

# BOUNCING BACK

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## SHARED VIEWS OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is a concept that is widely understood as the ability to return quickly to a normal state after an unsettling event. This includes the ability to remain in an attentive yet relaxed state even during a disturbing event. Resilience is dependent on a number of factors including community support, health, security and education.

If one thinks of resilience as a gesture, we might come to the image of bouncing back. Elasticity. The ability to bounce back implies that after being disturbed in some way we can come back to ourselves. We adapt to the situation and maintain our center. How do we move from being stuck in a loop of expecting stress or harm, or from being exhausted from a high level of vigilance?

Moving from a rigid state requires flow. The word resilience in Sanscrit also means flow. Reflecting on this connection between flow and resilience we can find many connections to our pedagogical work and our personal journeys. The life forces in and around us intermingle with our consciousness, emotions and nerve sense system.

This article mentions some common points and thoughts about how resilience fits in with Waldorf Pedagogy and Educational Support work. It also includes some conditions from mainstream that strengthen resilience. Sources are: Dr. Steiners gift of his work with the senses, the Pedagogical Law and the 4 bodies; on-line medical research; Dr. Bruno Callegaro; Dr. Ross Rentea, Dr. Andrea Rentea, our friends in Sensory Integration; AWSNA newsletter; the children I have worked with ;colleagues and my teachers, especially Rosemary Gebert, Audrey McAllen and friends in Camphill.

## INNER EXPERIENCES

When we have resilience we build a loop that generates itself and reinforces our stability. There are emotional, environmental and health factors that set the groundwork for resilience. These factors help create inner experiences:

- 1) We experience ourselves as a harmonious, reliable organism, where all the parts of the entire organism work together. Life feels balanced in the dynamic between ease and challenges. There is confidence to meet challenges. This is similar to a healthy life sense, one of the four foundational senses.

2) We experience our self identity and our connection to the world and others. This is similar to the sense of ego, one of the four higher senses. If we have resilience we maintain an experience of self even in adversity or uncomfortable situations.

## RESILIENCE and CHILDREN

Children of course do not bring the same consciousness into their experiences. They are at the beginning of the human journey and in some ways have clearer needs in regards to resilience. The following list of important ways to build resilience is a collection of mainstream research, pedagogical principles and musings on the effects of Extra Lesson.

\* *Rhythm and Strength.* Dr Steiner in one of his lectures referred to rhythm as strength. If you don't have strength, then strive for routine and rhythm in your life. The many rhythms of life provide a feeling of flow, leading to a feeling of strength. Everything from regular bed times, routines, daily chores and weekly events all cradle us in this rhythm of life. These rhythms provide us with a framework of expectations that we can then stand in securely, allowing us to more fully engage in each day and provides us with something to look forward to. Although we all need novelty too, it is often very beneficial to know what happens next. This can loosen stress from our world which is often demanding.

Taking this rhythm to a larger scale, let's look at the rhythm of the year and the festivals. Throughout the pedagogical lectures which inform us about festivals and other works, we can read about the importance of repetition in a timely way. Festivals for instance, celebrating the circling of the year, enhance our security in life as we participate in connecting to the changing seasons and the work of the creative spirits.

\* *A consistent and supportive relationship.* An infant develops non-verbal attachment, usually with the mother and develops an etheric bond. This is a right brain to right brain connection. The brain, a mirror of the bodily and soul reality, then develops the right frontal orbital cortex. A primary early relationship is very important. Other relationships will emerge and are essential to a child's well being. However, at least one stable, reliable relationship is ideal.

\* *A natural unfolding into decision making.* Too often young children are asked to make decisions that do not actually give them freedom but rather produces anxiety. If there is an adult who provides a well balanced environment , then the child is actually free to be a child, secure in a world that provides for him/her

\* *Body Image, Development and Sense of Self.* There is also a flow in the developmental maturation of the senses and our motor ability, although of course it varies in each child. Early exploration from rolling to crawling on the floor soon yields to imitation, inner

speech and finally independent movement. Body geography, balance, and spatial orientation are strong indicators for a sense of self. When a step on the developmental path is missed, the opportunity for the sense of self to grow is undermined. Therefore the addition of specific movement, such as cross pattern work in grade 3, can enhance resilience.

## INFLUENCES IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT WORK

*Confidence.* One observation that arose during years of Educational Support work was that, through imitation and then independence with the Extra Lesson and other developmental programs, children gained a strong confidence with those specific skills, which transferred to other areas of learning. The recapitulation of a stage of development, builds a stronger foundation, like sealing the cracks and smoothing the road.

*Lighthearted mood.* The dynamic of a light-hearted practice can be a feature of E.L. The child is accepted for who they are and where they are. There are many opportunities to practice where one can accept the fact that the first time with a task does not always work and to try again. This persistence builds will. There are also opportunities to use humor, which is a force for building the inner forces, an aspect of the Pedagogical Law.

*Universal connections.* A third dynamic is that, by aligning a child non-verbally with the natural currents of the body and the world we are opening the door to profound connections and what it means to be on the earth. The child or adult using the exercises can now claim a “dual citizenship” of both the physical world and the other world where the creative forces live. When we think of this “dual citizenship” we can imagine that there is a sub-conscious feeling that what is happening on earth has its reflection and source in another realm. This helps us make sense of our earthly existence and our connections.

## TIPS FOR NURTURING THE TEACHERS

Australian researchers set out to investigate the effect of dance mental and physical health, and discovered that "undertaking structured dance of any genre is generally equal and occasionally more effective than other types of physical activity interventions for [improving a range of psychological and cognitive outcomes.](#)" They found improvements in emotional well-being, depression, motivation, and cognitive functions such as memory, across all age groups, and even in individuals with chronic diseases! Therefore, do not forget your Eurythmy, Qi Gong, Hula.

Anchor your day. One thing the same in the morning and one thing the same in the

evening.

Take a mini-break whenever you can. Even washing your hands or doing a one minute form drawing can be invigorating.

Proper nutrition, sleep, exercise, and being in nature. All these things as we know have a strong effect on our emotional and physical well being. Try deep “box breathing” when stressed.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT PEOPLE

**Challenge** – Resilient people view a difficulty as a challenge, not as a paralyzing event. They look at their failures and mistakes as lessons to be learned from, and as opportunities for growth. They do not view them as a negative reflection on their abilities or self-worth.

**Commitment** – Resilient people are committed to their lives and their goals, and they have a compelling reason to get out of bed in the morning. Commitment is not just restricted to their work – they commit to their relationships, their friendships, and the causes they care about.

**Personal Control** – Resilient people spend their time and energy focusing on situations and events that they have control over. Because they put their efforts where they can have the most impact, they feel empowered and confident. Those who spend time worrying about uncontrollable events can often feel lost, helpless, and powerless to take action.

**Hormones and resilience** – For your further research: The hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis is key to resilience development. In times of stress, the hypothalamus secretes corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), releasing adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) from the pituitary gland. Consequently, cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands, which is critical for stress management, stress resilience, and homeostasis.

In summary, I hope that our readers conclude that a typical day in a Waldorf classroom or in a supportive household provides countless opportunities for preparing the children to face life's challenges. How fortunate we are that we can deepen our understanding of the curriculum that has been offered to us.