Building on Strengths: In Support of Children’s Mental Health

WATCH Training
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Objectives:

- Identify
  - Authentic strength-based practice & differentiate from identification of potential strengths as needs
  - 3 strength-based frameworks for practice
- Apply strengths-based practices
What is Strength-Based?

Basis of strength-based service delivery is “premise that even the most troubled youth have unique talents, skills, and other resources that can be marshaled in the service of recovery and development” (page 287-8).

Cox (2006)
Why use Strengths?

- Disease model undercuts personal autonomy & community responsibility (McCammon, 2012)
- Promotes wellness, reduces dysfunction, reframes/balances provider perspective, affirms, increases rapport and empowers, & promotes positive identity (McCammon, 2012)
- Antidote to depression, increases life satisfaction, improves learning, especially increases attention and creative thinking (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, Linkins, 2009)
Mental Health vs Mental Ill Health

Developmental & environmental characteristics facilitate or inhibit at level of:

- Individual
- Family
- School &
- Community

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013, p8)
Protective factors:

- **Individual**: Positive self concept, physical health, social efficacy, coping, connected to family

- **Social**: Parental support, belonging, relationships, community participation

- **School & Community**: Safety, economic security, positive educational experience, access to supports (health including MH)

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013, p 11)
STRENGTHS IN WRAPAROUND
Strengths in Wraparound

**Strengths based.** The wraparound process and the wraparound plan identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, their community, and other team members.

Strengths in Wraparound

- Wraparound is intended to achieve outcomes not through a focus on eliminating deficits but by identifying and using assets. The basic truth is that what you focus on expands whether that is positive or negative qualities.

- Wraparound validates and builds on youth and family members’ psychological and interpersonal assets, and their expertise, skill, and knowledge.

Identify
  ◦ Capacities
  ◦ Interests
  ◦ Resources
Recognize
Intervene
Create Enabling Niches

Cox, NWI Principles of Wraparound: Chapter 2.3
Try it on!
STRENGTHS IN
POSITIVE
PSYCHOLOGY
Positive Psychology’s 3 Pillars

- Positive subjective experiences
  - Pleasure & positive experience
  - Happiness

- Positive individual traits
  - Positive thinking
  - Character strengths
  - Values
  - Interests, abilities, accomplishments
  - Wellness

- Positive institutions
  - Interpersonal relationships
  - Enabling institutions
Happiness: 3 Types

- Hedonic or “Pleasant life” which is a positive emotional state
- Flow or “Engaged life” which results from deploying one’s highest strengths to meet challenges
- “Meaningful life” which is increased by connection to others or to causes that transcend self – using strengths to serve something greater than self

Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reuvich, & Linkins (2009)
Character Strengths: Values in Action Project

1. **Wisdom and knowledge** (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)
2. **Courage** (honesty, bravery, persistence, zest)
3. **Humanity** (kindness, love, social intelligence)
4. **Justice** (fairness, leadership, teamwork)
5. **Temperance** (forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation)
6. **Transcendence** (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness)

[https://www.viame.org](https://www.viame.org)
www.viacharacter.org
Please choose one option in response to each statement. All of the questions reflect statements that many people would find desirable, but we want you to answer only in terms of whether the statement describes what you are like. Please be honest and accurate! We cannot rank your strengths until you answer all of the 120 questions.

1) **Being able to come up with new and different ideas is one of my strong points.**
   - [ ] Very Much Like Me
   - [ ] Like Me
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Unlike Me
   - [ ] Very Much Unlike Me

2) **I have taken frequent stands in the face of strong opposition.**
   - [ ] Very Much Like Me
   - [ ] Like Me
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Unlike Me
   - [ ] Very Much Unlike Me

3) **I never quit a task before it is done.**
   - [ ] Very Much Like Me
   - [ ] Like Me
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Unlike Me
   - [ ] Very Much Unlike Me

4) **I always keep my promises.**
   - [ ] Very Much Like Me
   - [ ] Like Me
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Unlike Me
   - [ ] Very Much Unlike Me

5) **I have no trouble eating healthy foods.**
   - [ ] Very Much Like Me
   - [ ] Like Me
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Unlike Me
   - [ ] Very Much Unlike Me
Character Strengths: Clifton Strengths Finder

Measures 10 “talent” themes for youth (34 for adults):

1. Achieving
2. Caring
3. Competing
4. Confidence
5. Dependability
6. Discoverer
7. Future thinker
8. Organizer
9. Presence
10. Relating

http://www.strengths.org/youthstrengthsfinder.shtml
Compare

Cox
- Capacities
- Interests
- Resources

Domains:
- Social
- Academic
- Athletic
- Artistic/Creative
- Mechanical
- Spiritual/Cultural

Clifton
- Achieving
- Caring
- Competing
- Confidence
- Dependability
- Discoverer
- Future thinker
- Organizer
- Presence
- Relating

VIA
- Wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)
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Hope Theory

- Cognitive, motivational model
- Hope reflects ability to:
  1. Clearly form goals
  2. Develop strategies to reach goals (*pathways* thinking)
  3. Initiate and sustain motivation (*agency*)
Children’s Hope Scale

1. I think I am doing pretty well.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

2. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

3. I am doing just as well as other kids my age.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

4. When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

5. I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

6. Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.
   None of, A little of, Some of, A lot of, Most of, All of the time

Notes: When administered to children, this scale is not labeled “The Children’s Hope Scale,” but is called “Questions About Your Goals.” The total Children’s Hope Scale score is achieved by adding the responses to the six items, with “None of the time” = 1; “A little of the time” = 2; “Some of the time” = 3; “A lot of the time” = 4; “Most of the time” = 5; and, “All of the time” = 6. The three odd-numbered items tap agency, and the three even-numbered items tap pathways.

(Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, Feldman, 2003)
Try it on!
STRENGTHS
PROMOTION IN
SCHOOLS
Strengths in Schools

- The identification of strengths is mandated in student’s individualized education plans (IEP) within special education.
- Can be difficult to ground IEPs in child strengths within a system for which deficits are the key to access.
- Positive psychology has been developing and advocating for strength based practices for youth in schools (Knoop, 2011, Madden, Green, & Grant, 2011, Peterson & Park, 2011, Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).
Applying Public Health Approach to Mental Health

PBIS ⇒ Integrated Systems Framework

Tier 1

Primary Prevention: School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for All Students, Staff, & Settings

~80% of Students

Primary Prevention:
Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support

~15%

Secondary Prevention:
Specialized Group Systems for Students with At-Risk Behavior

~15%

Tertiary Prevention:
Specialized Individualized Systems for Students with High-Risk Behavior

~5%

http://www.apbs.org/new_apbs/SWDesc.aspx
Tier 1 Universal Mental Health Promotion & Prevention

"Promotion efforts focus on competence enhancement and positive mental health in the whole population within the context of their everyday lives”

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013, p 21)

Continues across all three tiers!
Tier 1

- Evaluation: examine environment and readiness for strength based approaches
- Intervention: Response to Intervention, Social and emotional learning, Positive behavioral interventions and supports, Participation in structured leisure activities
- EBP:
  - Strong: Social skills programming
  - Moderate to Strong: Play, recreation and/or leisure programming increases social competence and positive peer relationships

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)
Tier 2

- Targets at risk youth who are likely not diagnosed but may have behavioral changes
- Prevention (grading down demands/stressors) + promotion of competences to minimize early symptoms (Downing, 2011)
- At risk may also mean at risk due to trauma, socioeconomic factors, learning disability etc. (Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)
**Tier 2**

**Evaluation**

- Recognize prodromal symptoms, assist with early screening and education
- Recognize potential situational stressors and develop supports to build competencies
- Recognize subtle impacts on performance and offer early intervening supports (e.g., organization issues with ADD, decreased performance with mild depression, anxiety and difficulty presenting to class ...)

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)
Tier 2

Intervention

- Collaborate with teachers to modify tasks, environment to facilitate success
- Collaborate across disciplines to build and facilitate supportive activities
- Small group interventions
- RtI in school settings

EBP

- Social skills for antisocial behavior, ADHD, ID
- Play, leisure, recreational programming for ID, anxiety

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)
Tier 3

- Evaluate occupational performance and social participation
- Intervention:
  - Systems of care/wraparound
  - Youth empowerment
  - Identification of strengths and promotion of wellbeing
  - CBT
  - Intensive social skills programs
  - Intensive play, leisure & recreation programs
  - Consultation and collaboration
  - Accommodations specific to symptoms

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)
Try it on!
STRENGTHS OPEN

Initial Research & Translation into Occupational Therapy
My research: 5 themes, 31 strengths

- **Personal Traits**  Attention, Cognition, Creativity, Health, Interests, Optimism, Positive Identity, Temperament

- **Achievement Orientation**  Adaptive Capacity, Sense of Mastery, Striving Behavior

- **Psychosocial Development (Self & Others)**  Self Management, General Coping, Resilience, Sensitivity to Others, Social Skills, Pro-social Behavior

- **Contextual Supports - External Supports & Relationships**  Community Participation, Cultural Factors, Material Possessions, Respect from Others, School Environment, School Foundations, Caring Adults, Family Bonds, Peer Relations

- **Academic Functioning**  Academic Skills, Class Engagement, Group Skills, Performance, Rule Compliance
Strengths OPEN Model
Strengths Recap

- Public Health Model /PBIS+ SMH = ISF
- Wraparound
- Positive Psychology
CFETTE@TWU.EDU
References & Resources


References & Resources


Franz, J., & Miles, P. Paperboat Consulting


National Wraparound Initiative http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/

Peterson, C. (2006). A Primer in Positive Psychology. Oxford University Press … This is a positive psychology text that gives exercises, media and for practice of positive psychology practices
References & Resources


