

Kathy Hentcy, DMH
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Kathleen.hentcy@vermont.gov

Viewing the Movie, *Resilience*, Through a Prevention Lens

The movie, *Resilience*, is an excellent presentation of the issue of early childhood adversity, how common it is, the human and economic costs of it and how we can intervene and help build resilience in children and their families.

There is certainly hope in such a message; human beings are inherently resilient and even where that resilience has been worn down through exposure to toxic stress, it can often be rebuilt and even strengthened when providers are trauma-informed and strengths-based.

For some viewers, however, the film results in feelings of helplessness or hopelessness. What they come away with is a vision of a steady or even increasing stream of traumatized kids, since that's what they are experiencing in their classrooms, neighborhoods and other places where children gather and receive services. Intervening after damage has been done tends to feel like "too little, too late," according to some viewers, since it means that not only are those children suffering, the children around them continue to pay the price of high ACE scores in less focused time in the classroom, more disruption and even feelings of being unsafe around children who can't control feelings of rage or a need to bully others.

To help counteract this response, consider adding a prevention lens to your presentation. For example, you could make a statement before the viewing about prevention, since in addition to building resilience, science tells us we can prevent Adverse Childhood experiences by strengthening families, and that with strong families, we can build flourishing communities.

You could also consider beginning the panel discussion from a prevention/strengths-based perspective, to help those viewers who may be feeling overwhelmed by the scope of the ACEs problem.

A suggested prevention frame is provided below.

- 1) When you introduce the movie, consider adding a statement to the effect of:

"While you're watching the movie, I'd like you to be thinking about prevention as much as resilience. While building resilience is important for all of us and greatly helps those already traumatized, science tells us we can prevent Adverse Childhood experiences by strengthening families.

We strengthen families by building on protective factors such as parental resilience, social connections among families and community members, increasing knowledge about parenting and child development, providing concrete support in times of need and focusing on the social

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and emotional competence of children. Doing this pays impressive dividends in enhancing child development and reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Also, when you see the name “Laura Porter,” and the statistics from Washington State flash on the screen, know that a Vermont team is working with Laura to bring the Self-Healing Communities model to Vermont.

We can talk about this more during the panel discussion after the movie, but please keep that in mind as you watch the movie.”

2) Panel Discussion:

To assist the panelists to prepare for the panel discussion with a prevention lens, give them the attached flyers on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework and on the application of Strengthening Families in Vermont.

Tell them that the first question of the panel discussion will be:

- a.) How do you in your work/practice/service strengthen families, and which protective factors do you tend to focus on?

Or –

- b.) If you don't yet use the Protective Factors Framework, can you begin to work them into your work/practice/service? If so, which factor(s) will you focus on first?

- 3) Close the evening with a short description of the Building Flourishing Communities initiative (BFC Update, Issue 1 attached). This is a very hopeful, strengths-and-community-based implementation of Laura Porter's Self-Healing Communities model.