Resilient Families:
How Communities Can Cultivate Adaptability Within Family Systems
Family Stress
Hill (1949) identified family disruptions that cause crisis

- The coming apart of the family due to the death of a member
- The addition of new or returning family members
- The sense of disgrace, which may result from infidelity, substance use disorders, or nonsupport; and
- A combination of the above, which could include suicide, imprisonment, homicide or mental health disorders
Bain (1978) claimed a family’s coping capacity was tied to four factors:

- The number of previous stressors the members had faced in recent years
- The degree of role change involved in coping
- The social support available to members, and
- The institutional support available to members
“Resilient Families” ~ an outcome of adaptability

- cultivate stability by constructing a rhythm in family life through routines and rituals ... and with a confidence to manage change

[McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Galvin & Brommel, 1999]
Science tells us that some children develop **resilience**, or the ability to overcome serious hardship, while others do not.

[Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University]
To understand the development of resilience, visualize a balance scale or seesaw.

Protective experiences and coping skills on one side counterbalance significant adversity on the other.
Resilience = when a child’s development tips toward positive outcomes — even when a heavy load of factors is stacked on the negative outcome side.
Learning to cope with manageable threats is critical for the development of resilience.
Children who do well in the face of serious hardship typically have a biological resistance to adversity and strong relationships with the important adults in their family and community.
The capabilities that underlie resilience can be strengthened at any age.
Experiences leave a chemical “signature” on genes that determines whether and how genes are expressed. [Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University]
We are wired to connect with others


“The social brain represents the only biological system in our bodies that continually attunes us to, and in turn becomes influenced by, the internal state of people we’re with...

- Whenever we connect face to face (or voice to voice, or skin to skin) with someone else, our social brains interlock “(Goleman, 2006, p. 11).
The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is:

at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.
This is your brain on communication
Connecting Community with Family & Family with Community = A Sense of Belongingness

What can communities do to strengthen social connections, prevent failures of adaptation, and encourage resilient outcomes?
Communities can change to promote resilience

... differences in social capital are stable manifestations of culture, but they are also modifiable by programs that expand opportunities for positive social interaction among community members

(Zautra et al., 2010)
There are three types of social capital performed by communities:

- **BONDING** ways to develop and sustain close relationships with others
- **BRIDGING** connect socially to share experiences
- **LINKING** have ties across networks to people different from themselves

(Sander, 2002)
Discussion ~ connect with others sitting near you

- Share & brainstorm your visions of how your particular community members & community programs could promote family resilience & enhance families’ sense of community belongingness?

**Types of Social Capital performed by communities ~**

- **BONDING** ways to develop and sustain close relationships with others
- **BRIDGING** connect socially to share experiences
- **LINKING** have ties across networks to people different from themselves
Now, let’s consider skill sets that family members & community members need
Family Communication

Communication: A Facilitating dimension ~ critical for facilitating adaptability and social interaction for enhancing belongingness

- **Listening** = empathy & attentive listening
- **Speaking skills** = speaking for oneself & not speaking for others
- **Self-disclosure** = sharing about self & relationship
- **Tracking** = staying on topic
- **Respect & Regard** = affective communication and problem solving
If Bonding, Bridging & Linking are to be performed

Consider how your communities might assist family members in building their communication skill sets.

Consider how community programming could be enhanced by training providers with the communication skills to be effective in their social interactions with families.

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For your final activity, let’s put the picture together
Move your group to a flip chart sheet located on the wall

List the various ways your communities might/could/can:

(a.) assist families to grow in resilience

(b.) build a sense of community belongingness

Reflection & Sharing ~
I Thank You for working with me this afternoon!