



# Healthy Youth Development: From Concept to Application

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# Foundational Research: Resilience

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- Pioneers ('60s-early '70s): Garmezy, Werner, Smith and Rutter
- Resilience: positive outcomes, despite adversity
  - Refers to a pattern of behavior, not individual attribute
  - Grounded in ecological model
  - Dynamic process; not fixed

# Concepts of Risk and Protective Factors

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- From resiliency research emerged concepts of risk and protective factors
- Risk Factors
  - Elements or experiences in child's life that increase the likelihood of poor outcomes and decreases the likelihood of positive outcomes
  - Factors exist in family, school, community and individual
  - Effects of risk are cumulative

# Emergence of Concepts of Risk and Protective Factors

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- Protective Factors
  - Events or experiences that reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes and increases likelihood of positive outcomes
  - Buffer young people from involvement in risky behaviors
  - Mediate impact of risk factors
  - Like risk factors, protective factors exist in family, school, community and individual

# Power of Protective Factors

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- All young people need to be surrounded by Protective Factors
  - Although resiliency research focused on at-risk populations, researchers were convinced that most youth benefit from protective factors, whether they are at heightened risk for negative outcomes or not.
- Empirical Support: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
  - Cross-sectional, longitudinal surveys of youth health and behavior

# Add Health Findings

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- Designed to examine how social contexts (i.e. families, schools and communities) affect health and behaviors among youth; also assessed risk and protective factors.
  - Connectedness to family, other adults, school and community are robust, recurring protective factors across social groups of youth
  - Breadth and scope of Add Health revealed the dynamic interplay of risk and protective factors; negative behaviors are a result of an “imbalance” of these factors.

# Youth Development: Three inter-related definitions

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- A natural process
  - the growing capacity of a young person to understand and act on the environment
- Principles
  - set of principles, a philosophy or approach emphasizing active support for the growing capacity of young people by individuals, organizations, and institutions
- Practices
  - refers to the application of the principles (Number 2) to a planned set of practices, or activities, that foster the developmental process (Number 1) in young people

# Healthy Youth Development: A larger vision of what young people need

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- “.... the youth development framework assumes that young people have fundamental, underlying needs for healthy development. When these needs are met, these kids are more likely to develop as caring, compassionate individuals with lots of sparkle and zest for life.”

- **Michael Resnick, University of MN**

# Youth Development according to Gisela Konopka: 1973

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- **Youth need the opportunity to:**
  - Participate as citizens, as members of a household, as workers, and as responsible members of society
  - Gain experience in decision making
  - Interact with peers, and acquire a sense of belonging
  - Reflect on self in relation to others, and discover self by looking outward as well as inward

# Youth Development according to Gisela Konopka (cont.)

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- Discuss conflicting values and formulate one's own value system
- Experiment with one's own identity, with relationships; try out various roles without having to commit oneself irrevocably
- Develop a feeling of accountability in the context of a relationship among equals.
- Cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.

# Healthy Youth Development since 1973: A Plethora of Paradigms

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- 5 C's (developmental psychologists)
  - Competence
  - Confidence
  - Connection
  - Character
  - Contribution
- Social Development Theory (Hawkins/Catalano)
- 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute)
- Five Promises (America's Promise)

## DESIRABLE YOUTH OUTCOMES

Confidence	Character	Connection	Competence	Contribution
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Self-Worth</b></p> <p>The perception that one's ideas and contributions are meaningful.</p> <p><b>Mastery and Future</b></p> <p>Awareness of one's progress in life and projecting into future.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility and Autonomy</b></p> <p>Accountability for one's conduct and obligations. Independence and control over one's life.</p> <p><b>Spirituality</b></p> <p>Connectedness to principles surrounding families, cultural groups, communities and higher deities. An awareness of one's own personality or individuality.</p>	<p><b>Safety and Structure</b></p> <p>Having access to adequate food, clothing, shelter, and security, including protection from hurt, injury or loss.</p> <p><b>Membership and Belonging</b></p> <p>Being a participating member of a community. Being intimately involved in at least one lasting relationship with another person.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <p>Developing and reflecting on one's knowledge and experiences.</p> <p><b>Skills</b></p> <p>Developing a range of skills across developmental areas (health, civic, physical, social, emotional, cognitive, personal).</p> <p><b>Behavior</b></p> <p>Applying and practicing new life skills and new roles.</p>	<p><b>Participation</b></p> <p>Assuming roles as participants and leaders in various settings (family, school, community).</p> <p><b>Influence</b></p> <p>Making a difference, advocating for a cause, making meaningful decisions and accepting responsibility for mistakes.</p>

# Shifting to a Youth Development Approach

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- Requires a shift from “prevention” to “development”
  - Teaching resistance skills is not the same as helping young people think about and prepare for the future
- Program/service goals shift to focus on youth’s capacities, strengths, and developmental (physical, mental, social and emotional) needs.
- Incorporates protective factors and emphasizes ways to tap young people’s passion, enthusiasm and energy.
- May necessitate programs to *reinvent*, not simply reorganize, how they work with youth.

# Features of Developmentally Supportive Programs/Places\*

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- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive adult relationships
- Feelings of belonging and being valued
- Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery

■ \*National Academies of Sciences/National Research Council's Panel on Community Youth Development Programs

# Healthy Youth Development Programs: Examples of Effectiveness

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- Quantum Opportunities
  - Aimed at fostering academic and social development
  - Outcomes: **increased** academic skills, high school graduation rates, college attendance, and community service; **decreased** likelihood of high school dropout, pregnancy, or fathering a child.
- Teen Outreach Program
  - Designed to prevent adolescent problem behaviors by enhancing normative processes of social development
  - Outcomes: significantly **less likely** than control students to have failed a course, been suspended from school, or gotten pregnant

# Healthy Youth Development Programs: Examples of Effectiveness

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- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
  - Promote social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral competencies; positive identity, bonding, resiliency, self-efficacy, and pro-social norm
  - Outcomes: **improved** parental relationship, peer relationships, social acceptance (isolated to subgroup of Caucasian males), global academic self-concepts, school performance and attendance, perceived ability to complete schoolwork; **decreased** hitting; frequency of lies to parent; less likely to start using drugs or alcohol.

# Healthy Youth Development: Moving Beyond Programs

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- Although focus tends to be on eliminating risk behaviors, *all* youth need support, relationships, experiences, resources, and opportunities to become successful and competent adults.
  - Key element: Relationships with caring, competent adults
- Children do not grow up in programs. So how can we align adolescents' strengths and passions with developmentally supportive resources in the various settings in which adolescents live and interact.

# Healthy Youth Development in Families

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- Protective factors
  - Connectedness
  - Monitoring
  - Parental expectations
  
- Healthy Youth Development applied to parenting:
  - Authoritative parenting
    - Laurence Steinberg, Temple University

# Healthy Youth Development in Schools

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- Protective factor
  - School Connectedness
  
- Healthy Youth Development in schools:
  - Consistency Management, Cooperative Discipline®
    - Prevention
    - Caring
    - Cooperation
    - Organization and
    - Community

# Healthy Youth Development in Communities

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- Protective factor
  - Access to role models
  - Informal supports for caregivers
  - Access to resources/services
- Healthy Youth Development in communities:
  - Supports, Opportunities, Services (SOS)
  - Youth resource mapping
  - Youth Councils/youth in authentic decision-making roles

# Healthy Youth Development in Policy Strategies

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- State Strategies: From beating the odds to changing the odds
  - Focus on strengths and assets, not only on discrete problems
  - Build program quality and supply
  - Build a comprehensive, coordinated, aligned effort across department and committee lines
    - Data report cards
    - Children's budgets
    - Children's cabinets
  - Bring youth perspectives to the table

# Healthy Youth Development in the Funding Community

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- Funders must begin to integrate youth development framework and research on risk and protective factors into grant guidance.
- Funding must:
  - be flexible and long-term to provide organizational and program stability;
  - target the organization, not just the program;
  - support the creation of youth development assessment and evaluation tools, and training to build the capacity of youth workers

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Healthy development is not an individual process; rather, it is a community affair



Youth development isn't one more thing to add to your plate; youth development *is* the plate.