

On Resilience Theory: A Strengths-based Method for Social Work Practice

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed paper is to present Resilience Theory, a strength base theory, as an effective method for Social Work practice, in general, and with “at risk” populations in particular. In addition to providing a general overview of the theory and its efficacy as a strength base method for Social Work practice, the paper will provide a review of the literature that underscores the empirical supports for Resilience Theory. The paper will also address the applicability of Resilience Theory in different settings/populations, example schools (K-12), community support programs, and “high risk” populations. The literature on Resilience, identifies five protective factors of families, schools, and communities: (1) supportive relationships, particularly encouragement from school personnel and other adults, (2) students characteristics, such as self-esteem, motivation, and accepting responsibility, (3) family factors, such as parental support/concern and school involvement, (4) community factors, such as community youth programs (e.g., sports, clubs, hobbies), and (5) school factors, such as academic and pro-social skills training. The very nature of the Resilience model encourages the Social Worker to move away from the Practitioner-driven deficit focus of the medical model. Through the identification of *risks-factors* and *protective-factors*, the model places emphasis on the client and his/her responses to the environment. More specifically, proponents of Resilience Theory believe that an individual’s response to his/her environment, whether successful or unsuccessful, is greatly influenced by a host of risk (predisposition to danger) and protective (safeguards) factors.

Key words: high-risk, protective-factors, resilience/resiliency, risk-factors, social work, strength-base