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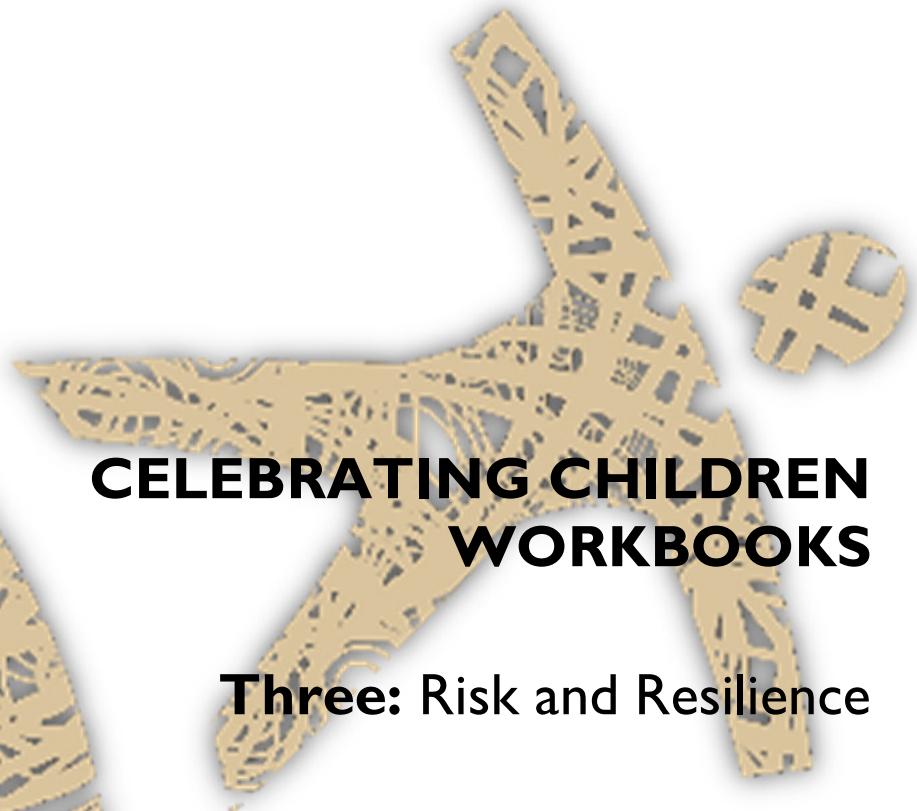
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# Viva Equip PEOPLE



## **CELEBRATING CHILDREN WORKBOOKS**

### **Three: Risk and Resilience**



Version 1\_2010

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*These workbooks have been written by a number of authors who have generously donated their time and expertise. Viva is pleased for you to use these workbooks to equip people caring for children at risk. Please do acknowledge authors and Viva if using these workbooks for training. Knowing how Viva's publications are used helps us to improve the quality of future publications. Please do give feedback on this through the registration and evaluation forms.*

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this workbook will be to explore the concepts of risk/vulnerability and resilience and how we as practitioners can enhance the resilience of the children and communities that we work with. It will also include the needs of children, how these can be met and the consequences of unmet needs for child and community.

The workbook will also introduce the framework of thriving / positive youth development as an alternative to a focus on children's needs and problems. It will also explore ways in which we as practitioners can work with children who have suffered trauma to enable them to overcome the past hurts and become all that God intends them to be.

Throughout, the workbook will show how psychological perspectives and approaches relate to a theological understanding of children and their needs.

## **Part I: Why are children vulnerable and what makes them resilient?**

In Part one of the workbook we will explore what it means for a child to be 'at risk' (lesson 1) and what trauma is and how it affects children (lesson 3).

Lesson 2 will show that it is more appropriate to think of children as vulnerable to certain risks rather than 'at risk' and to understand the things that can protect from those vulnerabilities. Lesson 4 will then introduce the concept of resilience and explore what resilience means and how children become resilient. Finally, lesson 6 will explain how we can help to build resilience in children.

The aim of this part is to lay foundations for understanding what makes children vulnerable and how they can be strengthened and protected in order to apply this in our projects and activities.

## Lesson 1: What puts children 'at risk'?

### Summary

- Risk factors
- Root causes of risks
- Understanding high risk

From a theological point of view the greatest risk all human beings face is the tendency to rebel against God, to sin and thus to not allow ourselves to stay in a protective nurturing relationship with Him as our Father. This inhibits growth into becoming mature and complete in Christ; it damages relationships with other people; it distorts the relationship between people and the environment. Many of the risk factors seen in practice are consequences of this rebellion. We must remember this central perspective in all analysis of the risks children face and how we seek to intervene in their lives.

### Risk factors

Individual children respond in different ways to difficult, dangerous and stressful circumstances. This is partly due to 'risk factors' and the way these interact with the child and his environment. A risk factor is a characteristic (in a group of people or a situation) that makes it more likely that a person will develop problems, such as delinquency or poor mental health.

Risk factors can include<sup>1</sup>:

- **Psychosocial factors**  
Poverty, economic crises, war, disaster, prejudice, being part of a minority group, being brought up in a deprived area
- **Family factors**  
Violence, abuse, neglect, bad family relationships between parents and between parents and children, being a young person who is looked-after outside the family
- **Educational factors**  
Truancy, having been suspended from school, teachers not turning up for lessons, perceived poor academic performance, low future academic expectations, examination results depending on bribes to teachers
- **Individual factors**  
Low intelligence, brain damage, chronic physical illness; Rejection by parents or peers, bullying by peers; Being a member of a deviant peer group; Not having a religious faith

### High risk

A high level of risk is likely to be the result of a combination of risk factors. Any factor becomes more risky for the child if it happens many times or if it continues for a prolonged time, or if the child is subjected to multiple risks over time.

Unless there is some positive form of intervention or support, children at high risk are liable to move into some form of institutional care, be forced to fend for themselves (often by living on the streets) or withdraw into themselves in a way that is harmful to their own wellbeing. In situations like these, normal

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Smith et al (2003), 568

emotional, physical and psychological development is likely to be impaired and the preparation for adult roles and tasks is disrupted.<sup>2</sup>

Risk factors interact with the different systems that the child is involved in.<sup>3</sup> A child is particularly vulnerable when any of his major systems collapses. Problems in the wider institutional context, like government, deprivation, etc. tend to put the more personal systems at risk, so schools, families and communities are pushed to their limit by wars and famines, for example. If a family is under stress, a poor context will further increase the risk to the child.

### Understanding root causes of risks

Many threats to children come from their environment.<sup>4</sup> We are accustomed to talking about children being at risk of, for example, sexual abuse and exploitation. A useful tool to use when looking at the causes for children being at risk is a 'But why?' flow chart. This chart helps people to think about the root causes of problems that they encounter, looking beyond the superficial answers to the more fundamental issues.<sup>5</sup>

- A. Draw or write the issue in a box at the top of a page.
- B. Ask 'But why has this happened?' and draw a connecting line between the problem and its cause.
- C. You may find more than one cause so that you can make a 'spider gram' going back to the root causes.

For example:

*A child is at risk of sexual exploitation. ... But why? ... She is very pretty and her family needs money. ... But why? ... There is demand from tourists. ... But why? ... Sin.*

*A child is at risk of sexual exploitation ... But why? ... There are few laws and no enforcement of the law. ... But why? ... The police and government are not committed to the process. ... But why? ... They want to promote the tourism industry. ... But why? ... Personal greed and / or few other national sources of income.*

*A child is at risk of sexual abuse. ... But why? ... She and her parents do not understand about the risks. ... But why? ... No-one explained them to her / to them. ... But why? ... Lack of education ... But why? ... Unfair distribution of resources.*

*A child is at risk of sexual abuse. ... But why? ... She is left out on the streets late at night. ... But why? ... Her parents both need to work late. ... But why? ... Poverty.*

Notice where intervention can / should occur in the 'But why?' flowchart. Personal sin needs to be addressed, but so does corporate sin. This is why advocacy tools need to be used with governments and corporations. Rehabilitation is needed, but the education of the child and her family are also part of the process.

<sup>2</sup> White and Wright (2003), 117

<sup>3</sup> See Workbook 1, lesson 6. Recall Bronfenbrenner's model of the different systems a child is involved in.

<sup>4</sup> See Workbook 1, lesson 5

<sup>5</sup> Miles (2003)

## **Case example**

Johnny is 6 years old; his sisters are 3 and 12 years old. They are all from different fathers and there has been domestic violence in the past, contributing to his mother's ongoing battle with depression. His sisters' fathers do have contact with them but Johnny's father has made it clear that the pregnancy was a mistake.

Johnny's mother has good support from her own parents and has recently moved to a village where there is a community support centre. Johnny is determined not to be like his father, but struggles with his feelings of rage and abandonment and with feeling less good than other children, as they are poor and he feels that he has to be the man of the house, but is not sure what that looks like. He struggles at school to read and write and his mother's literacy level is low. He tends to over attach to male teachers and to friends' fathers.

The family have recently been to a local church which provides emergency food rations and Johnny's mother noticed that Johnny was more peaceful afterwards and kept on asking her, "Who is God?" She is going to talk to the pastor of the church to see if he can help Johnny, as she struggles with seeing God as a Father as her own father abused her.



### Exercises:

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

The greatest risk all human beings face is the tendency to \_\_\_\_\_. Many of the other risk factors seen in practice are \_\_\_\_\_ of this rebellion. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a characteristic that makes it more likely that a person will develop problems. Risk factors include \_\_\_\_\_ factors, \_\_\_\_\_ factors, \_\_\_\_\_ factors and \_\_\_\_\_ factors. A high level of risk is likely to be due to a \_\_\_\_\_ of factors. A child is particularly \_\_\_\_\_ when any of his major systems collapses.

Many threats to children come from the \_\_\_\_\_, such as sexual abuse and exploitation. The 'But why?' flowchart is useful for looking at the \_\_\_\_\_ for children being at risk. It also helps to identify where to target \_\_\_\_\_.

### Discussion questions

1. What risk factors do you feel are operating for Johnny and for his family?
2. Which ones do you feel will most affect his self-esteem and his ability to grow up healthily both psychologically, practically and as a child of God?
3. Which risk factor/s do you feel are as most important:
  - From a psychosocial perspective?
  - From a theological perspective?
4. Which risk factors are most common in the children that you work with?

### Exercise

Use the 'But why?' tool to analyse why children are at risk in your context.

What sorts of interventions are needed to address the root causes of these risks?

## Lesson 2: What makes children vulnerable to risks and what protects them?

### Summary

- Understanding children's 'vulnerability' to risks
- Understanding factors that protect children from the adverse effects of risks

### From risk to vulnerability

Over the past hundred years, since the work of people like Shaftesbury and Barnados in the UK and the development of missions and charities reaching out to communities in need, the concept of risk has been widely explored. Many Christian agencies still use the term 'children at risk', whereas organisations such as UNESCO have used the term 'children living with difficult circumstances'.

One of the problems with thinking about a child being 'at risk' at a particular point in time is that the level of risk that a child or community is under depends on a wide variety of environmental, social, emotional, intellectual and economic factors.

In particular, the impact on a child's health and development and on his community will depend on vulnerability to those risks on the one hand, and also on factors that can protect them from or make them resilient to the risks.

Over the past seventy years, various studies have helped practitioners change their perspective.<sup>6</sup> Rather than seeing children as being 'at risk', there is a new focus on children's vulnerability and protective factors. This means that there is an emphasis on asking two related questions:

- Which children have on going vulnerabilities and what are they?
- What can help to decrease these vulnerabilities or protect against them?

This helps to make sense of the observation that certain risk factors have worse effects on one child than another because of the child's resilience or that of his community.

### Risk factors and protective factors

In Lesson One, we saw that there are many factors that put children at risk of developing problems. Some of the risk factors were individual characteristics, while others were a result of the family or educational situation. At the same time, it is important to recognize that children are protected by various factors that make them less vulnerable to adverse effects of difficult circumstances. Some examples are given in the table:

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<sup>6</sup> Particularly pioneering work by Rutter, Grotberg, Masten and others.

	<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>Protective factors</b>
<b>Childhood factors</b>	birth injury/disability/low birth weight insecure attachment poor social skills	social skills attachment to family school achievement
<b>Family factors</b>	poor parental supervision and discipline parental substance abuse family conflict and domestic violence social isolation/lack of support networks	supportive caring parents parental employment access to support networks
<b>School factors</b>	school failure negative peer group influences bullying poor attachment to school	positive school climate sense of belonging/bonding opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement
<b>Community factors</b>	social or cultural discrimination lack of support services neighbourhood violence and crime	community networking participation in community groups access to support services

**Benefits**

This shift in emphasis from thinking about risk to focusing on vulnerability and resilience has many benefits. It fits better with the Bible’s view of maturity and resilience, as well as risk (sin and the consequences), as ongoing processes rather than one-off events.

It also means moving away from a focus on assessing risks and managing crises, whether that is as a result of disasters, war or ongoing deprivation. A problem of the ‘at risk’ view of children is that it tends to encourage a mentality where the child is seen as a problem to solve or a victim to rescue. This view is inherently non-biblical. Of course, Jesus did encourage disciples to take care of the widows, orphans and the poor, but in his ministry he modelled a positive ethos of empowerment, raising people up and challenging and encouraging them to grow and mature both spiritually and in their practical examples to one another.

## **Case study**

Challenges such as poverty, one-parent homes, illness, or other catastrophes can put a child at risk for school failure and psychological problems.

Rosa is 13 years old and has failed two grades. Her parents are not married, and her father disappeared and does not support the family. Rosa lives with her mother and two younger siblings in a small apartment in the city. She is the caregiver of her younger siblings at night and in the morning. Rosa's mother works nights at a restaurant and often comes home very late. The mother makes enough money to provide shelter for the family, but she does not always have enough food for each child. Often times, Rosa is not able to concentrate at school, because she has not eaten or had enough sleep. Her teachers report that she is often sick and does not complete her school work, but they are not able to give her much attention, as the school is crowded with students with similar needs. In fact, they realize that the inadequate curriculum that they are using with the students is not helping them to learn. Additionally, Rosa often falls asleep in class and does not follow simple directions. She also hoards food from lunch (either to have later or to provide to her siblings).

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

One problem with thinking about children being ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ at a particular point in time is that the \_\_\_\_\_ of risk depends on a wide variety of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ factors. In particular, the \_\_\_\_\_ on a child’s health and development and on his community will depend on \_\_\_\_\_ to those risks on the one hand, and also on factors that can \_\_\_\_\_ them from the risks. Over the past seventy years, various studies have helped practitioners \_\_\_\_\_. Rather than seeing children as being ‘at risk’, there is a new focus on children’s vulnerability and \_\_\_\_\_. This perspective fits better with a \_\_\_\_\_ of people than one that mainly focuses on assessing risks and managing crises.

## Discussion questions

1. Looking at the case example of Rosa,
  - What are some examples of childhood factors that put Rosa at risk?
  - What are some family risk factors?
  - What are some school risk factors?
2. What sort of community factors could be additional risk factors?
3. With all these risks in their lives, how can we protect children like Rosa from failing in school or developing behavioural problems (include what her mother, school, and community might do to help)?
4. Thinking about the children that you work with, what sorts of protective factors will help to reduce their vulnerability to the risks you identified in lesson 1?
5. From your perspective, how is it helpful to think about children’s vulnerabilities rather than children being ‘at risk’? How will your attitude and approach change?

## Lesson 3: What is trauma and what effect does it have on children?

### Summary

- What is trauma?
- How does trauma affect children?
- What is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?
- What makes children more likely to suffer PTSD and what protects them?

*“Trauma is defined as an unexpected out-of-the-ordinary experience which causes distress and a sense of being out of control.”<sup>7</sup>*

It is a sad fact that many children are exposed to accidents, abuse, violence, disaster and danger, and that they often experience significant loss and trauma as a result. For some children, trauma may involve a single, frightening incident, such as being in an accident. For others, stress is ongoing, severe and often debilitating due to neglect, abuse, poverty and war.

### Recognising trauma in children

*“The more we can understand these children and the impact of traumatic experiences, the more compassionate and wise we can be in our interactions and in our problem solving.”<sup>8</sup>*

After a traumatic event, a child will begin to process and think about what happened, attempting to make sense out of what has just happened. Because the traumatic event is so far out of the normal range of experience, there will be a variety of mental attempts to process and make sense of this event. The following reactions are predictable and part of normal coping mechanisms in the first 4-6 weeks after a trauma:<sup>9</sup>

- **Re-experiencing the event**

The event will play itself out in the mind of the child again and again. A host of intrusive images related to the trauma may swamp the child's thinking. These are called 'flashbacks'. This may include telling the story over and over again to friends. The child may act this event out in their play and drawings or have intrusive dreams or nightmares.

- **Physiological over-sensitivity or over-arousal**

Even when not doing anything in the weeks following a traumatic event, children and adolescents often exhibit signs of hyper arousal (physiological and psychological tension) - including a fast heart rate and feeling tense or stressed. They may continue with their normal behaviours in most situations, but children exposed to trauma are internally agitated and therefore easily become upset or angry.

- **Attempts to avoid reminders of the original event**

Persisting physiological and emotional distress is physically exhausting and emotionally painful. Because of the pain, energy and discomfort associated with the recurring intrusive thoughts and the physiological and emotional 'memories' associated with these thoughts, a variety of protective avoidance mechanisms are used to escape reminders of the original trauma. These include active avoidance of any reminders of the trauma and the mental mechanisms of numbing and dissociation. They may avoid going near the site of the trauma or develop a phobia related to the incident. They may avoid the trauma by withdrawing into themselves, avoiding friends and family, and refusing to go out to play or to school.

<sup>7</sup> Greener (2003), 127

<sup>8</sup> Perry (1999)

<sup>9</sup> Perry (1999)

### Post-traumatic stress disorder

When these responses that are initially helpful and normal carry on in abnormal ways, this results in trauma-related disorders such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is when the acute post-traumatic stress response carries on beyond 3 months. Children can also develop delayed PTSD where initially they appear OK but after 6 months they develop PTSD symptoms. Flashbacks often continue for many months even if the child is otherwise functioning ok. Children with long-term PTSD, especially adolescents, may also become depressed.

The more prolonged the trauma and the more pronounced the symptoms during the period immediately after the trauma, the more likely there will be long term and potentially permanent changes in the emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physiological functioning of the child.

Children who survive a traumatic event and have persistence of this low level fear state, may show the following characteristics:

- Feeling out of control
- Impulsive behaviour
- Hyper vigilance (being overly sensitive to stimulation and scanning the environment for threats, including a raised heart rate) and hyperactivity (excessive restlessness and movement)
- Developing obsessive rituals
- Withdrawal and depression
- The child may engage in soothing behaviours such as rocking, head banging or self-mutilation, which can produce a pain-killing reaction in the brain
- Sleep difficulties (including being unable to sleep, restless sleep and nightmares)
- Anxiety
- Loss of developmental tasks that had been acquired (for example, they might start bed-wetting again) or a slow rate of acquiring new developmental tasks
- Children may act younger than they are
- Struggling to see the point in doing things and losing a sense of having a future which they can work towards, which affects their motivation to do school work, etc.

Whether or not someone develops post-traumatic disorder following a traumatic event is related to a variety of factors:

- **Risk factors:** the more life-threatening the event, and the more the event disrupts normal family or social experience, the more likely someone is to develop PTSD.

Unfortunately, a great majority of children who survive traumatic experiences also have a major disruption in their way of life, their sense of community, their family structure, and will be exposed to a variety of ongoing provocative reminders of the original event (e.g., ongoing legal actions, high press visibility). The frequency with which children develop post-traumatic stress disorders following comparable traumatic events is relatively high (45-60%).

- **Protective factors:** having an intact, supportive and nurturing family and community support will provide a secure environment for a child struggling to cope with trauma.

*“Even in the midst of turmoil, extended family and community can provide stability, continuity and tradition. When the child remains in the family and community context, coping strategies and socialization techniques that are used within the child’s culture can be maintained. Trauma is lessened when the immediate family and community are still together, maintaining familiar structures and practices.”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Greener (2003), 134

## **Case Study**

Munny is five years old and lives with his grandmother. Last year, Munny's parents were killed by rebel soldiers in a raid on his village.

Since his parents' killings in his previous village, Munny has been inconsolable and clings excessively to his grandmother and other adults. Though he lives in a much safer community now, Munny does not want to be left alone, particularly when it is dark. He has a difficult time going to sleep when there are any noises outside, and he wakes up to nightmares throughout the night. He whimpers and trembles all night long and has started wetting the bed again, like he did when he was much younger.

Before the attack, Munny was a talkative and inquisitive child, who loved exploring and mastering new skills. Now he is often sullen and quiet. He appears dazed, confused and does not want to eat. When he is asked questions, particularly related to the loss of his parents, he has trouble speaking. Munny keeps drawing pictures of the same images over and over again. He does not want to leave the house for any reason, and if his grandmother has to go out, she has to find other adults to stay with him.



## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Trauma is an \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ experience which causes \_\_\_\_\_ and a sense of being \_\_\_\_\_. Trauma may involve a \_\_\_\_\_ or it may be \_\_\_\_\_, severe and debilitating stress due to neglect, poverty, abuse or war. There are various ways in which children \_\_\_\_\_ traumatic events. In the first days and weeks, normal coping mechanisms include: \_\_\_\_\_ the event, physiological \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and attempts to \_\_\_\_\_ reminders of the original event. If these responses carry on in abnormal ways, for example for more than \_\_\_\_\_ after the event, this is called \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_. The more \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ the event, and the more the event disrupts \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ experience, the more likely someone is to develop PTSD. Having an intact, supportive and nurturing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will provide a secure environment for a child struggling to cope with trauma.

## Discussion questions

1. Looking at the case example,
  - What are Munny's risk factors?
  - What are Munny's protective factors?
  - What signs of PTSD are evident with Munny? (Include any re-experiencing, arousal, and avoidant behaviour)
2. Think of your context. What situations cause trauma for children?
3. How would you tell the difference between normal coping mechanisms in a traumatized child and signs that a child is suffering an abnormal reaction to trauma?
4. If you were working with a child soon after a traumatic event, what steps could you take to minimize the chance that he would go on to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder?
5. Who would you go to for advice if you were concerned about a child's reaction to trauma?

## Lesson 4: What makes some children resilient?

### Summary

- What is resilience?
- What helps children become resilient?
- Where does resilience come from?

### What is resilience?

Some children experience adversity yet do well and develop into well-functioning people. Other children faced with the same situation do not fare as well. The first group of children can be described as being resilient. Resilience can be defined as the capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. It is an active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge.

*“Resilient children and youth manage to succeed in all the ways we expect for children of their age, even though they have faced significant obstacles to success.”<sup>11</sup>*

### What helps children become resilient?

Historically, at least in the West, there was a sense that resilience is mainly a personal characteristic of some individuals. However, as we will see, many of the most important factors that help children cope with adversity are to do with the quality of their relationships – with family and community.

Resilience is associated with the presence of various things in children’s lives that enable them to cope with their experiences in a helpful way. These are called protective factors or resilience factors. As you look at these factors, notice how many of them are about the child and her personality and how many are about relationships and the context of the child’s community. Ask yourself how many of these factors can be influenced and changed by appropriate activities and support systems.

Some important resilience factors include:<sup>12</sup>

Strong and supportive relationships with adults, especially parents	Participation in activities, sports and outside interests	Personal attributes, such as good health, even temperament, positive self-esteem, intelligence or good social skills
Access to good educational facilities	Being a member of a non-deviant peer group	Material resources, such as adequate family income
A sense of meeting challenges and learning to do new things	Small family size	Religious affiliation

<sup>11</sup> Masten

<sup>12</sup> Smith et al (2003), 569

**Where does resilience come from?**

There is now a great deal of research that helps us to understand what builds children’s resilience. It is important to use this understanding to design programmes and approaches that strengthen the most important factors.

The family (or family substitute) is one of the most significant factors for children’s resilience. Research has established that resilience in children is greater when they have access to at least one caring parent, caregiver or other supportive adult who loves and accepts them unconditionally.

Here are some of the key characteristics of family life that help to build resilience in children:

Family belief systems	Family organizational patterns	Family communication processes
Making meaning out of adversity	Flexibility and stability	Clarity
Positive outlook	Connectedness	Open emotional expression (encouraging emotional sharing, tolerating negative emotions)
Transcendence and spirituality	Social and economic resources	Collaborative problem solving

For individuals and families alike, resilience is not a set of fixed traits. It is something dynamic that unfolds within the context of development and many other factors from the environment.

Two important challenges that families have to face and that can help to build resilience are:

- Sharing the experience of death, dying and loss
- Family reorganization and reinvestment in other relationships and life pursuits

**Some points to remember:**

- Resilience is not a personality attribute of an individual that some have and some do not
- Resilience is a dynamic process involving both internal cognitive and personality factors and external protective factors, such as caring adults.
- Rather than labelling any child as ‘resilient’ or ‘not resilient’, it is better to think in terms of children who are behaving in resilient ways and those who are not.
- Just because a child is showing resiliency today does not mean that she will continue to show it tomorrow or next year. The skills that help a child to be resilient at the age of nine may not be adequate for the demands of adolescence.

Understanding that resilience is not some extraordinary quality is good news. At the same time it is important that we do not just assume that children are inherently resistant and therefore do not need help. Part of the role of the church and of Christians working with children and communities in difficult circumstances is to enable them to use their potential to the full and to get help through strengthening those protective factors in individuals, families, communities and society at large.

## **Case study**

Sarah was the middle of five children whose parents lived on the edge of a big city. Their main family lived in a village 10 miles away, but the community where she lived now was close-knit and the children regularly played outside together after school whilst it was still light. After dark her parents made them come in because of the drunks in the town. Sarah was a planned child and, although money was tight and food was scarce so that rows over finances were frequent in the family home, she had a sense of the family being safe and united.

If she was worried she would go down the end of the lane to the stream and watch the clouds and talk to God about her worries. She enjoyed her school work and had a good friend at school who she could confide in. She did not like being one of the “village kids” and would sometimes imagine that her family came from one of the wealthier families up the road. When she grew up her dream was to be a teacher like her teacher at school.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Resilience is the capacity to rebound from adversity \_\_\_\_\_ and more \_\_\_\_\_. Resilience is associated with the presence of various things in children's lives that enable them to cope with their experiences in a helpful way. These are called \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_. Some resilience factors are about the child and her \_\_\_\_\_, while others are about \_\_\_\_\_ and the context of the child's \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the most significant factors for children's resilience. For individuals and families alike, resilience is not a set of \_\_\_\_\_. It is something \_\_\_\_\_ that unfolds within the context of development and many other factors from the environment. Resilience is not an \_\_\_\_\_ quality, however, it is important that we do not just assume that children are inherently resistant and therefore do not need \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions:

1. What are the risk (vulnerability) factors and resilience (protective) factors for:
  - Sarah
  - Her family
  - Her community
2. What may be a short term protective factor for Sarah now which may not be helpful for her in the future?
3. If you were considering a way of increasing Sarah and her family's resilience, what factors would you bear in mind?
4. What resilience factors do the children that you work with have?
5. How does your church or organization strengthen resilience factors in children, families and communities through your work? How could you increase this part of your work?

## Lesson 5: How can we strengthen children’s resilience?

### Summary

- What is the source of children’s resilience (Grotberg: I have, I am, I can)?
- Strengthening resilience: relationships and context
- Strategies for intervention

### What are sources of resilience?

As the result of an International Research Project which involved 30 countries across the world, Edith Grotberg developed a helpful tool for people who work with children and families to help them apply information about resilience to particular situations and programs.<sup>13</sup> Her tool is simple to understand and communicate and adaptable to use.

Grotberg identifies three sources of resilience, which she labels I HAVE (social and interpersonal supports), I AM (inner strengths) and I CAN (interpersonal and problem solving skills). In more detail, these are:

I HAVE...	I AM...	I CAN...
People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what	A person people can like and love	Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me
People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble	Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern	Find ways to solve problems that I face
People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things	Respectful of myself and others	Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous
People who want me to learn to do things on my own	Willing to be responsible for what I do	Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action
People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn	Sure things will be all right	Find someone to help me when I need

According to Grotberg, for a child to be resilient, she needs to have more than one of these strengths. For example, if a child has plenty of self-esteem (I AM), but lacks anyone to whom she can turn for support (I HAVE), and does not have the capacity solve problems (I CAN), she will not be resilient. This finding is in line with other research showing that resiliency is the product of protective factors that work together.

<sup>13</sup> Grotberg (2005)

## How can we strengthen children's resilience?

- Relationships with adults

Resilience does not develop in a vacuum. Resilience in children depends on adults to promote it. As we saw in the last lesson, relationships between children and caring, supportive and committed adults are a strong protective factor. In fact, one positive relationship can make all the difference for a child in terms of whether or not they thrive in adversity. This realization has highlighted the value of mentoring relationships for vulnerable children.

- Context

If we want to understand and foster resilience and protective mechanisms, we must not ignore the interplay between things that happen within families and the political, economic, social and racial climates in which they perish or thrive. We must not only try to bolster resilience in children and their families, but we must also strive to change the “odds” against them.

## How should we apply this in our work?

Resilience research and the theories that have arisen from it have led to three basic strategies for interventions, all aiming to positively promote health and competence not just address problems.

### **Risk-focused strategies** aim to reduce the exposure of children to **hazardous experiences**

Examples include prenatal care for mothers to prevent premature births; school reforms to reduce the stressfulness of school transitions for young adolescents; or community efforts to prevent homelessness and domestic violence.

**Asset-focused strategies** aim to increase the amount of access to, or quality of **resources** children need for the development of competence

Examples of resources with *direct* effects on children include tutoring a child or providing activities outside of school like sports or creative activities.<sup>14</sup>

Examples of resources which work *indirectly* include literacy and job programmes for parents; programmes to foster parenting skills; and programmes to provide teachers with more training or resources so they can be more effective in the classroom.

**Process-focused strategies** try to mobilize the fundamental **protective systems** for development.

Examples include fostering attachment relationships; helping young people develop a sense of achievement and purpose (mastery) and motivation; or building the skills young people need to regulate their emotions. Programmes to ensure that every child has effective and caring adults involved in their lives, including mentoring programs, are examples of this strategy. Diverse efforts to provide children with opportunities to develop talents and experience success, ranging from music to athletic opportunities, represent examples of mobilizing the mastery system, which builds self-efficacy and motivation to succeed in life.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Search Institute, headquartered in Minneapolis, has done extensive national research and programme development directed at this strategy. See <http://www.search-institute.org/>. Their work will be explained in part 3 of this workbook

<sup>15</sup> See Masten

## Case study

The children of poor Vietnamese parents in the U.S.A. and Germany<sup>16</sup>

Nathan Caplan studied the children of poor Vietnamese parents in the United States and Germany.

Most of the parents of children studied in the USA were refugees. In many cases they did not own anything except the clothes they were wearing when they arrived. Most did not speak English. Half of the parents had less than five years of formal schooling. These refugees lived in the worst neighbourhoods of big cities. Yet their children turned out to be academically more successful than many American middle class children.

Similarly, Germany is a multi-ethnic society. 8% of the whole population and 25% of 15-year olds are born outside Germany themselves or have at least one parent born abroad. In Germany, Vietnamese families started arriving as foreign workers during the 1980s and they are still coming in great numbers to search for a better life. The Vietnamese are the biggest Asian group in Germany and also one of the poorest ethnic groups. As a rule, children of immigrants are not as successful academically as children of native Germans. However it is not true for children of Asian parentage.

Why?

The study found out that the Vietnamese stress the value of education. Parents wanted their children to enjoy a better education than they did themselves. The Vietnamese children spend an average of 3 hours and 10 minutes per day doing their homework and reading for school, while American middle class students just spend an average of 1 hour and 30 minutes per day with these activities.

Equally in Germany research has shown that Vietnamese parents value education and that Vietnamese students spend a lot more time learning than their German counterparts.

In addition, the older siblings were supposed to help their younger siblings. That way the younger ones did not only learn facts but also learned attitudes towards school and learned additional subjects from their older siblings. The more siblings a child of Vietnamese parentage has, the more likely is he or she to achieve in school.

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<sup>16</sup> Caplan et al (1989)



## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Results from an international research project found three main sources of resilience: social and interpersonal skills (I \_\_\_\_), inner strengths (I \_\_) and interpersonal and problem-solving skills (I \_\_\_\_). For a child to be resilient, she needs to have \_\_\_\_ of these strengths. Two main areas to focus on are \_\_\_\_\_ and the interplay between things that happen within families and the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ climates in which they perish or thrive. One \_\_\_\_\_ can make all the difference for a child in terms of whether or not they \_\_\_\_\_ in adversity.

Three basic strategies for interventions, all aiming to positively promote \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ not just address problems are suggested by resiliency research: \_\_\_\_\_-focused strategies, to reduce the exposure of children to \_\_\_\_\_ experiences; \_\_\_\_\_-focused strategies, to \_\_\_\_\_ the amount of access to, or quality of resources children need for the development of competence; and \_\_\_\_\_-focused strategies that try to mobilize fundamental \_\_\_\_\_ for development.

## Discussion questions:

1. Thinking about the case example, what other resilience factors may be operating in this case for the children, the family and the community?
2. Group these factors under Grotberg's headings ('I am', 'I can', 'I have').
3. Are there any additional factors that you could introduce to enhance the resilience of this child and his community?
4. What sorts of interventions would strengthen resilience factors for this community?
5. Think about what would make these interventions difficult to implement and try to think of alternatives to enhance the children's resilience that come from within the children and their community, rather than requiring additional resources.
6. Use Grotberg's model to assess your own resilience and that of your family/community/team. What would help it to grow?

## **Part 2: How can we understand children's needs?**

In Part 2 and Part 3, we will explore what it means for children to thrive and what they need in order to thrive.

My favourite drink is a cup of hot chocolate. Sometimes I make a really good cup, or someone might make me a very good cup – creamy, sugary and sweet. Other times it might be weak, watery and more like dishwater. I know exactly what is needed for a good cup! Helping children thrive is a bit like deciding whether I'm drinking a good or a bad cup of hot chocolate. We need to decide what criteria we should use to determine what it means to thrive. I have a set of criteria for what makes an excellent cup of hot chocolate. I also have a set of criteria which I consider essential in helping children thrive. Do you?

The aim of part two and part three is to help you develop a set of essential criteria for helping children to thrive and to be able to adapt your practice in the light of these criteria.

First we will look at what children's fundamental needs are (lesson 6 and 7). We will look at two different models and at what the Bible shows us. We will then think about how we can find out about the needs of children we are working with (lesson 8). Finally, we will explore the consequences of not meeting children's needs, both for individual children and for the wider community.



## Lesson 6: What do children need?

### Summary

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- White's model of children's primary needs
- Children need a restored relationship with God

Children need many things in order to fulfil their potential and each child will have individual needs different from other children. Nevertheless, there are some common needs that all children have. It can be helpful to have simple models in mind that give a big picture of the needs of children to orient our work. In this lesson we will consider 3 perspectives on the question of what children need.

### 1. One model for understanding what people (including children) need is called **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**.<sup>17</sup>



Maslow suggests that, if people's basic needs are not met (at the bottom of the triangle), then they can't thrive. For example, a child with an empty stomach will not be able to learn well at school or church. Maslow goes on to suggest that there is a ladder to move up in this regard, from the basics (physiological needs like food) to safety needs, then to social needs (friendship). Finally, Maslow suggests that a person needs love, affection and self-respect (esteem needs) before he can become fully 'self-actualised'. The highest point of the

triangle is seen as the place where a person can fulfil their full potential.

This framework is helpful for getting an overview of many different kinds of needs and for diagnosing urgent needs that should be addressed as a priority. For example, it can be harder for a child who is hungry, neglected and unloved to learn in school or truly worship God. However, the tool does not recognize spiritual needs. In addition, it does not reflect the fact that many people are able to grow into mature Christians and human beings in situations where some basic needs are not met.

### 2. Another framework developed by Keith White identifies **5 needs of children**.

*"The overriding need of every child is to be loved by, and to love, one or more significant adults"*<sup>18</sup>

White, part of the Child Theology Movement, has established a framework that considers children's needs from an integrated biblical and psychological perspective.<sup>19</sup> It adds more depth to Maslow's model when the two are used together.

The need to love and to be loved is the overarching principle for White's model of children's needs. The 5 needs he identifies are elements of the overarching relational need of love. According to this model, all children need: Security, Significance, Boundaries, Community and Creativity.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.abrahammaslow.com/m\\_motivation/Hierarchy\\_of\\_Needs.asp](http://www.abrahammaslow.com/m_motivation/Hierarchy_of_Needs.asp) (viewed 29/01/10)

<sup>18</sup> White (2003), 123

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.childtheology.org/new/index.php?plD=1>

These are universal needs, but the ways in which they are expressed and addressed will vary from culture to culture.

- **Security**

Security is the primary need. Without security no safe base for exploration, relationships, play and development. Without security, dysfunctional defence mechanisms will develop that prevent the child from experiencing love.

- **Significance**

Children are people, not statistics or a group. Vital to their development and wellbeing is the assurance they are infinitely precious as people – not because of something they have done or achieved, but because they are. Each child needs to know that at least one adult is committed to him unconditionally, for life.

- **Boundaries**

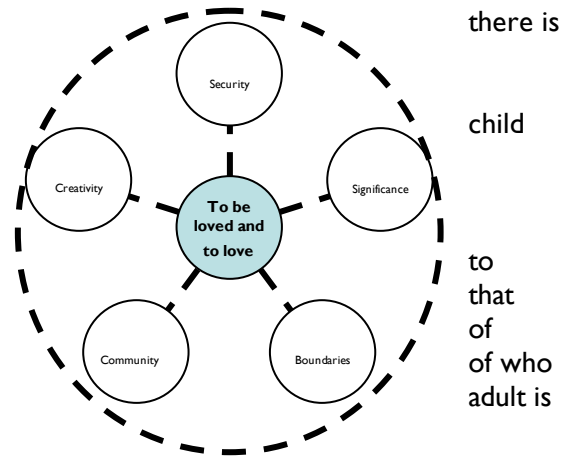
Every child and human being needs boundaries if she is to feel safe and able to relate to others and develop appropriately. The term ‘boundaries’ encompasses rules, discipline and values.

- **Community**

The Bible recognizes that we are made for community and for relationships. Families are the main starting point, but the norm is to find and make bonds beyond the family, for example peer groups, neighbourhood contacts, schools and faith communities.

- **Creativity**

Children are essentially creative because they are made in God's image. If they are to fulfil their potential they must be given opportunities and encouragement to create, to make, to shape, to dance.



### 3. A restored relationship with God

As Workbook 4 will explore, when sin entered the world in the Fall, God's perfect creation was broken and cursed. His relationship with humans breaks. Humans' relationships with each other break. Humans' relationship to the rest of creation breaks. Societies and structures break. The world is no longer as it should be. We feel this brokenness in the world around us and in our ministry with children. We see children who do not have a relationship with their Maker. We see families torn apart, societies broken down, and political, cultural, and economic structures that oppress children instead of supporting them.

The greatest need for all children – indeed for all humanity – is restoration. Jesus described a new way of living, the Kingdom of God, in which the world's brokenness is restored. Humans may again have an intimate, direct relationship with God through Jesus. They can live in harmony with each other and all of creation.

## Case Study

Richard and Yeakah Cole reach out to ex-combatants who fought in Sierra Leone's civil war, which lasted a decade.<sup>20</sup>

Richard Cole is no stranger to terror. He has been kidnapped and beaten, tortured and marked for assassination by rebel troops in Sierra Leone. But instead of hiding away, Cole developed a ministry to reach out to those who abused him. With their work now called the Nehemiah Project, Cole and his wife, Yeakah, care for orphaned children who had been recruited as soldiers by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, in their war with the Sierra Leone government. The decade-long civil war to gain control of the nation's rich diamond mines displaced more than 2 million people—well over a third of the population—leaving thousands more dead or dismembered, as rebel troops were known to hack off limbs with their machetes.

Thousands of children were taught to maim and murder. One 12-year-old boy known as Civilian was abducted at age 4, his parents murdered by the rebels. RUF soldiers rubbed crack cocaine into an incision on the boy's temple, and he quickly became addicted. Trained to kill, the child murdered his own grandparents and callously chopped off limbs. When asked how many people he had killed, he replied: "I don't know the number of people I've killed, but I remember killing many times, and cutting off hands many times. I once had 51 hands I carried in my sack."

Today Civilian is one of the Nehemiah Project's success stories. He is described as a gentle young man who learned carpentry and attended school through the ministry. "If one man can bring great evil, then one man can bring greater good," said Cole, a Sierra Leone native who sold drugs during his youth before accepting Christ and becoming a missionary in Liberia, then in his hometown of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

At the height of the conflict, the Coles began rescuing children from rebel hands. They started their mission informally in 1991 when they took in two boys. The number soon grew to 45 ex-soldiers living in their two-room home. In 1996, the Sierra Leone government asked the Coles to establish a rehabilitation program, which became the Nehemiah Project. The outreach is now home to 140 ex-soldiers, and includes a community school; business and computer schools; tailoring, carpentry and soap-making shops; and the beginnings of a health clinic.

In 2000, the ministry was given seven acres of land, which serve as an agricultural training institute. The coffee, peppers, cassava and rice grown there are used as food, and the remainder is sold to raise funds for the ministry. The schools educate almost 1,000 children from the community and rehabilitation home.

Richard Cole said many of the youth who came to Nehemiah had been 'dehumanized' by the RUF. "As we loved them, however, we helped them to realize that they were human, and their conscience began to awaken," he explained, noting that many wept bitterly when they remembered what they had done.

One of the boys in the Coles' care had murdered Richard's grandfather years before. The couple ministered to him as they did all the others. "We gave them truth," Richard Cole said. "You don't help people with emotion or sentiment, you help them with truth."

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/component/content/article/268-people-and-events/8186-african-couple-leads-ministry-for-sierra-leones-child-soldiers?format=pdf>

**Exercises:**

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Children need many things in order to fulfil their potential and each child will have \_\_\_\_\_ needs different from other children. Nevertheless, there are some \_\_\_\_\_ needs that all children have. \_\_\_\_\_ hierarchy of needs suggests that if people's \_\_\_\_\_ needs are not met, then they can't thrive. The next layers of needs are \_\_\_\_\_ needs, then social needs, then \_\_\_\_\_ needs. The highest point of the triangle is \_\_\_\_\_. Maslow's model does not include \_\_\_\_\_ needs. White believes that the most important need of every child is to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ one or more significant adults. The other \_\_\_\_\_ needs he identifies are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. All human beings also need a \_\_\_\_\_ with God.

Discussion questions

1. How could Maslow's theory be helpful for helping children in crisis?
2. What limitations can you see with Maslow's theory?
3. Does your experience with children resonate with Maslow and White's models? In what ways? In what ways do you disagree with these models?
4. What evidence do you see for White's theory that children's overarching need is to be loved and to love in the case example from Sierra Leone? What about from your own experience?
5. How do you provide for the 5 needs of children that White identifies in your family, church and organization setting? Are there areas that could be improved? What could you do about them?
6. In what ways does your ministry help to meet children's need for a restored relationship with God?

## Lesson 7: What does the Bible tell us about children's needs?

### Summary

- Biblical themes about children's needs
- Biblical maturity

It is vitally important to root what we do with children in theology: to be working from biblical principles. Therefore we need to learn to read our Bible accurately and to be aware of local practices and cultural biases and prejudices which may have developed from distortions of God's Word, particularly in the area of how God sees children and how children develop, what they need and how they should be treated.<sup>21</sup>

In examining Scripture and its place in identifying the needs of children, we find a number of key themes that are repeated again and again: children need instruction in God's ways, encouragement and appropriate discipline.

**The Laws** – A useful starting point for understanding children's needs is the 'Shema' in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Here we see the exhortation of God to the people of Israel when God says 'Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one.' He then instructs the people to worship Him with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and instructs all the people (not just the parents) to learn this simple scripture – when their children are sleeping, walking, eating, etc. God's way of working, that he passes down to the people is that Biblical values are better caught than simply taught; in other words they are learned from experience and from seeing them in action in other people.

**Wisdom and Writings** – Of all the writings and wisdom, the most famous in regard to working with children come from the book of Proverbs. Here God instructs us to train a child up in the way that they would go so that later on in life they would not depart from it. Alongside this we are encouraged to 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Although it is often misinterpreted, this advice is about loving guidance and discipline, not physical punishment which can be harmful for children.<sup>22</sup> These themes lead us to an understanding that we all have responsibility to see young people instructed, encouraged and appropriately disciplined that they may live long in the land.

**Prophets** – Malachi brings a telling end to the Old Testament in Malachi 4:6. This crucial verse encourages us to assist parents to turn their hearts to their children and children to their parents. Failure to do this? God indicates we will be left with a curse on the land. This challenging scripture is a reminder that Christians working with children and families have a profound responsibility.

**Jesus' words on children** – it is so encouraging that Jesus is so counter-cultural in his words to children! His most well-known statement in Matthew 18:1-2 that encourages the disciples to see the child in their midst and realise that this equals greatness is amazingly profound. Jesus instructing the disciples that they must not hinder children coming to him in Matthew 19:13-15 again shows us the amazing words of Jesus.

**Epistles** – for example in Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul writes that parents should not exasperate their children but should bring them up in the fear of the Lord. This passage leads us to an understanding that parents have responsibility to see young people instructed, encouraged and appropriately disciplined that they may live long in the land.

<sup>21</sup> Look also at Workbook 1, lesson 1, Workbook 2, lesson 1. Workbook 4 will explore more fully a biblical framework for understanding what God's heart for children is

<sup>22</sup> See Workbook 4, lesson 14 and Workbook 6 for more on this passage and this important topic



To sum up these themes, looking at the Bible to learn about the needs of children show us how vital it is to understand these needs fully in order to develop children and help them grow up healthily and to mature – particularly in the love and respect for God and for others.

### **Biblical maturity**

Another important theme is about the goal of working with children and meeting their needs. At a spiritual level, the goal of Christians is maturity – to become mature and complete, not lacking in anything (*Ephesians 3: 12b-16*). In other words, to fulfil all that God wants us to be, to become like Christ in our behaviour, our thoughts, attitudes and feelings towards God, others and ourselves. Our goal is to have our hearts and minds renewed, which should show itself in the outworking of our lives so that we are resilient, compassionate, showing love as described in 1 Corinthians 13 towards God, one another and ourselves. Obviously, this kind of maturity is a life-long process – it does not stop when we reach adulthood!

A significant part of work with children will include discipling them towards maturity. The following 10 characteristics can be identified as the characteristics of biblical maturity<sup>23</sup>:

- Saved and in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ
- Enjoying an intimate relationship with God, knowing that they are chosen by God and loved by him
- Enriched by the word of God and prayer
- Living in the strength and purpose of the great command (Matthew 22:34-40) and the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20) with a holy and godly lifestyle
- Being fruitful – sharing the kingdom with those outside and seeking justice, truth and mercy
- Using your gifts for all – enjoying Christian community and engaging with communities outside the Church
- Being expectant – God can do amazing things and has a place prepared for his people in Heaven
- Being able to handle suffering constructively, in dependence on God
- Living in godly contentment – able to feed on God’s word and love and being content in this
- Looking forward to the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21) – Jesus’ return when all will be put right

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<sup>23</sup> Other sources suggest similar criteria for Biblical Maturity – for example Bright, B. 1994. *Handbook for Christian Maturity*. (Orlando FL: New Life); Newton, G. 2004. *Growing Towards Spiritual Maturity*. (Wheaton IL: Crossway); Bridges, G. 2004. *Growing Your Faith*. (Colorado Springs Co: NavPress); Stott, J. 2010. *The Radical Disciple*. (Nottingham: IVP)

## **Case Study**

Mimi is 10 years old. She lives with her mother and two younger brothers. Her father is in prison for attacking her mother and Mimi. She is able to talk about this to her mother and her male youth worker, who helps her to realize that not all men are bad.

Mimi feels her daddy needs to be in prison because he knew what he did was wrong but she doesn't believe is really sorry, because he used to say sorry before and then be horrible to them again. She feels that if you are really sorry then you do not do the same thing again or you try not to. She knows God will forgive her daddy if he is really sorry but she doesn't want to see him!

Mimi is able to reflect on what has happened and to talk to God about it. She feels that there should be a group at church or at her school to help children whose parents do bad things. She would like to help with setting one up.

Mimi gets flashbacks and anxious feelings when she thinks about what happened but she is happy and hopeful about the future.

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

It is important to root what we do with children in \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore we need to learn to read our Bible accurately and to be aware of \_\_\_\_\_ and cultural \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ which may have developed from \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word. Key biblical themes about the needs of children are repeated often throughout Scripture: children need \_\_\_\_\_ in God's ways, \_\_\_\_\_ and appropriate \_\_\_\_\_. We should be deliberate about the ways we develop children and help them grow up healthily and \_\_\_\_\_ – particularly in the love and respect for \_\_\_\_\_ and for \_\_\_\_\_. The true aim of development is maturity: for a Christian this means to become mature and \_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_ in anything. This means becoming like \_\_\_\_\_ in our \_\_\_\_\_, our \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ towards God, others and ourselves. This kind of maturity is a life-long process.

## Discussion questions

1. What needs do you see in Mimi's life in the case example?
2. What evidence is there of her level of maturity and of resilience?
3. What factors are protective in her situation?
4. How do the biblical themes of children's need for instruction in God's ways, encouragement and appropriate discipline relate to the other needs we saw in the last lesson?
5. In what ways do you instruct children in God's ways, encourage them and give them appropriate discipline in your home / church / organization? How does this relate to the ways in which you meet their other needs?
6. Are the children you work with given opportunities to 'catch' Christian values? How do you and other staff model what it means to be a Christian to the children you live and work with?
7. Do you see evidence of increasing maturity in the children you work with? How do you keep track of this kind of growth and development?

### **Additional exercise**

Think of a child that you are working with and assess them in terms of

- Their level of resilience
- Their maturity in Christ
- Their developmental maturity

Do the same for yourself – be honest and ask your colleagues and friends to help you to appraise yourself well.

### **Reflection questions:**

1. What did you notice as you did these assessments – what were their common themes?
2. What measures did you use to decide if a child or yourself were spiritually mature?
3. In the case of the child and community that you are considering for this exercise, how do you think that adversities have affected their characters? What has it been about these experiences/their response to them/the help that they have received that has made these experiences ones that lead to growth resilience and maturity or experiences that have damaged and traumatized them? (Children are not necessarily more resilient. Adversities can harm as well as promote character development and resilience).
4. How can enhancing a person's spiritual maturity help them to be more resilient? (Think about how a person is more resilient if they have a relationship with God and a secure, safe adult attachment figure in their life.)
5. Devise an intervention to enhance the a) Maturity and b) Resilience of the child that you have discussed in this exercise
6. Identify three practical things that you can do to enhance you own: a) Maturity and b) Resilience
7. Develop an Action Plan to carry them out in practice. How are you going to ensure that they happen? (From whom do you receive mentoring, encouragement, wise counsel and accountability?).



## Lesson 8: How can we find out about the needs of children?

### Summary

- Children's involvement in identifying their own needs
- Tool for exploring needs and planning interventions
- Holistic needs of children

As we learnt in Workbook 2, listening to children and helping them to influence decisions that affect their life must be a foundation for the work we do. When we consider children's needs we must ensure that we combine our general understanding of children's needs with talking and listening to the particular children we are serving, not just assuming we know best what their most pressing needs are. This does not mean that we should only meet the needs that children are aware of and can articulate, nor that we will always give them what they say they need if it is not in their best interest. It does mean that we must seek to use tools and approaches that help us to see the situation from the child's perspective and that involve the child as an active partner in meeting his own needs, in line with his maturity.

A useful tool that has been developed in the UK for assessing the needs of children and young people is called **ASPIRE** (this stands for **AS**sess, **P**lan, **I**mplement, **R**eview and **E**valuate).<sup>24</sup>

The first stage is to do a 'needs assessment' together with the child or young person. The diagram on the next page shows a worked example for a young person of 14-19 years in the UK who is not in education or employment.<sup>25</sup> The needs assessment helps highlight areas where the young person has problems that need to be addressed.

The worker will then plan what to do about that, draw up a development plan that can be implemented and at a later stage this work would then be reviewed and evaluated.

This tool has proved very helpful for community development work. One of its biggest strengths is that it actively involves the young person in the process of assessing and addressing their needs. It has a helpful focus on action together with engaging with individuals' needs.

Obviously, the tool can be adapted to suit the needs of many different contexts, and for looking at the needs of a child, young person or community.

### Holistic development needs

If we want to truly help families, children and communities grow and develop we also need to engage them in all areas of their development.<sup>26</sup> A helpful way to remember this is to use the word SPIES.<sup>27</sup>

S – Spiritual    P – Physical    I – Intellectual    E – Emotional    S – Social

Just as in the book of Exodus in the Bible, Moses sent men to spy out the Promised Land so they could win it, we also need to examine carefully each context and pray for God's inspiration so that we can win the person, family and community for him. This approach helps us to keep in mind the many different kinds of needs that children have. Children need space and opportunity to grow healthily and maturely. It is harmful for a child to have a life where they are neglected either spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally or socially.

<sup>24</sup> Sutton (2001), chapter 4

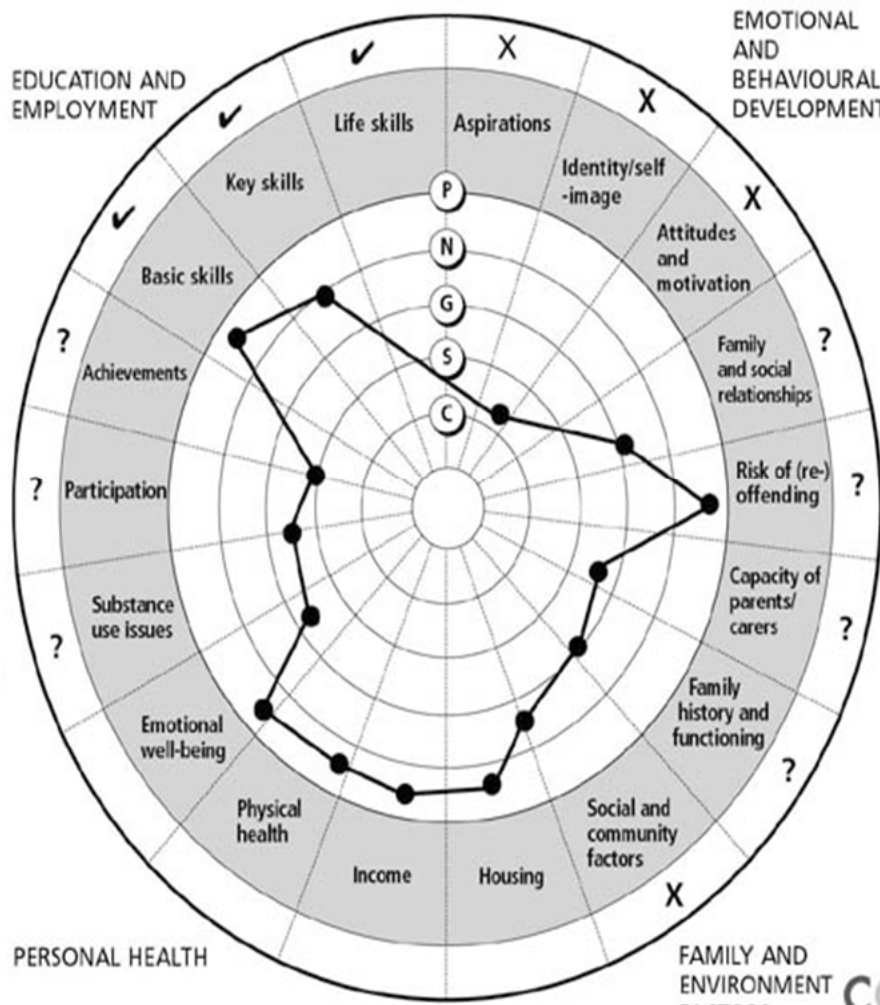
<sup>25</sup> [http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3BD541AF-28E5-4CAF-8625-D9580A17011D/0/CAF\\_Toolkit\\_09\\_APP\\_P.pdf](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3BD541AF-28E5-4CAF-8625-D9580A17011D/0/CAF_Toolkit_09_APP_P.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Recall Workbook 1, lesson 2. Workbook 4 will focus more fully on the topic of how we do holistic work with children

<sup>27</sup> Developed by Colin Bennett, Moorlands Bible College, UK

In addition, this reminds us of the importance of the spiritual needs of children, so that children are enabled to grow up with a proper 'God framework' and not become fixated on other aspects of SPIES. Often intellectual development is pursued almost to the point of fixation without parents realising that children need to grow up holistically. Without a healthy God framework it is hard for children to grow mature and resilient lives, particularly when suffering is encountered.

Name	Date created
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- KEY**
- P Positive strengths identified which could contribute to successful transition(s)
  - N No issues identified which could hinder successful transition(s)
  - G General issues identified
  - S Significant and/or specific issues identified
  - C Critical and/or complex issues identified



**Case Study<sup>28</sup>**

Timothy is ten years old and lives with both parents, next to relatives in a slum community on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand.

The house is a shack built against a larger house in a slum community. Constructed of wood and tin, the house provides minimal protection against the elements. It was built with the help of relatives in a day. When it rains it leaks. Timothy sleeps on the floor with his parents as they alternate shifts for work. While one parent sleeps the other works. There is no privacy and little supervision. The small space forces Timothy outside.

Lack of self-esteem and feeling of being valued are a problem for Timothy. There is little that would give him a sense of pride or self-worth. The simple shelter, crowded as it is, does not allow Timothy room to grow and to feel good about himself.

Timothy suffers from neglect. His parents are caring yet they have little time to give him. One or the other of the parents is gone all the time leaving Timothy with little supervision. With inadequate shelter, by default Timothy is forced out of the house to seek belonging and care elsewhere. Cramped quarters, inadequate protection from the weather and lack of the basic necessities forces the ten-year old outside, exposing him to among other things the temptation of drugs in the community. There is a growing drug problem in the community among young people.

Timothy is a good student and attends school. Yet going to school and learning necessitates foundations that only adequate shelter can provide. In the house, catching one's eye on a simple wooden shelf is a trophy. Timothy won the trophy at the local elementary school in a local running contest. Bright and shiny, it is a source of pride and esteem to the family.

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<sup>28</sup> Don Strongman, 'Profile of a child at risk in Thailand', Celebrating Children



## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

When we consider children's needs we must ensure that we combine our \_\_\_\_\_ of children's needs with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to the particular children we are serving, not just \_\_\_\_\_ we know best what their most pressing needs are. A useful tool for assessing the needs of children and young people is called \_\_\_\_\_. The stages of the tool are: assess, \_\_\_\_\_, implement, \_\_\_\_\_ and evaluate). One of its biggest strengths is that it actively involves the \_\_\_\_\_ in the process of assessing and addressing their needs. If we want to truly help families, children and communities grow and develop we also need to engage them in \_\_\_\_\_ of their development. The acronym \_\_\_\_\_ helps us to keep in mind the many different kinds of needs that children have. It is \_\_\_\_\_ for a child to have a life where they are neglected either spiritually, \_\_\_\_\_, intellectually, \_\_\_\_\_ or socially.

## Discussion questions

1. Answer the following questions for Timothy in the case example (use all your learning so far),
  - What do you think are the most significant risk factors for Timothy in the case example?
  - What factors are likely to be protective?
  - How would you try to enhance Timothy's resilience and that of his family?
2. What needs do you see in Timothy's life?
3. Which needs are most urgent (think about Maslow and White's models and SPIES)?
4. How could you find out from Timothy and his family which needs they feel are most urgent?
5. Look at the ASPIRE tool. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a tool like this?
6. Look at the completed spider diagram in the lesson. If you were the worker in this case, what steps would you take to meet the needs of this young person? What areas do you see as a priority? What sort of interventions would you try?

## Exercise

Adapt the tool to use with children like Timothy and other children in your context

## Lesson 9: What are the consequences of not meeting children’s needs?

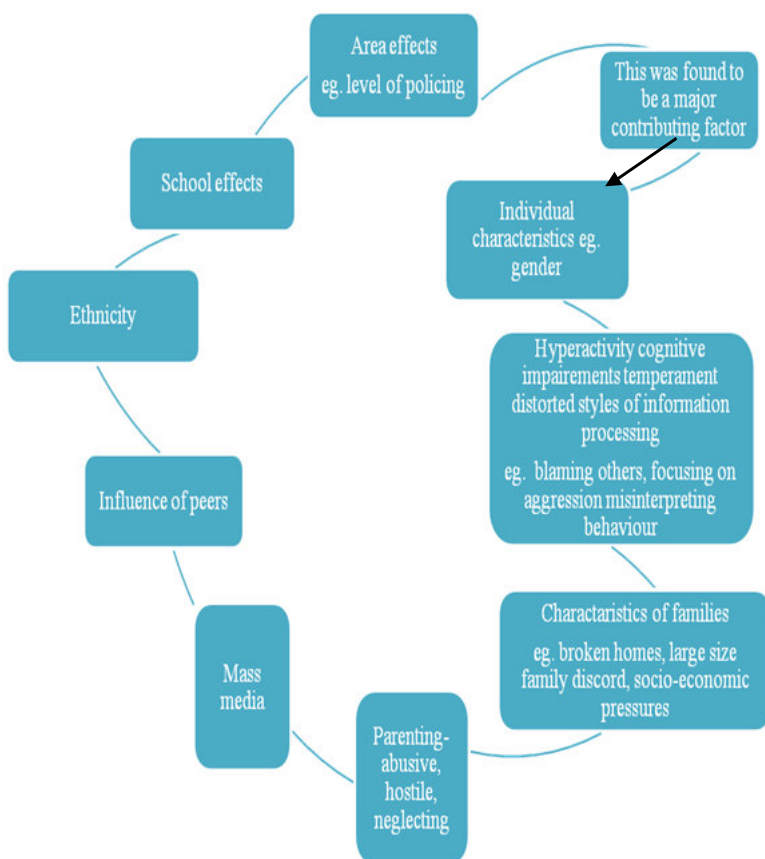
### Summary

- Consequences of unmet needs for a child
- Consequences of unmet needs for a child’s community
- How can we prioritise which unmet needs are most urgent?

When children’s fundamental needs are not met, it increases the risk that they will develop problems in their physical and psychological development, and their preparation for adult roles and tasks will be interrupted. This has implications for the individual child: for example, mental health problems and problems forming relationships. It also has consequences for the whole community: for example, delinquency.

### What are consequences for the community of children’s unmet needs?

A number of factors lead to breakdown of communities, antisocial behaviour and general lawlessness as well as children failing to develop into resilient mature adults who contribute productively to their communities. A major study in this area was undertaken by Michael Rutter and others in the UK (1995-98). The study highlighted several areas of factors that can be seen in the chart.



This is not just a UK-based problem. Many countries that have been torn apart by wars and natural disasters such as earthquakes have seen severe problems with broken families, youth violence, antisocial behaviour and problems with drinking, drugs and the resultant foetal abnormalities such as foetal alcohol syndrome. Examples of these difficulties can be seen in Poland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Angola (2002-2006) and Cambodia.

These factors often point to unmet needs in the lives of the children and the communities. These unmet needs increased levels of risk and resultant delinquency. For example, Rutter found

that **boys** were more at risk of having problems with **hyperactivity** and **aggressive** styles of interpreting the intentions of others. This meant they were less able to access **schooling** effectively and tended to create more **family discord**. This made them more vulnerable to getting involved with **dysfunctional peer groups** and **addictions** to cope with their feelings. This resulted in them being vulnerable to being led into **crimes** against their communities, leading to further **community rejection** and vulnerability.

In Angola, large numbers of displaced and orphaned children presented challenges for child protection and basic needs such as shelter, food and water. For example, in Huambo one in ten young people between eight and twenty-five years of age were not provided for within formal demobilization and new integration

programmes because they were seen as too young to have fought, yet most of them have had to carry arms or assist in attacks. They had felt abused and negated during the war and were now being neglected and negated again in the post-war provision. This resulted in mental health and antisocial problems.

They spoke of feeling disempowered with no sense of hope and lacking a sense of achievement and usefulness they had during the war (despite the fear and death that went with it). Most of them had committed crimes against their communities and had problems with lack of schooling and no support to work with the extreme emotions and traumas inside them. In terms of Rutter's model of areas of unmet needs, they exhibited several key areas of need both as individuals, as peers and in terms of their communities.

### **Which needs are most urgent?**

Obviously it is not possible to totally remove the adversities facing children in many of the contexts we work in. There may be social, economic and political constraints, environmental or psychological features that cannot be totally resolved. Therefore it is important to be able to work out when an unmet need is posing a significant developmental risk for an individual child and their community.

The following approach is recommended:<sup>29</sup>

- **Identify and enhance**

Protective factors in the child's environment that mean that risks and adversities can be overcome, and can actually become pathways for enhancing resilience

- **Identify and move the child away from**

Risks that will lead children to develop negative behaviour patterns (e.g. exposure to violence).

To be able to understand a child's level of need and their ability to adapt depends on looking at their strengths and coping strategies across many areas of development. The child's ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour and their level of interpersonal competence are especially important. A child's developmental age (not just their actual age) is therefore a crucial factor when assessing risk and levels of need.

In certain long-term negative situations a child's level of need and risk is heightened when they use certain strategies to reduce their exposure to distress and risk in the short term that actually cause long-term damage. For example, a child may emotionally and interpersonally detach himself from neglecting parents or bullying peers (using fantasy, day-dreaming, denial of feelings and pain, reading, running, etc.). However, this reduces his ability to develop and to learn the skills to make healthy intimate, supportive relationships (boundaries, conflict resolution, etc.) in new experiences and relationships. He therefore becomes more socially withdrawn and develops attachment problems, which places him at even greater risk of being hurt in the future or of not developing into an effective, competent adult.

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<sup>29</sup> See Wyman (2003)

## Case Study<sup>30</sup>

David was fourth in a family of eight children. His father was a gardener and his mother a cook and cleaner. Until seven years old his grandmother was the dominant figure in the family, everyone doing what she told them. She used to hit him frequently. Once, David's little brother fell into the water at the docks. He would have drowned but David dived in and saved him. Grandmother gave him a good thrashing, as they should not have been there.

David saw little of his parents. His father spent the evenings as a singer and comedian and his mother played bingo or visited friends. After his grandmother died he was left in the care of his older brothers and sisters. He started wandering around at night. Soon he started stealing sweets, smoking and playing truant from school. He found other boys living nearby who were also free to wander. They started challenging each other to do things for a dare. "How far can you go without being caught?"

Aged thirteen, he was caught shoplifting. Father disowned him and mother battered him all the way home. They sent him to a remand home. After release, still with no parents around at home, he went out and there were more thefts and burglaries. David was sent to another remand home. As an anti-bedwetting measure, children were wakened every hour and taken to the toilet, even though David never wet the bed. One staff member shook his penis "to get the last drop out". Soon after, David became a victim of sexual abuse by the supervisor of the remand home. Children were abused, both individually and in groups. He ran away twice but did not dare tell, as the children were warned they would never see their parents again if they "told stories".

David was not protected, either from physical abuse and neglect when at home, or from sexual abuse when put into the care of authorities. David's early experiences as a recipient of violence, together with anger at his neglect, led to him developing a very violent personality. Being the victim of sexual abuse as a child had the result that he later began sexually abusing children. David spent much of his life in prison.

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<sup>30</sup> George Hosking, WAVE 'Profile of a boy in the UK', from Celebrating Children

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

When children's \_\_\_\_\_ are not met, it \_\_\_\_\_ the risk that they will develop problems. This has implications for the \_\_\_\_\_ and for the whole \_\_\_\_\_. Community \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ behaviour and \_\_\_\_\_ can be seen to be linked to several different areas of factors including gender, influence of peers, school effects and characteristics of families. These factors often point to \_\_\_\_\_ in the lives of children and communities, which increase \_\_\_\_\_ and subsequent \_\_\_\_\_.

It is not possible to totally remove the \_\_\_\_\_ facing children in many of the contexts we work in. Therefore we should \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ protective factors in the child's environment and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ risks that will lead children to develop negative behaviour patterns.

## Discussion questions

1. Use the areas of unmet needs from Rutter's study to analyse the case study. You could also include any other risk factors that increase David's vulnerability.
2. What kinds of interventions could have reduced David's risks of developing problems?
3. Can you think of situations in your own country or region where unmet needs in the lives of children or communities increase the risk of children developing problems that affect them and their communities?

## Exercise

Take a situation that you know well and repeat the analysis. Discuss this situation with your peers.

Ask yourselves and your peers:

1. How did you decide that an area of need was not met?
2. How did you decide that an area of unmet need presented a significant risk to a child and/or their community?
3. How did you measure their relative importance?
4. Whose views did you ask/seek? Try to seek the views of the young people and adults affected as well as any providers.
5. How did you phrase your questions? In terms of negatives (unmet needs) or potential (areas of development)? Practice asking questions in different ways and see how it affects your data collected and your view of the situation.
6. Which changes do you feel would have maximum effect on children in that community short-term/long-term?

## **Part 3: How can we release children’s gifts and potential and help them to thrive?**

In Part 1, we focused on how we can help build children’s resilience so that they can face adversities and withstand vulnerabilities. In Part 2, our focus was on understanding and finding out about the needs of children from a number of different perspectives. These are important topics to consider. However, when our goal is to help children to thrive, it is important that we take a much broader perspective. We need to learn to see children’s potential and their gifts and find ways to release them. We need a framework for explaining properly what it means for children to thrive, whatever their situation, and how we can promote that process.

In Part 3, we will begin by exploring what it looks like when children thrive (lesson 10). Much of the work that has been done on this important topic is from the USA, so a very important task will be for the student to work out how to apply the indicators and descriptions to their own context. Lessons 11 and 12 will introduce the very promising ‘asset-development’ framework, which identifies and seeks to enhance qualities, experiences and contexts that help young people to thrive.



## Lesson 10: What does it mean for children to thrive?

### Summary

- Problems with just focusing on children's needs
- Positive youth development and thriving
- What are indicators of thriving in youth?
- What do young people need to thrive?

### From meeting needs to positive youth development

In the past, a lot of work with children has focused on responding to identified needs or risks of individual children or groups within a community or society. The resulting approach is usually targeted at a specific issue or towards needs that the young people have at a particular moment in time. This 'needs' focus, however, can lead to a very limited level of engagement with a child, just focusing on resolving the stated needs of the immediate situation. Such resolution of needs is very important if the young person is to be safe, healthy and begin to function within society or community.

However, an important concern with this needs-based approach is that once the immediate needs have been addressed and partially or fully resolved, the provision of support is frequently downgraded or withdrawn from the child. Though the child is usually in a better situation than when first the intervention began, the question of what happens next and how that child will develop over a longer time period is perhaps left unresolved.

A different approach is called 'positive youth development' (PYD). It does not focus on children and young people as 'problems to be fixed' or on things that they lack (needs). Instead, PYD focuses on young people's strengths, skills, and possibilities.<sup>31</sup> In this sense it builds on research into children's resilience and also goes beyond it. From a Christian perspective, this development in thinking about children and their communities is more biblical because it sees people as God sees them, in terms of their potential, their destinies, what they can become rather than just seeing them where they are now.

### Thriving

The name used for the outcome or goal of PYD is 'thriving'. Thriving is a holistic idea. It considers the whole spectrum of a young person's life and development; it also sees the young person within her community (influencing it and being influenced by it).

*Thrive Foundation defines thriving as "a forward, purposeful motion towards achieving one's full potential. Thriving is an orientation toward life marked by balance, meaning, and learning from experience, in which one knows and finds resources that foster one's talents, interests, and aspirations, and through which one contributes to the common good."<sup>32</sup>*

<sup>31</sup> Benson (2006)

<sup>32</sup> Thrive Youth Foundation (2010)



Currently, research suggests 12 indicators of thriving in youth. These are easy to remember as they are based around 6 'C's. These indicators are signs that can be used to check whether young people are on a positive development path:



1. **Competence:** Healthy Habits, Life Skills, Love of Learning, Emotional Competence & Social Skills
2. **Connection:** Positive Relationships & Spiritual Growth
3. **Character**
4. **Caring**
5. **Confidence:** Confidence & Persistent Resourcefulness
6. **Contribution:** Purpose

PYD and research into thriving has so far been focused on young people in the USA. It is therefore very important to think carefully about how relevant the indicators are for other non-US contexts, and to work out what they would look like for young people and communities in other parts of the world. An encouraging feature is that the indicators of thriving complement the findings of Grotberg's research into resilience (I AM, I CAN, I HAVE), which was conducted in many different international contexts.

### What do young people need to thrive?

According to the Search Institute, a leading researcher into what enables children and young people to succeed and to thrive, there are 4 essential factors that promote positive youth development:

- **Assets:** Positive experiences or qualities that help influence the choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults
- **Sparks:** An interest, talent, skill, asset or dream that truly excites a young person and helps them discover their true passions [...] – anything that motivates them
- **Spiritual development**<sup>33</sup>
- **Engaged Community:** An engaged community requires many people—educators, faith community leaders, parents, governmental figures, and others—to come together to support youth

In the next two lessons, we will look in more detail at how we can promote thriving in young people, using this framework.

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<sup>33</sup> The Search Institute's definition of spiritual development is a process that involves: *Awareness or awakening*—to one's self, others, and the universe (which may be understood as including the sacred or divine) in ways that cultivate identity, meaning, and purpose; *Interconnecting and belonging*—seeking, accepting, or experiencing significance in relationships to and interdependence with others, the world, or one's sense of the transcendent (often including an understanding of God or a higher power) and linking to narratives, beliefs, and traditions that give meaning to human experience across time; and *A way of living*—authentically expressing one's identity, passions, values, and creativity through relationships, activities, and/or practices that shape bonds with oneself, family, community, humanity, the world, and/or that which one believes to be transcendent or sacred. Although it is an inclusive definition, it can easily be modified to reflect a Christian vision of spirituality. This important area will be treated in workbook 4 rather than in this workbook from a Christian perspective.

## Case Study<sup>34</sup>

'La Palmera' CCC is a community Christian cultural centre located in the Bolivian Amazonian town of Trinidad-Beni. For around two decades, we have been involved in holistic mission to the local community, addressing critical areas of felt needs such as education, health, recreation, personal development, building development, employment and Christian witness. We have trained many of our Bolivian neighbours in the administration and provision of services to our beneficiaries, creating jobs for the community and promoting trust in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Empowering people in the neighbourhood to deal with the felt needs of their societies and enjoy a higher quality of life has meant for us to lead them to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in order to discover God's divine plan for their lives and their community.

Our vision "recognises that enabling people to experience Christ's Lordship is the key to wholistic ministry". This has included the Biblical MUST of church planting and identifying the vital role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the experience of transformation especially to the poor. Today there is an educational centre, health centre, recreational centre, discipleship centre and an independent church serving a continually growing neighbourhood as a fourfold community development unit.

The church is not only young in life but also young in membership. Its average age reckons to be 24 years old. There are more than 60 regular members currently in fellowship, from more than 25 families. Our files show a greater number of families being reached with the Gospel through the years but because the social conditions of the town and the temporal nature of its social opportunities, many have moved to the larger cities or emigrated to other countries, taking with them their newly acquired relationship with God and becoming active members of larger churches or pioneers of new churches in their new places. We are delighted that one of the young people who benefitted from the project has become one of our pastors!

Other young people involved in 'La Palmera' have showed real leadership themselves. One day, one of our Bolivian Staff members, Rufino Montenegro had the idea of starting a Football (Soccer) School for children under 10 years old. He offered to be the coach, to produce the planning and to commit himself entirely to this work. He himself was just 15 years old! We supported his idea, funded his activities, provided him with further education, attended his pupils' games, celebrated his victories, comforted him in his defeats and we all saw him taking his players from game number one that they lost 5-12 against a team of shoeless rural boys to the continual chain of championships that have given to our Christian Centre hundreds of cups and trophies that now adorn our main offices in town.

Today 'La Palmera' CCC celebrates achievements such as registering from a group of 100 children enrolled in its services two decades ago: 95 trusting the Lord, 60 being baptized with their parents' consent, 45 as current members of the church, 25 attending university, 12 already graduated as professionals of Law, Civil Engineering, Medical Sciences, Accountancy, Theology, etc. and 8 Christian married young couples.

These results are in a country where out of 1000 children starting Primary 1, only 6 finish university, 2 get a proper job, most won't have any spiritual input in their lives.

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<sup>34</sup> See <http://bcpfield.tripod.com/indexfl.htm>

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

An important concern with a \_\_\_\_\_-based approach to working with children is that once the immediate needs have been addressed, the provision of support is frequently \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ from the child. A different approach is called '\_\_\_\_\_ youth development'. It does not focus on children and young people as '\_\_\_\_\_ to be fixed' or on things that they \_\_\_\_\_ (needs). Instead, it focuses on young people's \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. The aim is '\_\_\_\_\_'. Indicators of thriving are arranged in into 6 areas: \_\_\_\_\_, connection, \_\_\_\_\_, caring, \_\_\_\_\_, and contribution. Four factors that are essential for thriving according to the Search Institute are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ development and an \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. For the young people in the case example of 'La Palmera' community project:
  - What evidence is there that they are thriving?
  - What positive contribution is the project making to the development of the young people?
  - How is it also contributing to meeting needs and building resilience in the young people and their community?
2. Look at the 12 indicators of thriving. How do they relate to Grotberg's resilience factors (I HAVE, I AM, I CAN)?
3. For each of the 12 indicators of thriving, try to give an example of what it would look like for young people in your context.
4. Do you find the indicators of thriving useful? How could you use them a) to assess the development of young people you work with, and b) to help plan activities to do with youth?
5. Is your work closer to a needs-based approach to children or to the positive youth development approach that focuses on the potential of young people? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

## Lesson 1 I: What helps children to thrive?

### Summary

- Introduction to developmental assets
- Using assets in work with young people and communities

### What are developmental assets?

A very exciting framework for working with children and young people has been developed by the Search Institute in the USA. Although most of their research is based in America, evidence from other contexts suggests that the approach is valid and productive in other settings too. The model identifies 40 'developmental assets'. You can think of assets as the nutrients of positive development and thriving. It marks a significant change to a much more biblical view of seeing people as assets not as needs or problems.

*According to the Search Institute, assets are positive experiences or qualities that help influence the choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults.*

By understanding the kind of nutrients of positive development, adults and programmes working with children and youth can focus on building these assets in a deliberate way.

The assets are divided into two main categories<sup>35</sup>:

- **EXTERNAL ASSETS**

External assets are about relationships the young person has with family, peers and community (like 'I HAVE' factors).

Support	Empowerment	Boundaries & Expectations	Constructive Use of Time
Family support	Community values youth	Family boundaries	Creative activities
Positive family communication	Youth as resources	School Boundaries	Youth programs
Other adult relationships	Service to others	Neighbourhood boundaries	Religious community
Caring neighbourhood	Safety	Adult role models	Time at home
Caring school climate		Positive peer influence	
Parent involvement in schooling		High expectations	

An example of an intervention to build external assets would be to strength relationships between adults and youth, as in a mentoring programme. Another example is to provide avenues for youth to be involved in serving the community.

<sup>35</sup> © 1997, 2006 by Search Institute, 615 First Avenue N.E., Suite 125, Minneapolis, MN 55413; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. All Rights Reserved

• **INTERNAL ASSETS**

Internal assets are about qualities, characteristics, competencies and experiences that are part of the young person as an individual (like ‘I AM’ and ‘I CAN’ factors).

<b>Commitment to Learning</b>	<b>Positive Values</b>	<b>Social Competencies</b>	<b>Positive Identity</b>
Achievement Motivation	Caring	Planning and decision making	Personal power
School Engagement	Equality and social justice	Interpersonal Competence	Self-esteem
Homework	Integrity	Cultural Competence	Sense of purpose
Bonding to school	Honesty	Resistance skills	Positive view of personal future
Reading for Pleasure	Responsibility	Peaceful conflict resolution	
	Restraint		

An example of an intervention aimed at building internal assets might be to provide youth with leadership training and opportunities or to organize educational support activities.

**Working with assets:**<sup>36</sup>

- Combine building up skills and competencies in the young person and changing the environment because developmental strengths within the person combine with strengths outside the person to promote thriving
- Increase the number of developmental assets across different settings in the life of young people – this is much more effective than a narrow focus on just a few assets or just one setting
- Community-wide efforts to build developmental assets are as important as those focused on the organization, family and individual levels

This approach of work with young people is flexible and easily moulded around any programme or even just as an approach for communities to use in relating to children. For churches and Christians working with young people, the asset model allows a more positive engagement that reflects in many ways the message of Christ: the belief that each child is valuable and worth the investment of time and energy required for children to fulfil their potential is a strong reflection of the Gospel.

The asset model creates the conditions for this transformation to occur and when practiced alongside the Christian faith it creates a great space for children to fulfil that promise. The case study in this lesson demonstrates the whole life transformation that can occur when a young person is exposed to the combined messages of the Christian faith and the connection to people seeking to model an asset-rich environment.

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<sup>36</sup> Benson et al (2006)

## Case Study

### Asset Development in Practice

RockSchool Poole is one project that has used the 40 Developmental Assets approach to shape its work with young people. The project in the south of England began in 2007 by providing music lessons for young people aged between 8 and 12, who were referred by the local authority and who were facing a range of challenges in their lives. These children may have been identified as being at risk in their homes, presenting difficulties in their schools or causing some concern in their community. RockSchool also provides STARFISH mentoring for 35 young people who have completed the initial music or art elements of the project. These 35 young people are provided with a one to one mentor who meets them each week to support, encourage and resource them for life.

Here is an example of a young person whose life has been transformed through this approach.

K was previously at High School but due to severe bullying he left school in June 2008. After that he was unofficially schooled at home by his mum. While he was not attending school, an Education Welfare Officer visited the family, completed an assessment and was concerned that K was not interacting with any peers, that he was withdrawn and the bullying had made him both physically and emotionally ill. A range of professionals were involved and one child psychologist reported that K had been having suicidal tendencies.

K was referred to RockSchool for a 3-month course at the start of 2009. Afterwards he got involved in a STARFISH mentoring group. K also joined a RockSchool band before getting a mentor of his own.

Before K attended RockSchool he did not play any musical instruments. Afterwards, he has become a good drummer, he has formed a band with other RockSchool participants and he even has an ambition to be in a rock band in the future. He has taken part in a range of activities such as art, rock climbing, team sports and visits to Art Galleries.

Before he attended the programme, K's mum described him as a tiny, withdrawn person with no interests or purpose. He was unable to look staff in the eye and would not ask questions or speak up in front of the group. During his RockSchool time K's confidence grew. He won an award for his attitude and behaviour during the course and has continued to maintain a positive approach to life. He now not only makes great eye contact but he is confident enough to laugh and joke with staff, to talk in front of the others during groups activities and even lead games. K's mum states, "There are no words to describe the way in which K's self esteem has grown." K was becoming increasingly distant from his family and other peers, but now his mum states the situation has brought them closer together. She reports, "He is not scared to show his feelings now."

In October 2009 K began attending a new High School. The project arranged for him to meet a school staff member before starting at the school and agreed to the staff member taking on a mentoring role within school. K's mum reports that he is settling in well and she is pleased with his progress. K has expressed an interest in working within a project like RockSchool in the future; he is good with younger people and has a number of other mentees who look up to him. K recognises this and we have discussed him attending some leadership training in the future. His mum said "K is a different child since the RockSchool / STARFISH programme."

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Developmental \_\_\_\_\_ are the nutrients of positive development and thriving. They are \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ that help influence the choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ working with children and youth can focus on building these assets in a deliberate way. \_\_\_\_\_ are about relationships the young person has with family, peers and community. Internal assets are about \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that are part of the young person as an individual. It is important to focus on building assets in \_\_\_\_\_ and also changing the \_\_\_\_\_ and building assets in the \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. Think back over your own youth. How many of the assets did you experience? How did they help you in your development and decision making? Did the lack of any of the assets have an impact on you?
2. Do any of the assets that seem inappropriate for your context? Are there any that you think are missing?
3. What advantages could there be in identifying building blocks of positive development like the 40 developmental assets?
4. Why is it important to focus on a range of internal and external assets rather than just a few? Why is change in the community important as well as in the individual?
5. In what ways does your work with children already build assets in their lives? How could you start to include deliberate asset-building in your church or organization?

## Lesson 12: How can we apply this in our work?

### Summary

- Using developmental assets to engage adult
- Using developmental assets to influence civic decisions
- Using developmental assets to mobilize young people
- Using developmental assets to invigorate programmes

The Developmental Assets™ model provides a practical framework for building opportunities for young people to grow and fulfil their potential. This framework provides an opportunity to directly impact the lives of individual young people. It also provides a great platform for influencing many different areas of society.

This lesson will suggest some areas where the developmental asset approach can be integrated into work with young people.

### Engage Adults

The importance of the role of adults in the lives of all young people is a message that flows through many of the assets. Young people need to have positive role models. This will often be part of the family situation.

However, the asset model recognizes the need for support for families and young people from communities that are committed to seeing young people develop in positive ways. In this respect, all adults can be positive influences on young people and can play an active role in supporting and developing them. In modern, urban cultures, where the family has become more fragmented and where society has become more isolated and interaction between generations less common, the opportunity to safely bring more adults into the lives of children is a potentially revolutionary plan. The argument between whether a young person needs a strong family or whether a strong community is the answer is settled in the asset model: the child needs both.

A strong message from PYD as a whole is that to thrive, youth require the one-to-one guidance of caring, supportive adults who communicate and model high expectations.

### Influence Civic Decisions

Sometimes the role of young people in society is not held to be of particularly high importance in the decisions of those who lead a community.<sup>37</sup> However the potential of the asset model allows the skills and abilities, as well as the needs of young people to be considered in those decision making processes. When the concept of asset development finds its way into the conversation of the people who make the decisions, they begin to understand not only that young people need to be considered when assessing the consequences of their decisions but that children themselves can be actively involved in the process.

### Mobilise Young People

One key message of the asset model is that young people themselves can be agents of change. Instead of focusing on their needs and problems, it highlights the importance of supporting young people themselves to become the agents of change.

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<sup>37</sup> See Workbook 2, lesson 12



Although there are elements in the model that are concerned with helping and developing the young person through outside support, the message is also that the young people themselves can be the solutions to some of the challenges they face as individuals, to challenges that society places on them and that they can contribute to the rest of the community in meaningful ways. Rather than offering merely superficial ways for children to have a voice, the asset model creates the potential for them to play active and influential roles.

### **Invigorate Programmes**

It can be very hard to identify the purpose of some youth and children's work, especially when the programme has run for a few years and the original intention has been forgotten. Even in newer programmes it can be unclear why a project is running or what the outcome for a each session is. The use of the asset model can bring a new clarity to these situations and even organisations with long histories of good children's and youth work such as the YMCA have found that the model invigorates and inspires creative energy.

For the individual youth or children's worker it can be tough to keep going when no obvious benefits are seen in the lives of the young people over a period of time or when a session goes badly. The asset model however offers a reason for hope. It is clear that overall child development most often requires the consistent and encouraging input of caring adults.

While the asset model has been used successfully in a wide range of situations, it is important to remember that in circumstances of high environmental trauma, youth need assistance in understanding and challenging negative patterns of behaviour first, before they will fully engage in a positive youth development process.

## Case Study

### Using the Assets model to shape practice

From its small beginning, run by a small voluntary team, RockSchool has developed over the last two years and the project now works with over 200 children every week from schools across the area. The RockSchool sessions include Alternative Provision lessons each week for pupils who are not able to attend mainstream school and lessons for teenage pupils identified as potential NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) from other High Schools.

In addition to school time sessions, the team currently provides many out of school sessions. Projects now include ArtSchool, DJSchool, FashionSchool, DanceSchool and SingSchool form integral parts of the weekly provision. All the RockSchool projects focus on developing specific 'artistic' skills alongside areas of personal development such as confidence, self esteem, group working, thinking and communication skills. This focus has been the result of shaping the project around the 40 Developmental Assets™, which are building blocks of healthy development essential for all young people. Each project has been able to identify unique elements of their programme that link into the Asset Development message of the RockSchool formula.

RockSchool also provides STARFISH Mentoring for 35 young people who have completed the initial music or art elements of the project. These 35 young people are provided with a one to one mentor who meets them each week to support, encourage and resource them for life. The most recent development has been the opening of the first STARFISH Mentoring Resource Centre (MRC) very near to the team's Poole music base. The MRC is a place where mentors and the young people they support can meet to have food, play games, do homework, have conversations and meet with others on the programme.

By linking to the Developmental Assets, RockSchool and STARFISH have found a framework with which the project has been able to both develop its work and understand the impact that it has. In planning and creating each programme within the project, a key element has been to identify specific areas of Asset Development to which it can contribute. For example the outcomes for each project have been able to offer opportunities to build certain assets such as connecting young people to adult role models (#14), engage them in creative activities (#17), develop self esteem (#38) and create a sense of purpose (#39).

Such understanding has led to a sharper delivery of support to the young person and encouragement to the staff and volunteers as they better understand what it is they are seeking to do. The Asset model also provides a basis for the training of the all the staff, whether paid or voluntary and informs the project, funders and supporters with more clarity on outcomes.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

An asset-building framework is helpful for many different aspects of work with young people. First, it helps to \_\_\_\_\_ as positive \_\_\_\_\_. The framework encourages all adults to play an active role in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ young people. Second, it provides a platform for influencing \_\_\_\_\_ by highlighting what young people really need to thrive. It also encourages young people to actively \_\_\_\_\_. Third, it highlights the importance of supporting young people to become \_\_\_\_\_, by playing active and influential roles. Fourth, it can invigorate \_\_\_\_\_ by making it clear what the \_\_\_\_\_ of activities should be and for encouraging workers to recognise the value of their \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. Think of an example of ways in which your work currently
  - Engages adults to be positive, supportive role models for children and youth
  - Seeks to influence civic decisions on behalf of children and youth
  - Mobilises young people to be agents of change in their community
2. How could you use the developmental assets to make these aspects of your work more effective?
3. Chose one of these 3 areas, and identify 3-5 concrete steps you could take to improve it
4. How could you bring more adults into children's lives safely? How would you train them?
5. How could you use the developmental assets to plan activities and to evaluate their effectiveness?

## **Part 4: How can we help children overcome the past and become all God intends?**

Our desire is to see all of the children we work with thriving, able to overcome adversity and developing into the fullness God intends for them. In reality, some of the children we work with will have suffered violence, neglect, trauma and loss. This section gives some practical guidelines for working with traumatized children (lesson 13) and for including different kinds of psychosocial activities in our ministries' programmes (lesson 14).

In the final lesson, we pull together some of the main themes of this module as we think more about the relationship between maturity and resilience, especially from a Christian point of view and explore how we can help children and their communities become more mature and resilient.



## Lesson 13: How should we respond to traumatised children?

### Summary

- General guidelines for adults interacting with traumatised children

Here are some brief guidelines designed for parents, carers and teachers interacting with children who are traumatised:

#### 1. Do not be afraid to talk about the traumatic event

Children do not benefit from 'not thinking about it' or 'putting it out of their minds'. If a child senses that his/her caretakers are upset about the event, they will not bring it up. In the long run, this only makes the child's recovery more difficult. You should not force the child to talk about it, but when the child brings it up, do not avoid discussion, listen to the child, answer questions, provide comfort and support. We often have no good verbal explanations, but listening and not avoiding or over-reacting to the subject and then comforting the child will have a critical and long-lasting positive effect.

#### 2. Provide a consistent, predictable pattern for the day

Make sure the child knows the pattern. When the day includes new or different activities, tell the child beforehand and explain why this day's pattern is different. Do not underestimate how important it is for children to know that their caretakers are 'in control'. It is frightening for traumatized children (who are sensitive to control) to sense that the people caring for them are, themselves, disorganized, confused and anxious. There is no expectation of perfection, however, when caretakers are overwhelmed, irritable or anxious; simply help the child understand why, and that these reactions are normal and will pass.

#### 3. Be nurturing, comforting and affectionate but be sure that this is in an appropriate 'context'

For children traumatized by physical or sexual abuse, intimacy is often associated with confusion, pain, fear and abandonment. Providing 'culturally appropriate physical comfort to younger children is very important. A good working principle for this is to provide this for the child when he/she seeks it. When the child walks over and touches, return in kind. The child may want to be held or rocked; go ahead. On the other hand, do not interrupt the child's play or other free activities by grabbing them and holding them.

**Never** tell or command them to 'give me a kiss' or 'give me a hug'.<sup>38</sup> Abused children often take commands very seriously. It reinforces a very malignant association linking intimacy/physical comfort with power (which is inherent in a caretaking adult's command to 'hug me').

#### 4. Discuss your expectations for behaviour and your style of discipline with the child

Make sure that there are clear 'rules' and consequences for breaking the rules. Make sure that both you and the child understand beforehand the specific consequences for compliant and non-compliant behaviours. Be consistent when applying consequences. Use flexibility in consequences to illustrate reason and understanding.

Utilize positive reinforcement and rewards. Do not use physical discipline.

#### 5. Talk with the child

Give them age appropriate information. The more the child knows about who, what, where, why and how the adult world works, the easier it is to 'make sense' of it. Unpredictability and the unknown are two things which will make a traumatized child more anxious, fearful, and therefore, more symptomatic. They will be more physically active, impulsive, anxious, aggressive and have more sleep and mood problems. Without factual information, children (and adults) 'speculate' and fill in the empty spaces to make a complete story or explanation. In most cases, the child's fears and fantasies are much more frightening and

<sup>38</sup> This is also likely to be a way of trying to meet the caregiver's needs, rather than those of the child

disturbing that the truth. Tell the child the truth – even when it is emotionally difficult. If you don't know the answer yourself, tell the child. Honesty and openness will help the child develop trust.

**6. Watch closely for signs of re-enactment (e.g., in play, drawing, behaviours), avoidance (e.g., being withdrawn, daydreaming, avoiding other children) and psychological hyper-reactivity (e.g., anxiety, sleep problems, behavioural impulsivity)**

Most traumatized children exhibit some combination of these symptoms in the acute posttraumatic period. Many exhibit these symptoms for years after the traumatic event. When you see these symptoms, it is likely that the child has had some reminder of the event, either through thoughts or experiences. Try to comfort and be tolerant of the child's emotional and behavioural problems. These symptoms will come and go – sometimes for no apparent reason. The best thing you can do is to keep some record of the behaviours and emotions you observe (keep a diary) and try to observe patterns in the behaviour.

**7. Protect the child**

Do not hesitate to cut short or stop activities which are upsetting or re-traumatizing for the child. If you observe increased symptoms in a child that occur in a certain situation or following exposure to certain movies, activities and so forth, avoid these activities. Try to restructure or limit activities that cause escalation of symptoms in the traumatized child.

**8. Give the child choices and some sense of control**

When a child, particularly a traumatized child, feels that they do not have control of a situation, they will predictably exhibit more symptoms of distress. If a child is given some choice or some element of control in an activity or in an interaction with an adult, they will feel safer, more comfortable and will be able to feel, think and act in a more 'mature' fashion.

**9. If you have questions, ask for help**

These brief guidelines can only give you a broad framework for working with a traumatized child. Knowledge is power; the more informed you are, the more you understand the child, the better you can provide them with the support, nurturance and guidance they need.

It is vital that we as workers are able to acknowledge when we have reached the limits of our skills and when we need to seek extra specialist professional help. If not, we risk damaging a vulnerable child.

The next lesson will look at some of the kinds of activities that ministries can include in their programmes to help children who have been exposed to traumatic events. It will give some important principles for what help you can offer to traumatised children and when you should use trained professionals.

## Case Study<sup>39</sup>

Veng is 10 years old... she lives in a poor rural village in Cambodia. She works to help her large family survive. One day she is gathering wood in the jungle not far from her house, this is a task she must do every day to enable her mother to cook food for the whole family. A man approaches her. He has mud all over his face to disguise his identity. Veng is terrified. He repeatedly and violently rapes her, threatening to kill her with a knife if she dares to speak about this to anyone. Veng returns home very injured and traumatised.

Her aunt finds her and they send her to a centre for victims of rape. Veng was treated for her injuries and began to physically recover. She began to meet the Ragamuffin Arts Therapist. At first she couldn't speak. The Therapist sat with Veng at first in silence. Sitting next to Veng, the Arts Therapist began to draw a picture on some paper offering Veng to join in. Veng picked up a red crayon and drew a line towards the Therapist's lines. Veng made her first mark and smiled. Soon they were drawing pictures together, slowly building up trust again.

Veng's first picture was a little bird with all its wings broken. The therapist asked her how the little bird felt...Veng started to cry, "the bird is so sad it feels like it can never fly again. Someone broke its wings. The bird dreams of living with their family but it is scared because bad things live in the trees who hurt little birds so the little bird is not safe to go back home".

Through the picture and the story Veng created, she began to find her voice again and express her deepest pain. Veng felt so much relief from expressing her emotions. She soon discovered she loved to dance and sing... With the Arts Therapist's support Veng brought the little bird to life through her movement and song. "The little bird loves to sing", Veng said as she began to sing a song about flying free.

Veng began to realise a part of her that was not broken. This helped her begin the long journey of acknowledging and honouring the pain of the trauma that she had endured for so long, and rediscovering that she still had beauty and dignity inside.

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ragamuffinproject.org/real-life-stories/vengs-story/>. Ragamuffin project brings together qualified, registered and accredited Arts Therapists working with Statutory and Voluntary Sector organizations in the UK, Cambodia, Russia and Peru.



## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Children who have been \_\_\_\_\_ need to be cared for appropriately. Some good guidelines include: allowing the child to \_\_\_\_\_ about the traumatic event when he wants to; providing a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ pattern to the day; using \_\_\_\_\_ ways to comfort the child; discussing expectations for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with the child; \_\_\_\_\_ with the child about the situation; watching out for signs of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and psychological \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ the child; giving the child \_\_\_\_\_ and some \_\_\_\_\_. Finally, be sure to \_\_\_\_\_ so you can support the child best.

## Discussion questions

1. Based on the guidelines in this lesson, how would you give comfort to a child in your work or church situation who has experienced traumatic circumstances?
2. Imagine that a major disaster happened in your community (e.g. an earthquake or a violent incident in school). What sorts of symptoms in children would you tell parents to watch out for? What should they expect to see as a normal reaction? What should cause concern? How would you advise them to treat their children?
3. Which of the guidelines in this lesson have been ignored by you or by others? How did children react? What would you do differently?
4. How could traumatized children be at risk of further harm in your project or church?
5. Who would you consult for more guidance in dealing with traumatized children?
6. Think about the case example of the Ragamuffin project. Why do you think creative arts therapy was so helpful for Veng?
7. What sorts of therapy could you refer traumatized children to in your context?

## Lesson 14: What activities should we include in our programmes to help children overcome trauma?

### Summary

- Understanding psychosocial support
- How can ministries incorporate psychosocial support into their activities?
- What sort of support is appropriate?
- Spiritual support

Many organizations working with child survivors of serious violence and emergencies will find it beneficial to include appropriate psychosocial support activities in their programs. The aim is to help these children to recover and move on with fulfilling lives.

### What is psychosocial support?

‘Psychosocial’ means the relationship between psychological and social effects. Psychological aspects of life include thoughts, emotions and behaviours; while social experiences involve relationships, traditions and culture. These two spheres continually interact with and influence each other. For this reason, psychosocial support goes far beyond individual psychological interventions.

*Psychosocial interventions are a set of integrated interventions that assist children and families to cope. They enable children to experience love, protection and support that allow them to have a sense of self-worth and belonging. These are essential in order for children to learn, to develop life skills, to participate fully, and to have hope for the future.<sup>40</sup>*

Good psychosocial support can help children recover from grief and violence, make good self-protective decisions, and live more safely in dangerous situations.

It is not necessary to use professional psychological therapeutic techniques in order to meet the psychosocial needs of most children, even those who have undergone terrible experiences.<sup>41</sup>

### Principles for including psychosocial support in ministries

*First Normalize Children’s Lives:* Prioritize everyday systems of care – families, schools and communities. The best psychosocial support comes from the consistent nurturing care and support that is best expressed through family and community in everyday life.

*Integrated Interventions:* Psychosocial interventions should be part of a wider set of supports which are meeting basic needs. The family and community must be fully brought into the program.

*Caring Relationships:* Psychosocial support is expressed through caring and nurturing relationships that communicate understanding, unconditional love, tolerance and acceptance.

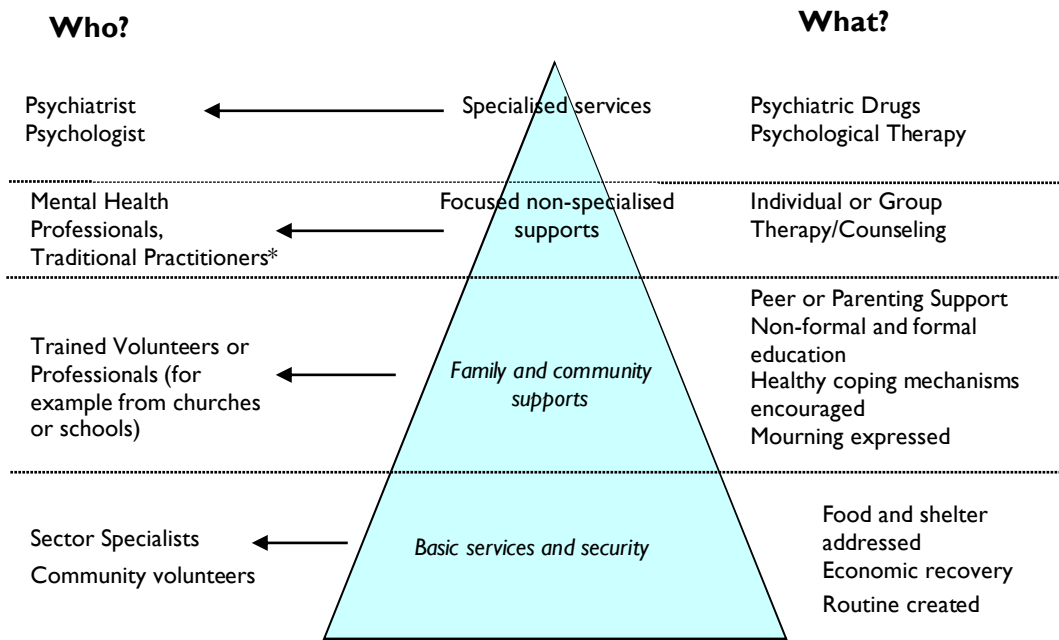
*Participation:* Children’s and adults’ participation in decisions which affect their lives has a positive impact on their psychosocial well-being, empowers them, and helps them to regain control over their own lives.

*Cultural Sensitivity:* All psychosocial interventions should be grounded in the child’s own culture, unless it is not in the best interests of the child - as this is both ethical and more likely to produce a sustained recovery. For example, traditional music and art forms can be helpful means of expression for children who have suffered loss.

<sup>40</sup> World Vision International

<sup>41</sup> For further guidance on psychosocial support programming, see IASC (2007).

## What kind of support is appropriate?



\* It is important to distinguish between traditional practitioners who use story-telling, herbal remedies, etc. from witchdoctors who access occult methods of revenge, curses, hexes and so on.

Organizations should be clear and specific in their definitions and strategies for including psychosocial support in their programs in order to avoid harming children further through the use of inappropriate methods. The diagram should be used to guide psychosocial interventions. The majority of people, even in emergency situations, will be able to function and recover with the bottom level interventions; with fewer people needing the psychosocial supports at each layer of the triangle.<sup>42</sup>

**It is very important that trauma counselling should only be provided by trained professionals, and when an appropriate and sustained follow-up mechanism is guaranteed.**

### Spiritual support

For children who come from communities with specific religious or faith backgrounds, being given a chance to practice their faith can a helpful part of their healing process. Christians should not use emergencies to push their beliefs on distressed children.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, prayer, spiritual encouragement from Biblical teachings, and God's healing can provide support, meaning, and guidance to children who have suffered serious violence or disasters. Particularly if children already believe that there was a spiritual component to their suffering (for example, that an evil spirit caused the disaster, or they are being haunted in dreams by the perpetrator of violence), appropriate spiritual care can help them progress in their healing. Great care must be taken to avoid manipulating children in these circumstances, while also providing the opportunities for prayer, encouragement and strength that faith can bring.

The next lesson will focus on ways in which the Christian community can create an environment for healing and wholeness for children and their communities.

<sup>42</sup> Adapted from IASC (2007). Please also refer to [www.repssi.org](http://www.repssi.org) (specific materials on this website that are suitable are journey of life, tree of life, mainstreaming PSS guidelines); and HIV AIDS Alliance "Building Blocks: Africa Wide Briefing Notes Psychosocial Support" [http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/BBE\\_Psychosocial\\_support.pdf](http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/BBE_Psychosocial_support.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> See Workbook 4, lesson 13 and Workbook 6 for more discussion of spiritual abuse

## Case Study<sup>44</sup>

If you ask almost any child in southern Chile right now what they feel when there are aftershocks or what they dream about, they will tell you one of two things. They are afraid, like Millaray, 7, who says, “I get scared at night.” Or, they say, they have trouble sleeping, like Matias Henriquez, 10: “Now I dream only bad things. Sometimes I see that the earth is opening and we all fall in a hole. Many bad things. That my mom and dad die.”

“The children don’t understand what’s happening. They cry. They suffer. They are traumatized,” says Paz Romina Castillo Aviles, a fourth-grade teacher from Dichato. This young teacher knows the long-lasting effects an earthquake or other traumatizing events can have on children. She wasted no time in looking for someone to help her help the kids in Dichato, Chile.

“The first day, [after the earthquake], I was trying to [help]. When the media arrived, I had already made a sign that said ‘Don’t Forget the Kids,’” she said. “They are traumatized by what it means to have lost their homes and their parents are also facing a lot of stress because of what they are living through right now.”

The stress that the children in Chile are dealing with is often hard to see. “Even though you see them laughing and smiling, they are dealing with the trauma of what it means to have lost their homes,” she says. “What kids need most right now is a distraction.”

That distraction comes through World Vision’s Child Friendly Space which will provide children with a safe place to play, receive a good meal, and regain a sense of normalcy as they process what they are going through. “This is significant because it helps them forget what they have gone through. They have fun and they begin to feel that this is normal—a new normal,” she said.

For Paz, working as a volunteer leader in World Vision’s first Child Friendly Space was a natural fit. “I am from here. I am from Dichato,” she says emphatically.

She wanted to do something to help the kids in her community but had no means to make it happen. Now, she does. “World Vision provides the materials and the physical space to do the activities and we (a group of teachers and volunteers Paz enlisted) will provide all the professional support.”

Each Child Friendly Space accommodates about 100 kids. There are more than 1,000 children between 0-18 living in Dichato, about 300 of them are between 1 and 5 years old. The remaining 700 are between 6 and 18 years old.

For Paz, being the leader of the first Child Friendly Space in Dichato is a privilege. “This is what I wanted all along, because these are my neighbours and they are my friends’ children,” she says.

And, even before the Child Friendly Space was officially opened the following day, it was already helping the children get a start on their recovery. “I am already seeing, [the effects],” says Paz. “[The kids] are getting together, they are happy, they are smiling,” she said, before going to talk with another one of the volunteers.

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<sup>44</sup> Adapted from ‘Child Friendly Space helping kids recover after enormous earthquake’ by Heidi Isaza reflecting on the importance of helping children recover from the massive earthquake of 27.02/2010 in Chile.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Those working with child survivors of serious \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will find it beneficial to include appropriate \_\_\_\_\_ activities in their programs. 'Psychosocial' means the relationship between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ effects. Therefore, psychosocial support goes far beyond individual psychological interventions. Good psychosocial support can help children \_\_\_\_\_ from grief and violence, make good self-protective \_\_\_\_\_, and live more \_\_\_\_\_ in dangerous situations. It is not necessary to use \_\_\_\_\_ techniques in order to meet the psychosocial needs of \_\_\_\_\_, even those who have undergone terrible experiences. It is very important that trauma counselling should only be provided by \_\_\_\_\_, and when an appropriate and sustained \_\_\_\_\_ mechanism is guaranteed. \_\_\_\_\_ support can be very helpful, but Christians should not use \_\_\_\_\_ to push their beliefs on distressed children.

## Discussion questions

1. What is psychosocial support?
2. What are the most powerful and important forms of psychosocial support for most children—even those in very difficult situations?
3. What programs in your organization provide some form of psychosocial support?
4. How does your organization's Christian identity relate to your approach to psychosocial support of children?

## Lesson 15: How can we help hurting children and communities become more mature and resilient?

### Summary

- What is maturity?
- How is maturity related to resilience?
- How can we help children and communities become more mature?

Child developmentalists see **maturity** as the goal of childhood: to become a socially responsible, effective adult. At the same time, a child at any age can be described as 'mature' (e.g., performing effectively within their age competences and capability). So a child can be mature in one sense, while also still developing into a mature adult and thus intrinsically immature too. Likewise, adults can be immature and all adults are in a process of maturing.

As we saw in lesson 7, at a spiritual level also, maturity is the goal of Christians – to become mature and complete, not lacking in anything (Ephesians 3: 12b-16). The word here for 'complete' is *telos* (Greek for the end attained/goal). 'Mature' or *telios* (mature and complete, perfect, fully accomplished) reflects the meaning of maturity for the Christian – to fulfil all that God wants us to be; to become like Christ in our behaviour, our thoughts, attitudes and feelings towards God, others and ourselves. Christian maturity reflects the relational community of love in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Wholeness and maturity are the goals in the Christian's journey of sanctification.

In many ways there is a great deal of resonance between psychosocial and theological perspectives on maturity. In particular, both are mediated by love. The main differences arise because psychosocial maturity and wholeness are measured by parameters based on this world (psychosocial competencies, etc.), while theological maturity and wholeness is defined with reference to Christ.

Christian maturity is not just about becoming aware of and processing past hurts or dealing with current problems; nor is it a process simply of self-development in order to enable a person to become other-centred and responsive, thus achieving effective social relationships. Instead, Christian wholeness or maturity is the result of Spirit-enabled character transformation. It is not just problem solving or growth. As we allow ourselves to be filled with His love for us, there is no room for fear (1 John 4:18) and we are released to be our authentic (true) creative selves, reflecting God's image in us. In Ephesians Paul speaks of us as being in Christ, where our identity, our status and position are defined in Christ. This permits us to live and behave as mature people who get their acceptance, status and being from Him, not from others.

In this workbook we have seen that **resilience** is a person's ability to adapt effectively to and work with the ongoing adversities of life. Thinking biblically, is it possible for a person to be resilient in a situation without being Christlike? Maturity involves being more like Christ and having relationships that are modelled on the relational love of the Trinity, so maturity will lead to resilience. In addition, resilient responses to adversity can also help to develop more mature character through perseverance, hope and love (Romans 5:3-4, James 1:3-4). Therefore, biblically-based resilience theory requires us to be realistic about the constraints on a person's life.

## How do we facilitate maturity and wholeness in our work with children and communities?

We have seen that a positive, asset-development framework of seeing and working with children and communities is currently the most biblical approach available. It helps to empower people, rather than seeing them as problems or victims. It sees people as God sees them: in terms of their potential and their destinies, what they can become rather than just seeing them where they are now.

In seeking to help children and communities become both resilient and truly mature, the following principles are helpful guides for churches and Christian organisations, although they have profound implications:

- For a person to dare to change they first need to know that they are **loved and delighted in** as they are (Zephaniah 3:17, Jeremiah 13:3). Pastor Richard Cole from the Nehemiah Project in Sierra Leone found that child soldiers and adults need to know that they are accepted and *loved* first before workers assess their rehabilitation needs<sup>45</sup>
- Children and adults need to be **trained and guided** by parents and the community as a whole into how to love and develop their character and gifts and overcome their vulnerabilities (Deuteronomy 6:1-16)
- People need to be firstly **dependent on God**
- People also need to experience a genuine **sense of community** and to grow in **relational maturity**. We need to help each other to learn to live in healthy relationships with one another if we are to reflect the relational love-in-action seen in the Trinity<sup>46</sup>
- The whole **Body of Christ** needs to work together in love so that people feel accepted, challenged, disciplined and encouraged as they deepen their relationship with one another and with God (Ephesians 4:16). If people are to develop biblical maturity they need safe places to grow

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<sup>45</sup> See lesson 6 case study

<sup>46</sup> Practitioners like Crabb, Vanier and Scazzero have explored the question of how we develop biblically-mature communities.

## Case Study

Zena is an eight year old girl who lives in South Africa. She has a thirteen year old brother whom she likes and admires but she is jealous of her little five year old sister Evie. Her Father is Dutch and Mother is English both in their forties – aspiring middle class. They are just about employed but are poorly paid in technical work and are not highly educated. Both have alcohol /drug dependence problems but hide it well under a social facade of busyness and false respectability. They do not let their neighbours know that they are struggling, but their neighbours are aware of the drinking and see Zena as the family scapegoat. They want to help but do not know what to do for the best.

Zena has always been a difficult child and had a difficult birth she is very outspoken, manipulative and demanding. Her mother sees her as a problem but Zena would like to be different. Parents shout a lot at her and despair of her growing up she is already drawn to the streets where she can find people who she can relate to and who seem to see her as a person and not a problem. She wonders if her mother loves her and is scared of her dad and often feels that the world would be better off without her in it.

At night she tends to climb out of the house and goes to a shelter in the back of a church where they give you good food and seem to be pleased to see you. She likes it when the workers pray with her, she feels safe. Zena sometimes talks to God when she is frightened and she wonders if He is fed up with her too or if He might love her.



## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Child developmentalists see \_\_\_\_\_ as the goal of childhood. \_\_\_\_\_ maturity is the goal of Christians. Christian maturity reflects the relational community of \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_. Wholeness and maturity are the goals in the Christian's journey of \_\_\_\_\_. Main differences between \_\_\_\_\_ and theological maturity are related to \_\_\_\_\_. Christian maturity involves being \_\_\_\_\_ Christ and having relationships that are modelled on the relational love of the Trinity, so maturity will lead to \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, responses to adversity can also help to develop more mature character through \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Helping children and communities become more resilient includes letting people know they are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_; giving \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to children and adults; helping people become \_\_\_\_\_ on God; creating a sense of \_\_\_\_\_ where relational maturity can develop. For this, the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ needs to work together.

## Discussion questions

Look back across this module, think about and write down your answers. Hold before you John 10:10 as you answer these questions.

1. What are some of the challenges for us in working out how to help this family and community mature?
1. What are Zena's and her family's and community's strengths, interests and assets?
2. How could you use these in practice? (Think back to lessons 5,6, and 7)
3. What would be your role and why would you adopt this role in this instance?
4. How could you help Zena and her family to develop a sense of who God is, what the gospel is and develop a relationship with Him?
5. What might be the difficulties in these? How can Zena learn that God delights in her?
6. How might this help them to relate healthily to one another (Zephaniah 3)? How might this enhance their maturity and their resilience?
7. What life skills and skills for making healthy attachment relationships does Zena have? What might she need help with in this area? (e.g. trusting people, making and keeping healthy boundaries, resolving conflicts rather than running away or hurting herself by putting herself at risk on the street.)
8. How might this enhance her resilience?
9. How can you help Zena to feel she can trust some adults and how she can work out if adults/peers are safe?
10. How can the community help Zena and her parents to mature? (Think of using some of the ideas in this lesson and Grotberg's model of resilience - I AM, I CAN, I HAVE)
11. How would you help Zena and her community to develop a new story for their lives and to know that her past may mould her but it does not need to define her – only God does that?

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## Additional resources

<http://www.encare.info/riskyenvironments/resilience/factors>

[http://www.extension.unm.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7576\\_06](http://www.extension.unm.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7576_06)

[www.community.nsw.gov.au/researchtopractice](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/researchtopractice)

A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit (1995)  
<http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb95b.htm>

www.repssi.org (specific materials on this website that are suitable are journey of life, tree of life, mainstreaming PSS guidelines)

HIV AIDS Alliance "Building Blocks: Africa Wide Briefing Notes Psychosocial Support"  
[http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/BBE\\_Psychosocial\\_support.pdf](http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/BBE_Psychosocial_support.pdf)

Findings of the International Resilience Project with practical ideas and teaching aids:  
<http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb95b.html>

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