



# The Youth Advocate

August 2009 ~ Children and Resiliency

A Newsletter of the Youth Advocacy Task Force of  
The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

The Youth Advocacy Task Force (YATF), which is coordinated by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, is a statewide coalition of Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocates who focus primarily on providing advocacy services and prevention education programs to children and youth in Vermont. As part of our mission, we are committed to acknowledging the specific injustices experienced by young people and to holding their integrity and human rights as paramount in our work to end domestic and sexual violence. We meet regularly to share resources, design children and youth related materials, and support one another in carrying on this important and challenging work. The idea to produce a newsletter grew out of a desire to share our work and other youth related resources with a wider audience. In each issue, *The Youth Advocate* will highlight topic areas related to domestic and sexual violence and how these issues affect children and youth in Vermont. Enjoy!

## Special Focus - Book Review

Raising Our Children to Be Resilient -  
A Guide to Helping Children Cope with Trauma in Today's World  
By: Linda Goldman

Reviewed by: Sandy Hart,  
Youth Program Coordinator  
Umbrella, Inc.



As adults our instincts tell us to shield children from the harsh realities of today's world, in

essence protecting them from the realism of war, illness, death and violence. There is an innate need to safeguard their young minds and hearts by attempting to screen their experiences. What becomes clear throughout this book is that although the intentions of these caring adults are well meaning, the inevitable results are detrimental. Why? Because, while it seems natural to keep a buffer between children and life's horrific events, whether it's in the home or globally, the truth is that if they are shielded from the effects of human realities as a child, they will not have the

experience or the tools required to deal with similar circumstances as adults. Instead, they are forced to face trauma blindly.

Linda Goldman, a certified Grief Counselor, shares her invaluable wealth of knowledge in *Raising Our Children to Be Resilient*. This book addresses the many terrifying events that impact our children's lives. She paints a picture that brings the losses, traumas, and everyday fears that children experience to the forefront and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging their pain and confusion in order to guide them on the path to living a more productive and strong adulthood.

Through validation and education Goldman gives examples of strategies used to empower children. Goldman offers a plethora of resources including

"From the moment of birth every human being wants happiness and wants to avoid suffering. In this we are all the same."

~ The Dalai Lama

(Con't on p. 7)

# The Voice of a Young Survivor: An Interview With Jeanelle Achee

By: Judy Szeg, Safeline

As we will see throughout this issue of the YATF newsletter, children who have experienced abuse can be very resilient, especially with the support of the non-offending parent. Jeanelle Achee is one such young woman. She is a recent graduate of The Sharon Academy and will be attending UVM in the Fall as a Community Services Scholar. Jeanelle is the recipient of the 2009 Crime Victim's Services Youth Activist Award. She has volunteered with SafeArt and Safeline; has taken part in the Model United Nations Project at Dartmouth College and the Iraqi Youth Peace Program at the Governor's Institute; and participated in beauty pageants, including running for Miss Vermont on a platform of Domestic Violence Advocacy. Her words are an inspiration to us all.

*"Listen and attend with the ear of your heart." ~Saint Benedict*

**Q: How old were you when you first experienced abuse in your home? Do you remember how it affected you at that time?**

**A:** I remember experiencing emotional abuse very young, probably around 4 is my first memory. Some of my earlier recollections are of my parents fighting and of my father holding me by my ankles over the staircase railing to scare me into following the rules. I did not

have a word to call it, but I knew that it was not good. Especially when my parents would argue worse about what my father was doing to my sister and me.

**Q: Did you think that other children might be having similar experiences?**

**A:** I assumed that it was normal because my father was (and still is) a police officer. Most of my friends were children of other officers as well and it seemed like that was how problems were dealt with. I knew that my other friends got spanked, and sometimes my uncle helped my dad scare me. I had no idea as a child that this was not normal behavior.

**Q: What kinds of things were helpful to you in processing your feelings?**

**A:** I did not process my feelings until many years later when I hit adolescence. Before my mom had me see a therapist, I was very angry and violent towards the people in my family. I would yell at them and try to scare them like my father did to me. I had no idea how to handle the emotions that I was feeling towards my mother for leaving my father, or my father for making her want to leave. Thankfully, therapy helped me cope with my emotions and be able to come to peace with my past and my relationship with my father.

**Q. What kinds of things were helpful to you for your safety?**

**A:** While I lived with my dad, the safest thing to do was to do what he wanted. My goal was to not get spanked or yelled at. That worked most of the time because

he was away at work so often. My mom was the key to my safety because she had the courage to leave the house and take my sister and me with her. I can't imagine what it was like for her because she had to escape from the house while my dad was at work and she had to hide at a friend's house until our flight, I fear that he would come find us and forcibly take us home with him.



**Q: Were you able to speak with an adult (s) about what was happening? If so, who did you speak with, and were they helpful? How?**

**A:** My mom has been an incredible support throughout my life especially concerning difficult topics. I know that I can talk to her about anything and that she loves me unconditionally. She proved that by standing by my side when I was so mad and confused. Sometimes I would yell at her about how mad I was with the whole family situation and why I couldn't have a normal family. She stayed rational and supportive through everything and kept her promise to herself to never use violence in our new home. Our relationship has become so much stronger throughout this terrible ordeal for both of us and it was her who supported me in my goal to help other teenagers and women suffering from abuse.

*(The Voice continued on p. 6)*

# Fostering Resiliency in Children Who Experience Domestic Violence

Amy Torchia  
Children's Advocacy Consultant  
Vermont Network

**Resilience is defined as the "human capacity and ability to face, overcome, be strengthened by, and even be transformed by experiences of adversity."**  
*(ResiliencyNet.org)*

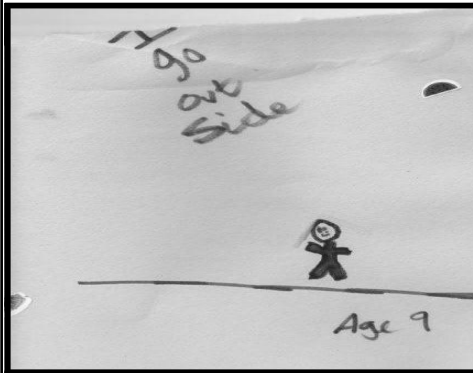
The concept of *resilience* explains why some children overcome overwhelming obstacles like poverty, domestic violence, child abuse, and war and make their way to healthy and meaningful adult-hoods. Research has consistently documented that between half and two thirds of children who grow up amidst adversity are able to beat the odds and create lives that look very different from the ones in

***What makes some kids more resilient than others? How can we foster resiliency in children who experience domestic violence?***

which they grew up. Resiliency research indicates that children who are most resilient to difficult or traumatic circumstances **have access to resources and protective processes which work to balance out the risk factors that exist in their lives.** We can foster resiliency in children by identifying their risk factors, adding resources into their lives, and strategizing protective processes that offer support.

## Fostering Resilience in Young Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

As we know, the main developmental tasks for young children include the development of healthy attachments, gaining peer and social competence, and learning self regulation. Growing up in a home where domestic violence exists creates circumstances where mastering these important tasks is jeopardized. The high co-occurrence of domestic violence and child physical and sexual abuse (30-60%) further intensifies the degree of hardship that many of these children face.



## Attachment

Children whose mothers are being battered may not have consistent opportunities to bond with their parents. Battered women are justifiably distracted by the dangers and dynamics of living and/or dealing with a batterer. Most expend much of their energy making plans to keep themselves and their children safe, many experience depression or anxiety, most don't have access to the re-

***We can help families by engaging resources which increase stability and safety, support vulnerable mothers to access needed services, and encourage improved parent-child relationships.***

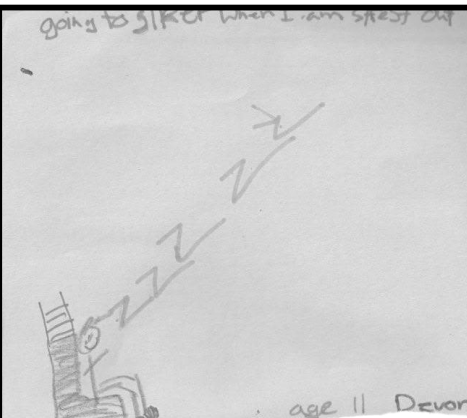
sources that they need to survive. Batterers are generally self-involved un-attentive parents. They most likely do not take active roles in providing care or nurturing for their young children. <sup>1</sup> *(Bancroft, Lundy. The batterer as a parent, 2002).*

***Encouraging early education and social resources for families will work to enhance positive development in young children exposed to domestic violence.***

## Social Competence and Self Regulation

Men who batter often limit their families' abilities to have social and support networks. Many children grow up without pre-school, playgroups, access to extended family, or meaningful opportunities to socialize with their peers or learn communication and conflict resolution skills. Their mothers are equally isolated. They are very often cut off from access to transportation, phones, friends or family. Children who grow up in violent homes are also consistently exposed by the batterer to a model of behavior that lacks positive regulation of negative emotions. The parenting of a battered mother is frequently devalued and undermined by her batterer <sup>2</sup>*(Lundy Bancroft, 2002).* Given these dynamics, children are often left without consistent boundaries or positive guidance. This, in addition to a limited ability to participate in social networks makes it difficult for children to learn how to regulate their own emotions and successfully navigate conflicts. Enriching child care environments with curricula that focus on successful regulation of anger and negative emotions can provide long *(Fostering con't on p. 4)*

(Fostering Resiliency con't from p. 3)  
 lasting protective effects. Also, home or community based opportunities to work with parents and children together enhance parenting skills and model self regulation for children and parents. Efforts to enhance a battered mother's social support network, like support groups with available child care or children's groups, will also provide opportunities for children to spend time in positive social contexts.



**Supporting Protective Processes: Something we can all do, every day for all children**

Supporting positive protective factors in children's lives is something that every adult can do to promote resiliency in all children. Protective processes are circumstances that help mediate the risks that exist in some children's lives. For the purposes of fostering resiliency, we can group protective processes into three categories:

- ◆ *Caring and supportive relationships*
- ◆ *Positive and high expectations*
- ◆ *Opportunities for meaningful participation*

**Resiliency on the Web**

**ResilienceNet:**

<http://www.resilnet.uiuc.edu/>  
 Provides the single, most comprehensive world-wide source of current, reviewed information about human resilience. ResilienceNet includes: bibliographies of literature, descriptions of links to web resources, publications, tips on fostering resilience, and research information.

National Educational Association Health Information Network:  
[www.neahim.org](http://www.neahim.org)

Great resources for fostering resiliency for children. Participate in "Embracing Resiliency" program online at:  
<http://www.neahin.org/programs/mentalhealth/stressguide.htm>

Download a **Resiliency Activity book** for grades K through 5 at:  
<http://www.neahin.org/resources/docs/Resilience-Activity20Book.pdf>

**American Psychological Association Resilience Guide for Parents & Teachers:**  
<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=39&ch=1>.

Tips for building resilience for children from preschool through teens.

**Project Resilience:**  
<http://projectresilience.com/index.htm>

Private organization that promotes a strengths-based approach to both youth and adults struggling to overcome hardship, for instance family disruption, poverty, violence, substance abuse, and racism. Good resources and articles.

**Fostering Resilience\_012804.pdf:**  
<http://www.cce.umn.edu/pdfs/NRRC/>

**Caring Relationships**

Children of all ages benefit from knowing that there is at least one person in their lives who loves them compassionately with understanding, respect and interest. Every adult who has overcome adversity or trauma will readily tell you who the people were who helped them along the way.

*"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."*  
 ~ Plato

**Positive and High Expectations**

Through relationships that convey messages of trust and confidence, children learn to believe in themselves and in their future. They are better able to develop the critical resilience traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, autonomy, and optimism.

**Opportunities for Meaningful Participation**

Participation, like caring and respect, is a fundamental human need. When children are given opportunities to be involved in positively influencing their environments, they learn that they have control over their own destinies. They begin to know that they have the strength and ability to make their own choices and create lives which are meaningful and healthy.



# Inner Resiliency in South Burlington Schools

Interview with Pat Messerle and Auriel Gray

Compiled by Amy Torchia  
Children's Advocacy Consultant  
Vermont Network

The South Burlington School district has been working with the NYC based *Inner Resilience* program to increase the practice of *mindfulness* in their school environments. The goal of this project is to generate increased interest and skills in staff, parents and students around these basic wellness practices so that they may be incorporated into the daily routines of teachers, students and families.

To find out more about this exciting initiative, we interviewed Pat Messerle, South Burlington School Psychologist and Auriel Gray, South Burlington School Guidance Counselor at Rick Marcotte Central Elementary School.



**Q. Can you describe what 'Mindfulness' means and why you pursued incorporating this work in the S. Burlington Schools?**

A. *Mindfulness* author and educator, Jon Kabat Zinn, defines

it as "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally." The regular practice of mindfulness has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression and increase self-regulation and attention. We pursued incorporating this work in our schools because we believe it helps us to address the noted increase in student anxiety, depression and attention problems, as well as providing strategies for staff to effectively respond to stress (in themselves as well as their students).

**Q. Can you tell us what the South Burlington Schools have been doing to incorporate 'mindfulness' into their work with children?**

A. Staff who have participated in the *Inner Resilience* pilot training are doing the following in their classrooms:

- ◆ Create peace corners in the classroom where students can elect to go to calm themselves.
- ◆ Schedule some quiet time into each day when students either do a relaxation activity using a guided relaxation CD like the *Building Emotional Intelligence* CD or color mandalas while listening to calming music.
- ◆ Use language like lets 'get our minds and bodies ready to learn' and integrating focusing/calming strategies like taking deep slow breaths and gentle stretching, as well as tuning into the five senses.
- ◆ Pay attention to their own adult level of stress and tension and model the use of self calming

practices while teaching. (i.e. slowing down, taking a break/moment of quiet - e.g. sometimes using a chime, reflective writing, conscious communication, etc)

◆ Teachers are also modeling these behaviors for their students.

**Q. What benefits does this work provide for children who have been traumatized?**

A. This *Inner Resilience* work helps to develop self-awareness and self-regulation, so traumatized children are better able to recognize and anticipate triggers/stressors and their effects on them, and respond with more awareness and self-control. Calm brains are available for learning while emotional brains are trying to protect themselves from threatening situations. When we teach all children how to deal with an unavailable brain, they learn lifelong skills.

**Q. What specific outcomes have the children and staff experienced in South Burlington?**

A. Preliminary results from our year-long data collection show students and teachers feel more empowered to continue with these inner resilience practices and report that they feel they help them to feel calm and have a quieter learning environment. This project has also opened up discussions with parents and district personnel about the need for all of us to develop, "*Inner Resilience*."

(*Inner Res. continued on p. 7*)

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it. ~Helen Keller

(The Voice con't from p. 2)

**Q. Did you speak with any of your friends about what was happening? How did they respond?**

**A.** I was not able to articulate anything while I was younger and even through my pre-teen years. Not until I had educated myself and found that the experiences I had constituted abuse was I able to talk to my peers. It was difficult to admit that one of my parents treated me in such a way, but most of them (my peers) were supportive. I don't think that they understood the magnitude of the problem and many of them still don't, even though I am 18. I still have to constantly correct my friends and tell them that it is not ok to make rape jokes or jokes about hurting someone. Sometimes I feel like an annoyance, but I know that if one of my friends finally understands the message then they can help me change and stop the current attitude towards victims suffering from abuse.

**Q: If there was something that you wish someone could have said or done differently, or a resource that could have been available during or after your experience, what would it be?**

**A:** I wish that I had known that (what I was experiencing) was abuse earlier in my life. It was terrible to not know that what was happening to my family was

*"The most important protective force in a child, is the strong, positive and loving relationship with a competent and caring parent or other adult."*

Carter, Weithorn & Behrman, 1999;  
Kashani & Allan, 1998

not ok. I wish that there was more literature available to mothers that told them the facts about abuse. I think that my mom was not able to decide whether the situation was bad enough to leave or if she was supposed to stay because he was the father of her children. If she had had that information readily available it would have saved everyone a lot of grief.

**Q: What would you like to say to children or youth who are survivors?**

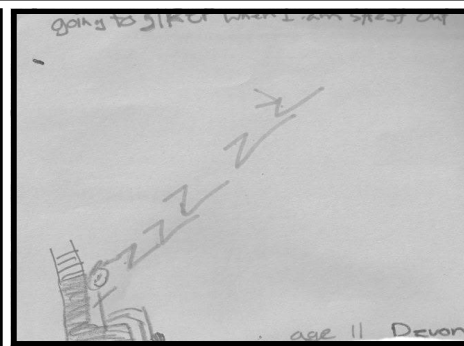
**A:** You are not the only one that this has happened to. There are many more other people out in the world and even in your community that know what you are experiencing or have experienced. Do not be afraid to talk to someone you know that you can trust, like a family member, friend, or guidance counselor. The chance to talk to someone about your feelings and fears is irreplaceable and incredibly helpful for recovery and finding peace with yourself. Finally, you have probably heard this many times, but it is still the most important thing to remember, *nothing you did caused the abuse you experienced.* It was and will never be your fault.

## Understanding Trauma

Eliza Behrsing,

Outreach/Education Coordinator,  
BWSS

Perhaps I'm a bit of a pessimist, because when our task force decided the topic for this year's newsletter would be promoting resiliency, I couldn't help but think we needed to



include an article on trauma. What are we encouraging children to be resilient against? What are we trying to prevent? Understanding the answers to these questions can help frame the conversation around resiliency in new ways.

Beneath all the complex thinking, scientific advances, cultural feats, we are still mammals trying to survive.

*"Don't worry that children never listen to you. Worry that they are always watching you."*

~ Robert Fulghum

There are certain parts of our brain that are very, very old, and we still use them from time to time. The **reptilian** and **mammalian** parts of our brain are what kept us alive thousands of years ago, despite those grouchy saber tooth tigers. Even now, those parts of our brain will kick in if we are in danger, prompting the "Fight, Flight or Freeze" response.

Information about the world around us comes into the brain through our senses, and then goes to the thalamus for processing. The thalamus sends this information to the **limbic system** or the **cortex**. The limbic system is the emotional center, and is pretty concerned with survival. The cortex is the

(Understanding con't on p.9

(Inner Res. con't from p. 5)



**Q. Do you have words of wisdom for all teachers out there about how to incorporate mindfulness into their time with kids?**

**A.** It is not complicated or an 'add-on' curriculum. The teachers in our program noticed the biggest changes in themselves first, which was the initial focus of the training. The mindfulness work needs to first be modeled and practiced by adults before it can be effectively taught, but no one needs to be an expert to begin using some basic calming and self awareness strategies in their lives and teaching. Simple deep breathing can easily be practiced several times a day at any developmental level and without disruption to the day's schedule For more information on the *Inner Resiliency* program go to:

[www.innerresiliencetidecenter.org](http://www.innerresiliencetidecenter.org)

**What Children Face in Today's World**

- ◆ Family Violence
- ◆ School Violence
- ◆ War
- ◆ Illness
- ◆ Gangs
- ◆ Loss
- ◆ Bullying/harassment
- ◆ Death
- ◆ Uncertainty

(book review continued from p.1)

books, DVDs, websites, and activities that help adults implement these strategies.

These resources are geared toward an array of topics such as death, war, illness, school violence (including bullying) and family violence. Also, Goldman takes the extra step to aim the resources at particular audiences such as advocates, parents, caretakers, educators and mental health providers, just to name a few.

While researching several of her suggested websites, I found myself drawn into the enormous amount of information regarding kids and trauma. Even the most well-meaning adults tend to forget that perception is reality. What children see when trying to understand circumstances is their truth. Unfortunately *their* truth may not be *the* truth, resulting in an increase of unnecessary fears, anxiety and the feeling of hopelessness. This is why Goldman consistently puts emphasis on the importance of hearing the children's voices along with ways to validate and alleviate their confusion, sadness, fear and conclusions.

This book is an extremely useful guide for any adults working with youth. I have always understood that it is important to meet children and youth where they are at in order to empower their healing process. This book not only reinforced my own personal approach but also taught



me a lot about being more effective in the lives of youth.

**Signs of a Resilient Child**

- ◆ The ability to bounce back
- ◆ The capacity to have courage
- ◆ The motivation to move forward
- ◆ The power to stay centered
- ◆ The awareness of knowing themselves
- ◆ The gift of laughter
- ◆ The potential of showing promise
- ◆ The capacity to ask for help
- ◆ The tenacity to accomplish goals
- ◆ The willingness to share feelings
- ◆ The capability to connect with others
- ◆ The inspiration to give back

*A Guide to Helping Children Cope with Trauma in Today's World*  
By Linda Goldman (2004)

**Families Exposed to Domestic Violence. Site-Based Youth Violence Prevention Programming:**

A Model for Domestic and Sexual Violence Organizations and Their Community Partners.

By Kate Rohdenburg & Lavinia Weizel,  
WISE

In 2007 WISE received a grant from the Vermont State Legislature to pilot "site-based programming" for youth exposed to domestic violence. WISE has been committed to children's programming and has continually sought to build capacity to address the needs of youth whether related to our adult clients, though our work with Child

(Families continued on p.8)

*Families Exposed con't from p. 7)*  
Education Program. Advocacy Centers, or in our Youth However, we continually met with some reoccurring obstacles involved in creating effective longer-term programming with youth: transportation barriers; low numbers of youth residing at our emergency shelter for any length of time; difficulty scheduling into busy – often chaotic – family lives; and the stigma of receiving services from a domestic/sexual violence organization. WISE used this grant in order to collaborate with other service providers in a way that would reduce these barriers and increase valuable intervention with youth in an innovative yet sustainable way. Children exposed to domestic violence are often struggling with a range of other issues which are compounded by the violence in their home life. The goal of the WISE pilot site-based programming was to develop a portable, sustainable model for domestic and sexual violence organizations to provide on-site programming for children impacted by domestic violence in settings that are safe and accessible.

At the onset, we knew that youth could benefit from WISE services. As Bancroft and Silverman note in The Batterer as Parent, “Psycho-educational group counseling is a particularly valuable resource for children exposed to domestic violence. Group work lends itself well to the mixture of emotional and cognitive processing that children need.” (Bancroft, Lundy. *The Batterer as Parent*, 2002) The idea to pilot site-based programming was founded in the desire to

bring those processing services to youth **where they are** – both physically and emotionally. In doing so we could begin to support youth and foster resiliency by providing a safe space for youth to process and heal from their experiences of violence. By tailoring programs and services to be delivered on-site at community partner organizations that are already used and trusted by families, the program sought to enhance the accessibility of domestic and sexual violence program services and the collaborative relationship and cross-program knowledge between organizations providing distinct but complementary services in support of children and families. Our first partner was the Upper Valley Haven, chosen because of the known link between domestic violence and homelessness, the Haven’s relatively constant group of live-in youth, pre-established youth groups/extracurricular activities, and an existing relationship between the WISE and the Haven. Our goal was to pilot the program, and create a manual describing the process, structure, outline, successes and challenges for future replication with WISE and for other crisis centers in collaboration with youth service providers.

The manual is meant to offer a specific model for the development of a collaborative relationship at the level of programming and service delivery between two community organizations. Our model is designed to honor the strengths, expertise and unique culture that each organization brings to such an initiative. As such it is not

meant to provide a recipe for the specific content of the programming. It does outline the programs we implemented, highlighting, above all, the flexibility that was required to keep the content relevant and engaging for audiences and the foundation of mutual understanding and open channels of communication that allowed the pilot collaboration to flourish. The hope is that the structure and reflections outlined will provide a solid foundation on which other such collaborations may be built.

**Specific aims of the Site-Based Model for Children’s Programming for children and families exposed to domestic violence.**

- ◆ Extend programming for children and their mothers to locations already used and trusted by the family;
- ◆ Reduce the transportation challenges associated with accessing services in rural areas;
- ◆ Reduce additional barriers, including potential stigma, associated with accessing crisis center services;
- ◆ Increase the knowledge and skills of local providers/ community organizations in supporting children and mothers exposed to domestic violence; and
- ◆ Offer a mobile, cost-efficient and flexible program that can be easily replicated and tailored for use among other crisis centers and community providers.

By reducing barriers, increasing environmental supports for youth, enhancing nuanced

*Understanding con't from p. 6)*  
higher level thinking part, useful for 'Twittering'. If a threat is perceived by our senses, the information first goes to the limbic system, where it can be matched against previous experiences to figure out how to handle the situation and stay alive. If the brain decides the threat is real, or if it matches something that was a real threat in the past, alarms start going off and the "Fight, Flight, or Freeze" thing will happen.

This is a good thing, especially when there were saber tooth tigers around every corner. Humans might not have gotten this far if we saw those shiny teeth and then sat around for a few minutes trying to make an educated decision about the best way to approach the situation. If the brain senses danger, it goes into protection mode and may even cut off communication with the higher level thinking part of the brain. If you've ever had a scary experience, you can probably remember that you weren't spending too much time thinking about the grocery list or that annoying email from your friend. Additionally, the way that we store those scary memories is different.

Non-traumatic memories get filed away chronologically in the cortex part of the brain. However, traumatic memories are not processed in this way. They get "stuck" in the limbic system of the brain, so that they can be easily accessed (hopefully it only took one encounter with a saber tooth tiger to figure out that trying to pet him might result in a fairly large scratch).

Let's examine a more relevant example: a child who

*"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."*

*-Confucius*

witnesses his father abusing his mother. Studies have shown that witnessing this kind of violence can be just as traumatic to an individual as if he were hit himself. This boy may be traumatized by the events that he witnesses, and his brain is going to spend a whole lot more time in the limbic system than in the cortex. It could be pretty hard for him to focus on his math class if he is worried about what's happening when he gets home, and this is part of the reason that children who live with an abusive parent may have developmental delays. If we are living in traumatic, scary situations, our brains are pretty much always in a heightened state of arousal and trying to keep us alive. Learning to 'Twitter' isn't quite as high on the list of things to do.

This boy who is witnessing domestic violence may experience any number of effects. Perhaps whenever he hears a man raise his voice, the boy's brain jumps right into the limbic system and begins matching this man's loud voice with the loud voice of his father. Even though he might not be in danger from the man yelling right now, his brain may interpret it to be just as life-threatening as when his father yells, so the boy's brain may tell him to "Fight, Flight, or Freeze." The more that this happens, the more rehearsed the jump to the limbic system will be, and even things like remembering the event or seeing someone play wrestling

may "trigger" the boy.

The good news is that just as our brains can rehearse traumatic events and the response to them, we can retrain the brain to be less responsive. There are many kinds of therapy that address this; although it has been proven that "reliving" or re-experiencing the traumatic event is harmful and not helpful. Some therapies that have shown some success are ones that work with a client while she is in a relaxed state and the limbic system is not activated. Yoga, Tai Chi, and meditation can be effective because of the purposeful relaxation of the body. Focusing on a physical task when the limbic system becomes activated has also been helpful to many people. For a child, having someone who makes him feel safe and cared for helps rehearse those alternative routes in the brain. Safety planning can be helpful in these situations because it may give a child something else to focus on during a traumatic event at home.

Our brains are pretty adaptable which means that promoting resiliency and helping children heal can go a long way toward ending the generational cycle of violence and raising well adjusted kids. Encouraging resiliency is a way to prevent children from being traumatized by the scary things going on around them, but it is still just a piece of the solution. The ultimate goal is creating a world where children aren't traumatized by domestic violence, sexual assault, living in poverty, or living in war zones, because although we can try to heal, we cannot undo trauma.

(Families exposed con't from p. 8)

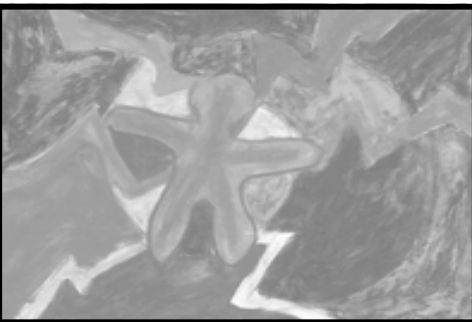
collaboration among youth service providers and creating a stable support network, children who have experienced family violence are able to start processing their emotions, stressors, and ideas about relationships in safe and supportive environments. Youth who are involved in the programming have adults that are invested in their personal

*"The most important protective force in a child, is the strong, positive and loving relationship with a competent and caring parent or other adult."*



(Carter, Weithorn & Behrman, 1999; Kashani & Allan, 1998)

success as well as cohesion with other youth who experience similar situations. Adult facilitators are further able to incorporate activities and educational processes into a framework in ways that fully integrate messages of coping with stress and stressful emotions, respectful relationships with peers and adults, and self-soothing/regulation techniques. Feedback from youth participants and adult facilitators showed this pilot program to be successful in building resiliency through these processes, and our hope is that the model may be replicated and



expanded for further collaborations of youth-centered support.

## For Moms

By Roxana MacMartin, BWSS

### Extracted from:

### When Dad Hurts Mom,

(by Lundy Bancroft, 2004)

### How can I help my children heal from the pain?

According to Lundy Bancroft's research on healing from domestic trauma, providing children with a close relationship with YOU and their siblings is the most important element in their journey to recovery.

Your love, kindness and the safe haven in a home without violence or intimidation are the most precious gifts you can provide for them.

Children are able to heal through their connection with you and the power of love. Your love brings them a sense of goodness at a deeper level, than praise alone will ever do. Your faith in them and their protection by you, will lead them into a path of healing.

At the same time, your assistance in dealing with sibling conflict, bullying and fighting, will teach them mutual listening skills and the ability to share their feelings, while they feel respected. Your modeling and insistence that they treat you with respect, teaches them respect for self and others.

Always look for opportunities to engage with your children, whether it's an infant or a teenager. Find ways to enter their world and find interest in their activities, in play

or serious learning. Even in your busy life, let them know that you want to know about their lives.

## A Survivor's Pride

Survivor's pride is defined as the well-deserved feeling of accomplishment that results from persisting in the face of hardship or adversity. By identifying and acknowledging survivor's pride, practitioners can reach youth more effectively and more constructively than by focusing on their pathology and attempting to "fix" their problems. Recognizing survivor's pride motivates positive change by:

- ◆ conveying respect and honoring the struggle of a youth, by which we mean seeing their behavior and the choices they make in the context of the difficult lives they lead.
- ◆ shifting the self-image of a youth from "damaged goods" to "one who prevails."
- ◆ providing evidence that a youth has been capable of meeting challenges in the past and can do so again.
- ◆ uncovering a youth's method for succeeding in the past that he or she can duplicate in the present.

<http://projectresilience.com/index.htm>

## References

Page 3  
1Bancroft, Lundy. *The Batterer as Parent*, 2002

Page 3  
2Bancroft, Lundy. *The Batterer as Parent*, 2002

Page 8  
3Bancroft, Lundy. *The Batterer as Parent*, 2002

## The Resiliency Wheel

Using this wheel as a model, teachers can identify, by looking at their behavior, the students who need resiliency improvement. By focusing on the area of the wheel that deals with behavior, educators can begin to understand why students feel and act in certain ways.

The left side of the wheel is an mixture of the three elements for building resiliency identified by Bernard in her synthesis of research on resilient students. These elements deal with building resiliency within the environment:

**Care and Support:** Includes unconditional positive regard, support, and encouragement. This part of the wheel is the most

significant, as this is where the relationship begins.

**High Expectations:** This includes making sure that young people understand that we believe they can be successful in their own right; as well as providing the resources for them to do so.

**Opportunities to participate:** This includes giving young people the opportunities to demonstrate their competence and eagerness to contribute to the classroom functions in meaningful ways.

The elements on the right hand side of the wheel are adapted from the works of Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, and

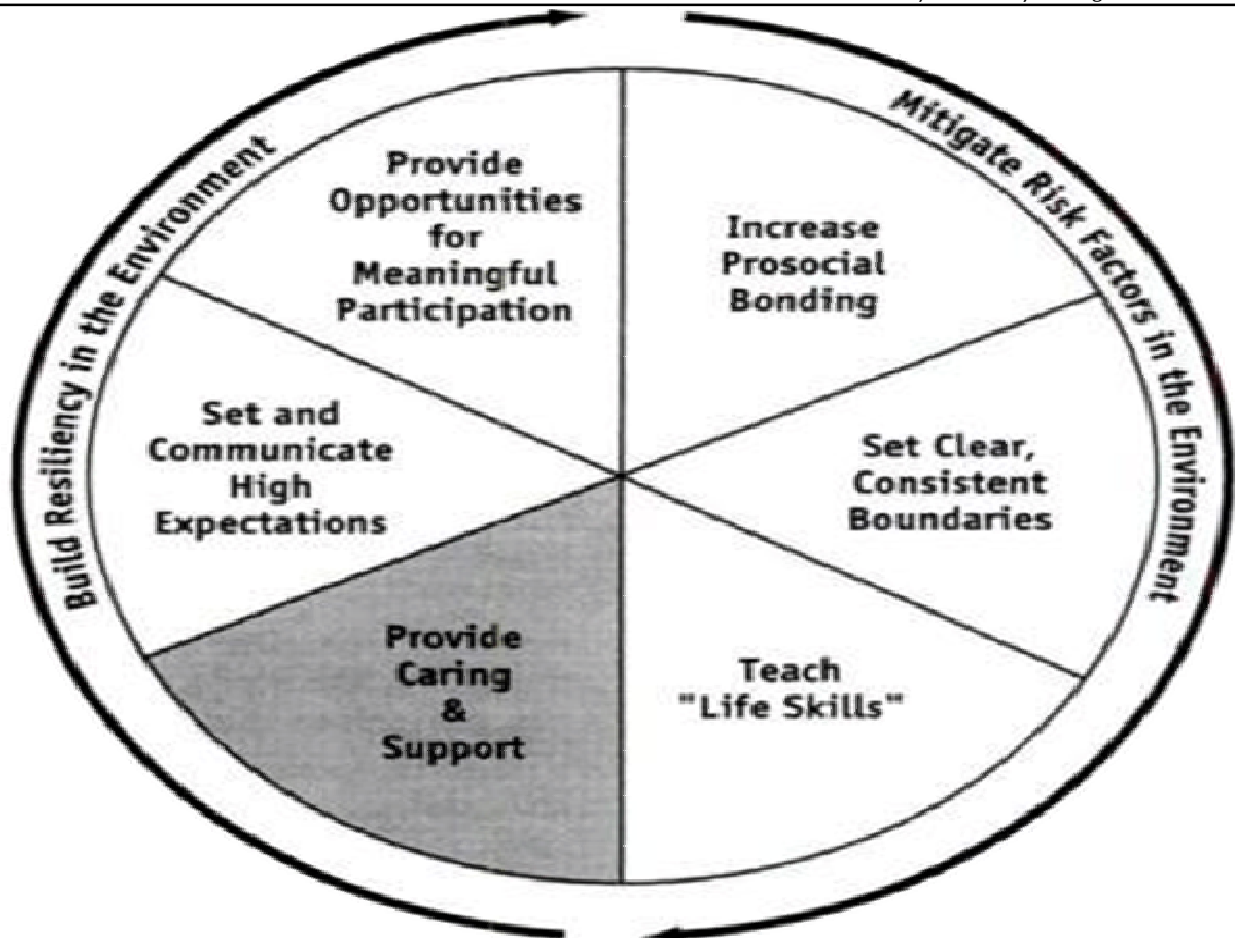
highlight the protective factors that they believe mitigate risk and deal with risk within the environment.

**Prosocial bonding:** This includes increasing positive connections between youths, their peers, and adults within the environment.

**Clear boundaries and expectations:** This includes policies and rules which govern a student's behavior. They need to be consistently fair, while developing a youth's input.

**Life skills:** Includes skills of decision making, communication and stress management. Schools need to prepare students, for life after school.

[http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/educationDLiT/2006/resilience/strategieresilience\\_wheel.htm](http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/educationDLiT/2006/resilience/strategieresilience_wheel.htm)



# *Youth Advocacy Task Force Member Programs*

<i><u>Program</u></i>	<i><u>Area</u></i>	<i><u>Hotline Number</u></i>
<b>AWARE</b>	Hardwick area	472-6463
<b>Battered Women's Services and Shelter</b>	Barre/Montpelier area	1-877-543-9498
<b>Clarina Howard Nichols Center</b>	Morrisville area	888-5256
<b>New Beginnings</b>	Springfield area	885-2050 or 674-6700
<b>PAVE</b>	Bennington area	442-2111
<b>Rutland County Women's Network</b>	Rutland area	775-3232
<b>Sexual Assault Crisis Team</b>	Barre/Montpelier area	479-5577
<b>Safeline</b>	Orange and Northern Windsor Counties	1-800-639-7233
<b>Advocacy Program at Umbrella</b>	St. Johnsbury area Newport area	748-8645 334-0148
<b>Voices Against Violence/Laurie's House</b>	St. Albans/ Franklin & Grand Isle area	524-6575
<b>WomenSafe</b>	Middlebury area	1-800-338-4205
<b>Women Helping Battered Women</b>	Burlington/ Chittenden Co. area	658-1996
<b>WISE (Women's Information Service)</b>	White River Junction, VT/ Lebanon, NH	866-348-WISE (9473)
<b>Women's Crisis Center</b>	Brattleboro area	1-800-773-0689
<b>Women's Rape Crisis Center</b>	Burlington/ Chittenden Co. area	863-1236

## *~Network Program Children and Youth Services~*

**Children and Youth related services provided by Vermont Network Programs vary across the state. Services include:**

**Prevention Education** in flexible formats on topics including: healthy relationships, dating and sexual violence, domestic violence, bullying, the effects of domestic violence on children, media literacy, and consent.

**Support Groups** for children, teens and non-offending parents with variety of focuses relating to domestic and sexual violence.

**Emotional Support** for children, teens, and non-offending parents.

**Emergency Shelter** for families fleeing from domestic or sexual violence.

**Advocacy** for children, teens, and non-offending parents with courts, schools, DCF, and other child related systems.

**Training and in-services** about domestic and sexual violence related issues for teachers and other professionals working with children and youth.

