

The ABC's of Mental Health: Meeting the Needs within a School Context



Dr. Gerry Weintraub



Centre of Excellence for
MENTAL HEALTH



Why Child and Youth Mental Health?



Looks different than
in adults

Mental Health Literacy
De-stigmatization
Systems Approach
Build Awareness

THE VOICE

Changing Issues in Education Today



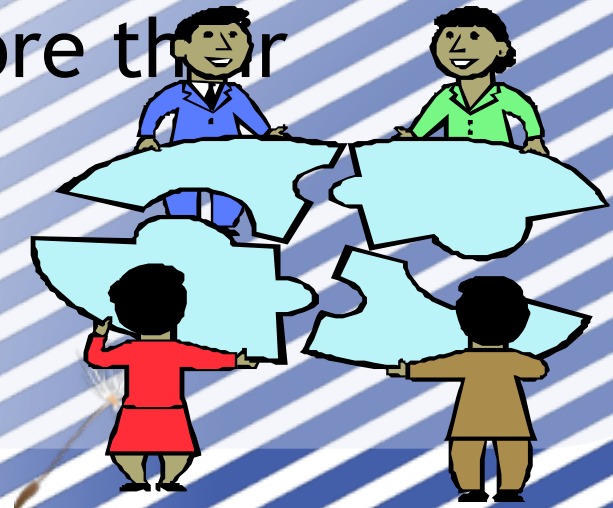
***Mental Health
can have a
significant
influence on
school success***

Children's Mental Health is about ...

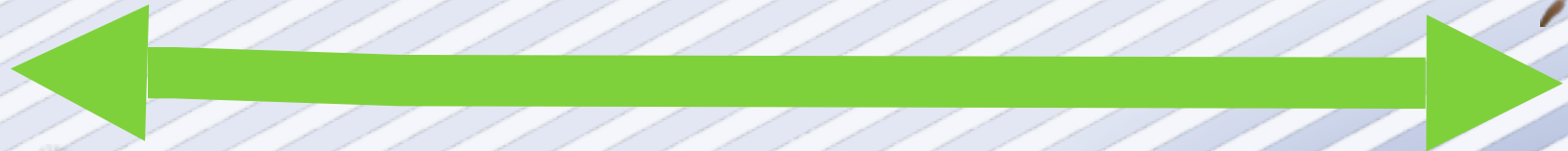
Healthy Social and Emotional Development

Educational objectives:

- Experience, regulate and express emotions
- Form close interpersonal relationships
- Foster curiosity to explore their environment and learn



Mental Health Continuum



Health/Wellness

- Healthy thinking, feeling & functioning
- Realizing potential
-

Health Problems

- Stress related problems
- Mild to moderate difficulty with thoughts and feeling

Illness/Disorder

- Mood/anxiety problems
- Externalizing problems
- Psychoses

Risk & Protective Factors

Biological

- Genetic
- Brain chemistry & structure
- Hormones

Environmental

- Early Experiences
- Stressful Events
- Parent-Child Relationship
- Parental mental health
- School Context

Individual

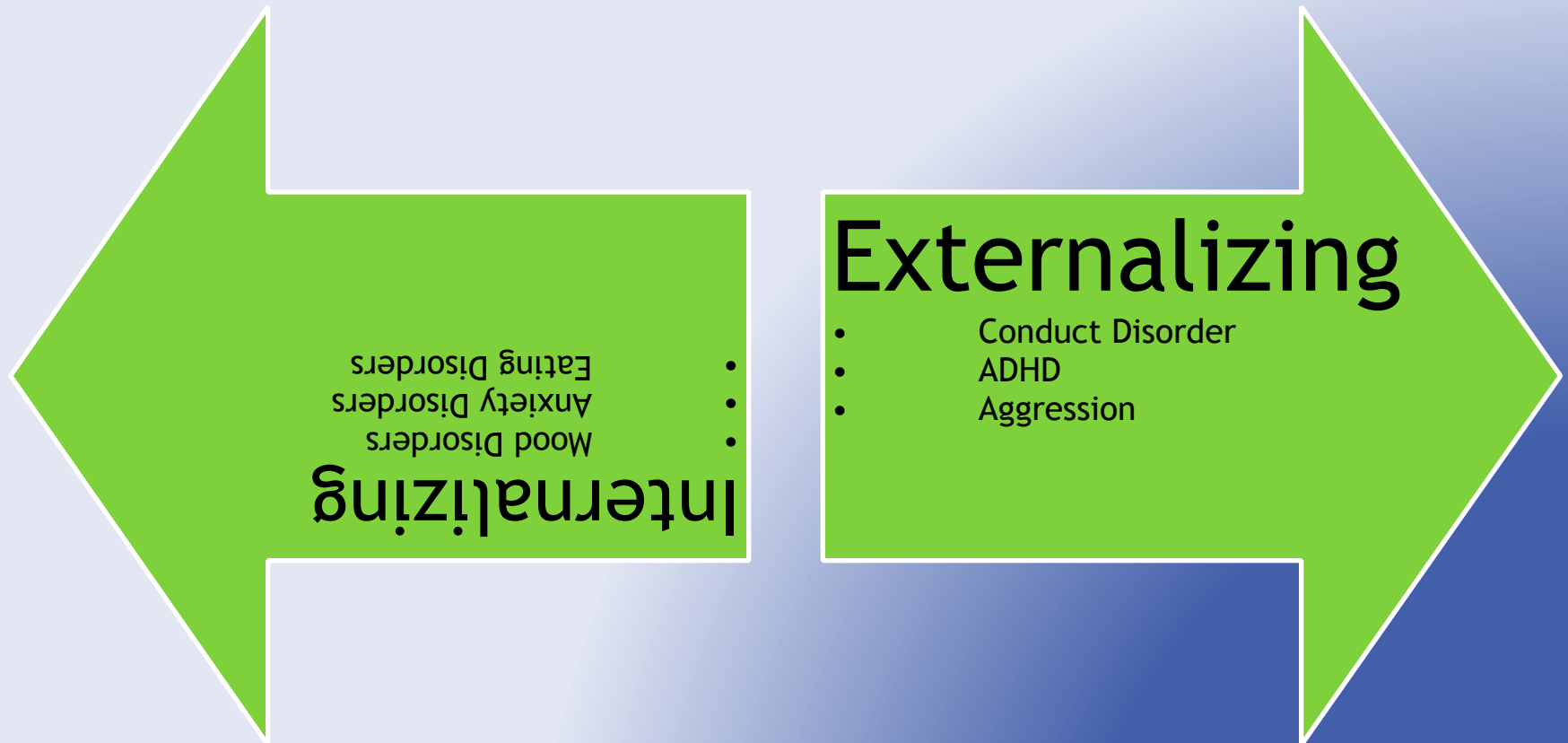
- Temperament
- Communication Skill
- Sense of Humor
- Optimistic, Motivated
- Able to Regulate Emotions

What does it look like?



- How would you know?
- What are the symptoms?
- How long would you wait?
- Who would you tell?
- What would you do to get help?

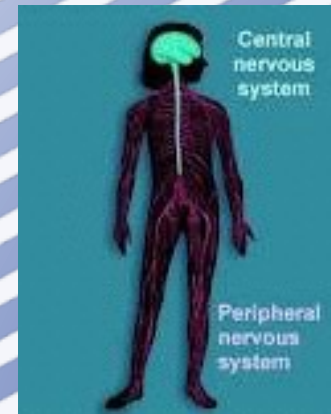
Areas that are Missed....



When students are stressed, they may express externalizing behaviors despite having the warning signs of internalizing disorders, which are often missed.

Fears & Worries

- Our brain is primed to notice and respond to threats
- Fight/Flight - our built in Red Alert!
- Brain systems involved
- Linked to physiological arousal (autonomic nervous system)



Anxiety or Anxiety Disorder?

Anxiety

- Normal feeling when faced with threat, danger, stress
- Can feel upset, uncomfortable
- Can experience physical symptoms (i.e., headaches)
- Can be caused by life experiences: a new relationship, a new job/school
- Feels anxious for a limited time
- Anxious feelings are appropriate for situation
- Not necessarily reaction to a negative situation

Anxiety Disorder

- **Interferes with daily functioning** or from what a person wants to do
- May be triggered by significant distress
- Can experience **physical symptoms**
- **Persistent and chronic**
- Fear response in the **absence of or out of proportion** to a threat
- Associated with worrying about past and future
- Can be **maladaptive or unnecessary**

When does anxiety become a problem?

Normal Fears

Anxiety disorders

- **Significant distress**
- **Interferes with functioning**
- **Developmentally inappropriate**
- **Duration**

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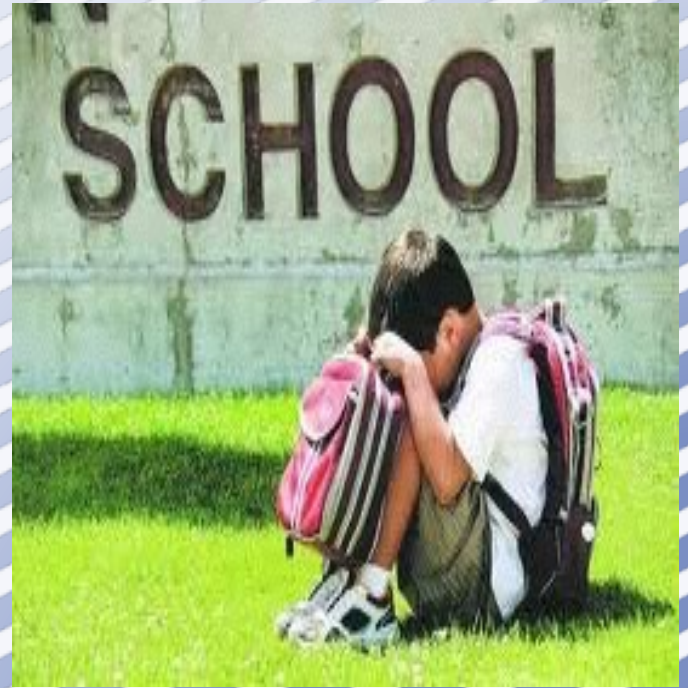
WWW.ANDERTOONS.COM



"You think that's bad, I've got test *prep* anxiety."

Types of anxiety

- Separation anxiety
- General anxiety
- Specific phobias
- Social anxiety
- Selective mutism
- PTSD
- Panic attacks
- Obsessive compulsive disorder





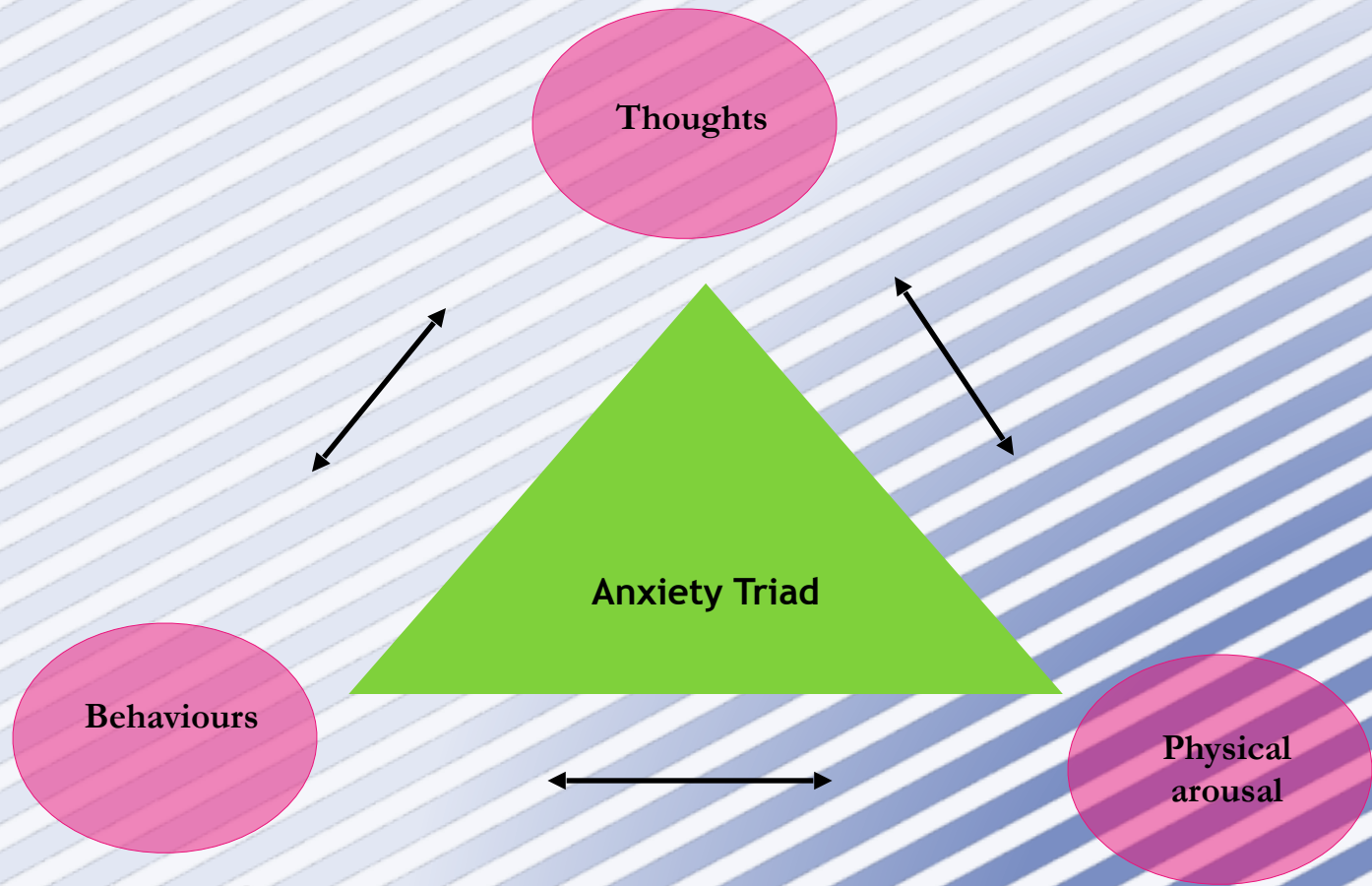
<http://youth.anxietybc.com/types-anxiety-problems-1>

Warning Signs: Anxiety

➤ Excessive:

- Worry (anticipatory)
- Avoidance
- Attention to threat
- Fast and sustained physiological arousal
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Shyness
- Social Withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Difficulty resting and going to sleep

What Fuels Anxiety?



Anxiety & thoughts

“Something terrible will happen to my mother!”

“I need my mother to protect me!”

“What if the school bus gets into an accident?”

“Everyone will laugh at me in gym class”

“I can’t do the math test and I will fail at everything”

“What if I feel sick and have to throw up?”

Cognitive distortions

- **Overestimation of danger or threat**
- **Underestimation of coping ability**
- **Expectation of catastrophe**
- **Sense of uncontrollability**
- **Responsible for bad things happening**
- **Need for certainty & perfection**

Physical Arousal

- Feeling tense, jittery & nervous
- Heart pounding, sweating
- Stomach pain/cramps
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Trouble breathing
- Disturbed sleep

Anxiety & behaviour

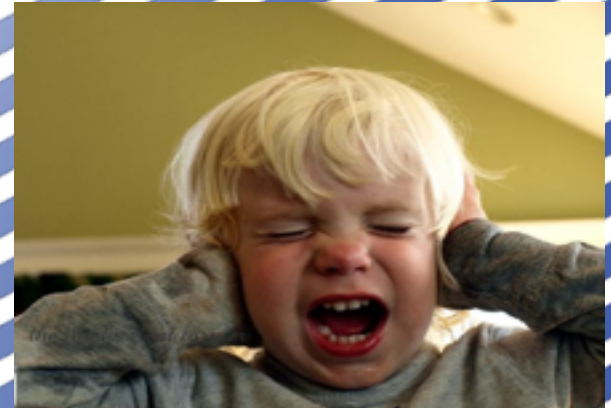
- Hypervigilance to physical symptoms
- Escape & avoidance
- Withdrawal
- Panic
- Reassurance seeking



Signs Anxiety

What educators may see:

- Demanding attention & extreme need for reassurance
- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
- Avoidance of stressful situations (tests, public speaking)
- Avoidance of places in school or school itself
- Refusal or severe reluctance to participate in eating or dressing in public, social activities (dances)
- Persistent perfectionism – schoolwork erased and rewritten many times
- Repeating rituals
- Working exceedingly slowly to feel it has been done properly



Strategies that Work!



What schools can do

- **Be aware of warning signs of anxiety**
- **Use a team approach (including parents) for assessment and intervention**
- **Ensure a welcoming school environment**
- **Provide a safe place for student when feeling stressed or overwhelmed**
- **Temporarily allow for flexible school day**
- **Show sensitivity for performance anxiety and allow alternative evaluation**

What schools can do

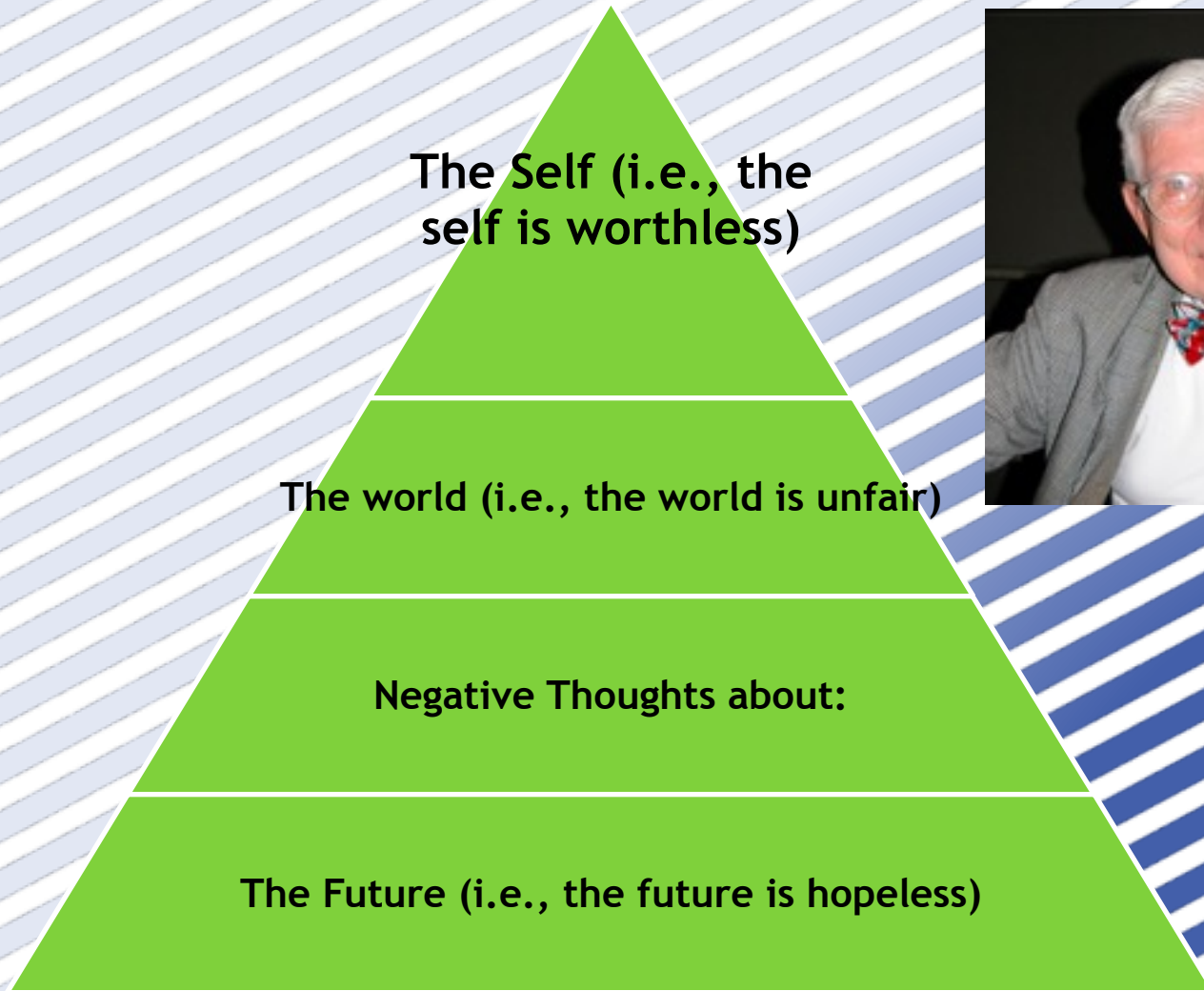
- Check-in & connect with a support person
- Pre-plan with student coping mechanisms (safe-place in school, resource person, calls home)
- Determine conditions (safety card, frequency of use, first—then)
- Work with parents regarding home routines
- Co-ordinate with mental health services

Breathing & Relaxation

- Muscle relaxation
- Positive self-talk
- Mindfulness breathing: 4-7-8
 1. Inhale for 4 counts
 2. Hold breathe for 7 counts
 3. Exhale for 8 counts
 4. An Example:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r82UgmWReYs>

Making Sense of Depression



Common Signs of Depression

- Different children & youth experience different symptoms of depression. Some common symptoms include feelings of:
 - Sadness
 - Anxiety
 - Emptiness, hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness, helpless
 - Irritability
 - Restlessness

Depression in Children

- Irritability with temper tantrums, anger, moodiness
- Behavior problems, refusal behavior
- Withdrawal from play, apathy, looking sad, sulky
- More psychosomatic complaints particularly tiredness, lack of energy.
- Boredom, often uninterested
- Feelings of guilt, low self-confidence, low self-worth
- Symptoms of anxiety

Depression in Teens

- Similar to those of younger children
- Problems concentrating, remembering information, or making decisions
- Poor school performance and attendance
- More appetite and sleep problems
- More impairment in functioning in general
- Acting out behaviors, behavior problems
- Substance use or abuse
- Social withdrawal or dependency
- More morbid thoughts, more mood swings
- Severe cases - suicidal thoughts and attempts more likely than young children

The background features a pattern of diagonal stripes in shades of blue and white. Scattered throughout are several dandelions in various stages of being blown away, with some showing their full seed heads and others just as seeds dispersing.

<http://www.bringchange2mind.org/videos/entry/the-callaghans>

Supporting students who are depressed

- Make a special contact with the student; show interest
- Reduce the school work load/ homework load if necessary
- Recognize and reward small improvements (e.g. finishing a task)
- Provide advance notice of changes in routine: allow a brief time out

Supporting students who are depressed

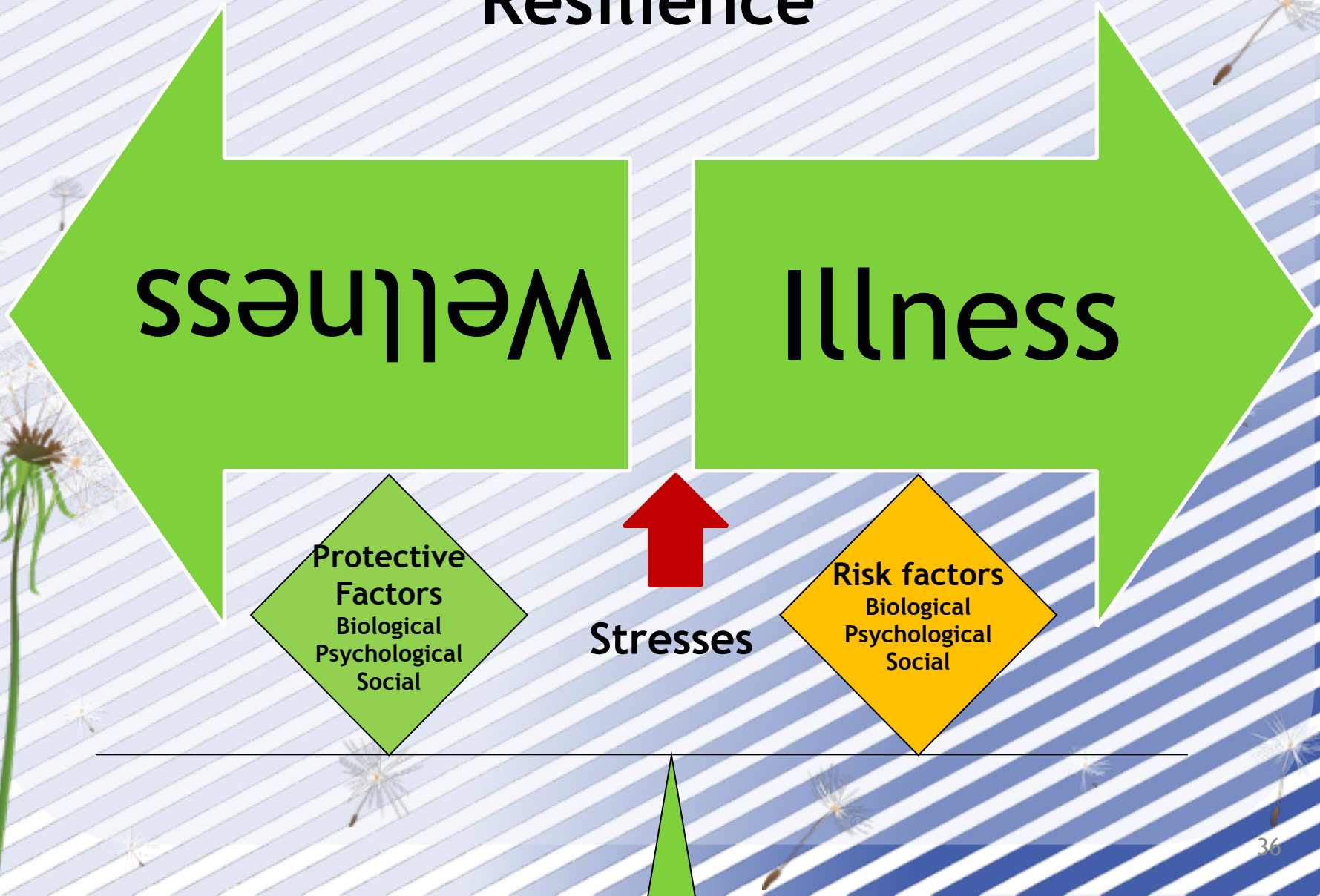
- Express confidence in the student's ability; offer support and assistance
- Provide a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of the learning process
- Recognize that a student who is depressed is more sensitive to criticism and requires praise and support

8 Therapeutic Lifestyle changes

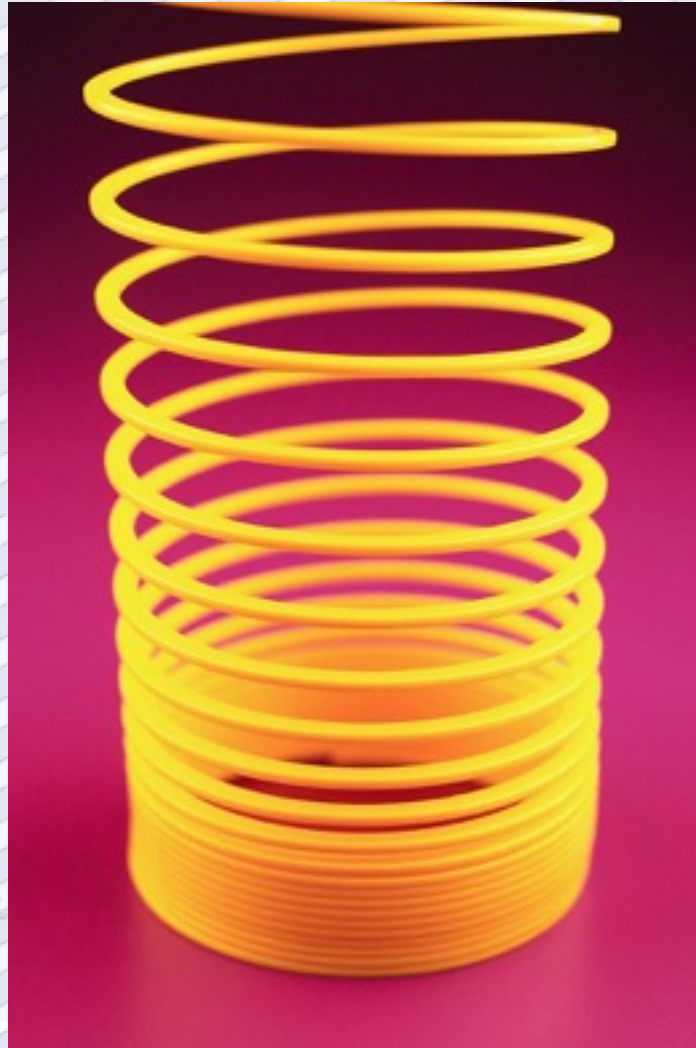
- Exercise - move your mind
- Nutrition and Diet - you are what you eat
- Nature - the great outdoors
- Relationships - together we're better
- Recreation - power of play
- Stress Management - relax!
- Religious/Spiritual Involvement - higher power help
- Service to others - giving back, paying forward



The path to Wellness - From Risk to Resilience



What is resilience?



Predict the outcome...

- A 5 year-old child watches helplessly as his younger brother drowns
- In the same year, the boy begins to lose vision due to glaucoma. His family could not afford the medical services that might save his sight.
- Eventually he goes to live in a state institution for the blind
- Both parents die during his teens
- He was an African-American boy growing up in poverty in the Southern USA during the 1930's & 40's,
- He loved music but did not have access to many activities

*From The Power of Resilience
(Brooks & Goldstein, 2004)*

Who is this person?





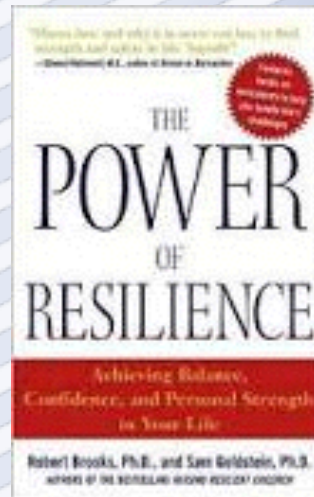
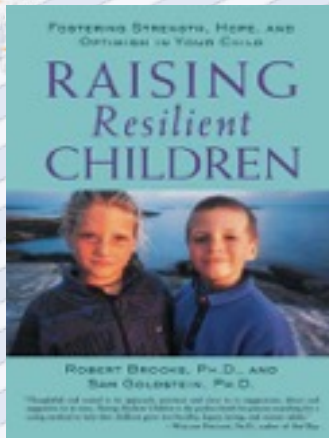
Ray Charles



- “My mom, to me, was always the most fantastic woman in the world...she didn't have a lot of what people say you are supposed to have. She didn't have a college education... we were in a very small town and very poor... there were no such things as psychologists to teach her how to raise a kid who was such an oddity in that town... I was the only blind kid... but my mom, somehow, she knew that there's nothing wrong with my brain. I just couldn't see”.

Lessons Learned From Resilience Research

- Power of one significant relationship
- Rethinking resilience as a mindset



From Risk to Resilience...

Educators can Help Tip the Balance

- Build positive relationships with students
- Help students to not see adversity as pervasive or permanent
- Actively teach problem-solving skills
- Tap into students' strengths and talents
- Model kindness, compassion and respect

For more ideas, see *The Power of Resilience*, Brooks & Goldstein, 2002

What Can We Do? Watch for Changes in Behavior

Marked drop in school performance

Increased absenteeism

Withdrawal from peers

Negative comments

Outbursts of extreme emotion

Increased physical complaints

Neglect of physical appearance


Complaints of feeling overwhelmed, poor concentration, boredom

Resources

- Center of Excellence for Mental Health (<http://cemh.lbpsb.qc.ca/index.htm>)
- Hincks-Dellcrest Center (www.hincksdellcrest.org/ABC)
- Ami Quebec (www.amiquebec.org)
- Friends for Mental Health (www.asmfmh.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org)
- Suicide Action Montreal (514-723-4000)
- Kids help phone (800-668-6868)
- The Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca)
- National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov)
- Mind Matters (www.mindmatters.edu.au)
- The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca)

Thank-you for your time





Contact Info: For more information
related
to the Center of Excellence for Mental
Health:

Please contact :
Gerry Weintraub @ gweintraub@lbpsb.qc.ca
or 514-422-3000 ext. 4448