asked: “*What kinds of thoughts and feelings were you having today while talking about some of the common problems students may be having?*” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

b) “Ask[ed] students to write an ending to the following two statements. Ask[ed] them to share their answers with a partner. Then ask for volunteers to share what they wrote” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

i. “One thing I learned today was...” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

ii. “One way I can use what I learned today is...” (Smead, 2000, p. 60).

7) “Thank[ed] group members for coming, remind them of the next session’s day and time...” (Smead, 2000, p. 61)

### **SESSION 3:**

1) Asked the group what they remember about the last meeting. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121)

2) Introduced the topic of stress to the group and discovering ways to cope with stress.

Asked each student to tell the group “something I do to relax after a stressful day is...”

(Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

3) Asked the following questions of the group

- *“How many of you feel some stress today?”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)
- *“How do you know when you are under stress?”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)
- *“What are the symptoms?”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)
- *“Name some physical symptoms.”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

4) Had students think about things that cause them stress. As they thought of the things that cause them stress, had them toss the words on a piece of paper in the middle of the table. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

5) As the students tossed out the different things that cause them stress, had them explain how that topic causes stress. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

6) Handed out “Getting a Handle on Stress” (see attached for copy) to the students.

Explain that as we read each suggestion aloud, please do the following:

- *“Choose your favorites.”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)
- *“Check the ones you already use.”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)
- *“Circle the ones you would like to use more.”* (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

7) Had volunteers read each suggestion and used each suggestion as a stimulus to create student discussion. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

8) Asked students to share their ratings of each suggestion and asked them to provide examples. Discussed further what strategies are hardest, easiest, and helpful. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 181)

9) “Thank[ed] group members for coming, remind[ed] them of the next session’s day and time...” (Smead, 2000, p. 61)

#### **SESSION 4:**

1) Asked the group what they remember about the last meeting. (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121)

2) Asked the following question to group members *“On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning not at all upset and 10 meaning extremely angry, how do you feel when you try to tell someone something you think is very important, and the other person is not paying a bit of attention”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

3) Introduced that today we will be learning “big-ear skills” which is a humorous way to learn listening skills. Explained that *“listening is the other half of talking. If you want to be listened to and respected when you talk, you need to model to other people what you want. This actually teaches them how you want to be listened to and gives them the idea that this is the way they can expect you to listen to them.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

4) Author expressed to the group some good listening skills

Skill 1: *“Make eye contact with the person who is talking to you but not more than 5 seconds at a time because after 5 seconds a person feels stared at.”*

(Smead, 2000, p. 62)

Skill 2: *“If you are walking along beside someone, turn and look at the person sometimes, not always away at other people or things.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

Skill 3: *“Don’t butt in – let the person tell his or her story.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

Skill 4: *“Say something to let the person know you are listening and paying attention, such as ‘um-hum’, ‘OK’, ‘all right’, ‘I see.’ These are called minimal prompts – they encourage the other person to go on because you are listening.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

Skill 5: *“If you are sitting across from someone, smile and nod sometimes as well as using verbal reinforcers.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

Skill 6: *“Do not start talking about what you want to talk about until the person completely finishes his or her part of the conversation.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

5) Asked the group to split up into pairs and decide who is going to be talker and who is going to be the listener. For 3 minutes the talker attempted to tell the listener something that is very important. Explained to the listeners that during this time they will be using terrible listening skills. Explained the following examples of terrible listening skills the listeners can perform: look away, start fiddling with something, clean their fingernails, watch the clock, yawn or do other distracting things. During this time, the talkers will be trying to get the listeners attention with all interesting things they are talking about. (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

6) Once the 3 minutes are over, asked the students to switch roles. The talkers became the listeners and the new talkers tried to tell something important to the listeners. The listeners used the terrible listening skills listed above. (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

7) Called time after 3 minutes and asked the following question: *“When you were in the role of Talkers, what was it like for you to try to get your important message across to the Listeners who were sending you the message that they didn’t care about what you were*

*saying and who were using terrible listening skills?.*” Stated that you are interested in hearing all group members’ thoughts/feelings on their reactions as talkers. (Smead, 2000, p. 63)

8) Explained that now the group is going to practice using good listening skills. Had the group members pair up with someone different in the group and had them choose a Talker and Listener. The Talkers used 3 minutes to tell the Listeners something interesting or important to the talker. This time the Listeners used good listening skills: eye contact, smile and head gesture, no interrupting, and an “um-hum” or other way of letting the Talkers know they are getting the message. (Smead, 2000, p. 63)

9) After 3 minutes, asked the students to switch Listener and Speaker and follow same directions as before. (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

10) Called time again after 3 minutes. Asked: *“As Talkers, what was it like when the Listeners were using good listening skills? How did you feel?”* (Smead, 2000, p. 62)

11) Followed up by asking: *“Are there some people in your life who bug you that maybe you aren’t using good listening skills with, and maybe if you changed a little, they would too? Who might that be? If you want other people to listen to you, then you are going to have to do the changing first to show them what you want. It doesn’t work the other way around. They aren’t going to change first – you have to change.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 64)

12) Asked the following questions of the group:

a) *“What were you thinking and feeling when we were practicing the different listening skills?”* (Smead, 2000, p. 64)

b) *“What is it like for you to practice sharing and learning in a small-group situation?”* (Smead, 2000, p. 64)

c) “What new ideas or skills have you learned today that you can use?” (Smead, 2000, p. 64)

14) “Thank[ed] group members for coming, remind them of the next session’s day and time..” (Smead, 2000, p. 61)

#### **SESSION 5:**

1) “Ask[ed] students to share what they remember about last meeting.” (Brigman & Goodman, 2001, p. 121).

2) The principal investigator summarized the major topics of all previous group sessions. After summarizing each session, asked the group if they would like to share something they remember from that group.

3) Discussed the following questions:

a) “What did you learn from coming to the group that really has made a big change in your attitude?” (Smead, 2000, p. 54)

b) “What have you learned from the group that has resulted in some behavior changes that you are going to keep in place, some ways of acting that work better for you now?” (Smead, 2000, p. 54)

3) Thanked group members for participating and provided the following hope statement:

*“Sometimes it is very hard to say good-bye, especially when the person or persons mean a lot to you at the time. During the last several weeks we have shared many personal, private, and painful things about ourselves, and this makes us feel really close. The closer you feel, the harder it is to say good-bye. It is good-bye for the group meeting each week as we know it. Sometimes it feels lonely when group ends. You might have just gotten started on some of your personal growth and have lots more wonderful things to*

*discover and improve about yourself. This is good. Maybe you can work on them yourself, and maybe you need more help. Please come see me if you need more counseling. I feel so excited and enthusiastic about how far each of you has come during the group experience, and I know you have some special skills and talents to keep improving yourself and continue being a support to your new friends.”* (Smead, 2000, p. 54)

4) Had students take Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP).

5) Thanked students for consistently coming each week to the group and that you will be present through the remainder of this school year. Explained that the counseling center is here for the students and that if they have any problems in school, the counseling center can be a valuable resource.

Appendix 2

**SURVEY KEY:**

**Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP)**

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**CREATIVITY:** 6, 22, 23, and 39

**HUMOR:** 11, 25, 33, and 36

**INDEPENDENCE:** 2, 9, 16, 19, 20, 26, 34, and 38

**INITIATIVE:** 1, 3, 13, 30, and 37

**INSIGHT:** 4, 5, 7, 10, 15, 21, and 27

**RELATIONSHIPS:** 12, 14, 18, 24, 31, 32, 35, and 40

**VALUES ORIENTATION:** 8, 17, 28, and 29

**There are no reverse coded items.**

The following items relate to your opinions of yourself and your personal characteristics. Please read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as possible!

	STRONGLY DISAGREE					STRONGLY AGREE
1. When my work is criticized, I try harder the next time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I can deal with whatever comes in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Once I set a goal for myself, I don't let anything stop me from reaching it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I learn from my mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I notice small changes in facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I can imagine the consequences of my actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I know when I'm good at something.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I'm prepared to deal with the consequences of my actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I say "no" to things that I don't want to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I can change my behavior to match the situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. My sense of humor makes it easier to deal with tough situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. My friends know they can count on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I can change my surroundings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. My family is there for me when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. When something goes wrong, I can tell if it was my fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. It's OK if I don't see things the way other people do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Lying is unacceptable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I avoid people who could get me into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. It's OK if some people do not like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I am comfortable making my own decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I can sense when someone is not telling the truth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. When I'm faced with a tough situation, I come up with new ways to handle it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I can come up with different ways to let out my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I choose my friends carefully.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I look for the "lighter side" of tough situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I control my own life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I can tell what mood someone is in just by looking at him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Try to help others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I stand up for what I believe is right.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Try to figure out things that I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. I'm good at keeping friendships going.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I have friends who will back me up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Laughter helps me deal with stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. I avoid situations where I could get into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. I can be myself around my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. When I'm in a bad mood, I can cheer myself up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. When something bad happens to me, I don't give up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I share my ideas and opinions even if they are different from other people's.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I can entertain myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. I make friends easily.	1	2	3	4	5	6

The following items relate to your opinions of your child and his/her personal characteristics. Please read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one. **There are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as possible!**

MY CHILD...	STRONGLY DISAGREE					STRONGLY AGREE
1. tries harder the next time after his/her work is criticized.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. can deal with whatever comes in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. doesn't let anything stop him/her from reaching a goal once he/she sets it for himself/herself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. learns from his/her mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. notices small changes in facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. can imagine the consequences of his/her actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. knows when he/she is good at something.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. is prepared to deal with the consequences of his/her actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. says "no" to things that he/she doesn't want to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. can change his/her behavior to match the situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. uses his/her sense of humor to make it easier to deal with tough situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. has friends who know they can count on him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. can change his/her surroundings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. has family who is there when he/she needs them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. can tell if it was his/her fault when something goes wrong.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. knows it's OK if he/she doesn't see things the way other people do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. knows lying is unacceptable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. avoids people who could get him/her into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. knows it's OK if some people don't like him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. is comfortable making his/her own decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. can sense when someone is not telling the truth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. comes up with new ways to handle difficult situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. can come up with different ways to let out his/her feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. chooses his/her friends carefully.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. looks for the "lighter side" of tough situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. controls his/her own life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. can tell what mood someone is in just by looking at him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. tries to help others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. stands up for what he/she believes is right.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. tries to figure out things that he/she doesn't understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. is good at keeping friendships going.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. has friends who will back him/her up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. uses laughter to help him/her deal with stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. avoids situations where he/she could get into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. can be himself/herself around his/her friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. can cheer himself/herself up when in a bad mood.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. doesn't give up when something bad happens to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. shares his/her ideas and opinions even when they are different from other people's.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. can entertain himself/herself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. makes friends easily.	1	2	3	4	5	6