

Enhancing  
Resiliency to  
Overcome the  
Challenges of  
Work and  
Personal Stress

# Report Community Network Forum

A forum on approaches to promoting resilience to turn strengths into strategies to restore abilities to cope and adapt to stress in work and personal situations for ourselves and the communities we serve

March 14, 2013



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To read more about the Community Network Table, visit the following link:

<http://reisa.ca/en/partners-ressources/files/montreal-laval-south-shore-community-network-table>

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## Welcome and Introduction

Ann Usher, Forum Facilitator

Dear Forum participants,

We are pleased to send you the report of the Community network forum held March 14, 2013– Enhancing Resiliency to Overcome the Challenges of Work and Personal Stress.

Your feedback confirms that this day added to our understanding of promoting resiliency within ourselves and among the communities we serve.

Many of you highlighted the value of networking at these community forums. We have included a list of all participants and their contact information to enable the continuation of the conversations that were begun at the March gathering.

Please stay in touch with the Community Network. We look forward to your participation at future events.

Sincerely,

Anne Usher

Member of the NDG Community Council  
and Chair of the Networking and Partnership Initiative's Volunteer Committee  
for the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)

**Evaluation of the FUN FRIENDS Intervention Program**  
Professor Robert Savage, Faculty of Education, McGill University

(See powerpoint presentation in Annex 1)

## Enhancing Resiliency to Overcome the Challenges of Work and Personal Stress

Catherine Austin, AnnMarie Churchill, Austin Resilience

“Into every life, some rain must fall.” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1842). Most people are exposed to at least one traumatic event during their lifetime. (Bonanno, 2004; Ozer et al. 2003). Research is helping us to better understand the factors that will help us to be more resilient and to cope better with adversity. Resilience is the ability to successfully adapt and rebound after exposure to significant stress, adversity, or traumatic or tragic life events. These events may include the death of a loved one, family and relationship problems, serious illness or injury, financial stressors, mental illness, experiencing violence, military combat, natural disasters, or terrorism.

Research on children growing up in adverse conditions or disadvantage has led to the surprising conclusion that resilience is a common rather than an extraordinary phenomenon (Rutter, 1985, Masten, 2001, Werner & Smith, 1992). Resilience is not a trait that we are born with or not. Resilience is a dynamic process and we can learn ways to become stronger and more resilient.

Steven Southwick, professor of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, and Dennis Charney, professor of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Mount Sinai Hospital identified 10 coping mechanisms used by highly resilient individuals. They conducted interviews with diverse groups of people who demonstrated resilience in conditions of extreme stress. The three groups of people included former Vietnam prisoners of war, Special Forces instructors, and civilian men and women who had experienced abuse, natural disasters, serious medical problems, and poverty. Despite the difference in their circumstances, their coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma were the same or similar. The ten ‘resilience factors’ that emerged were:

1. an optimistic and but realistic outlook (belief in a brighter future)
2. facing their fears (an adaptive response)
3. relying on their inner moral compass, ethics, and altruism (doing what is right)
4. turning to religious or spiritual practices (drawing on faith)
5. seeking and accepting social support (learning the ‘Tap Code’)
6. imitating resilient role models (providing the road map)
7. training: physical fitness and strengthening (improving physical and mental health)
8. brain fitness (challenging your mind and heart)
9. cognitive and emotional flexibility (acceptance, cognitive reappraisal, gratitude)
10. meaning, purpose, and growth (clear and valued purpose, committing fully to a mission)

Source: Southwick, S & D. Charney. (2012) *Resilience The Science of Mastering Life’s Greatest Challenges*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Our ability to manage stress and adversity can be enhanced through learning and developing these key resiliency skills and strategies. Realizing Resilience offers training in the following five resiliency-building modules based on the acronym A.D.A.P.T:

**A = Adjust your attitude.**

Participants learn how by changing their thoughts and beliefs about adversity they can change also change their feelings and behaviour. Strategies for developing realistic optimism and positive emotions are also provided.

**D= Develop emotional resilience.**

Participants learn skills to become more emotionally aware, control their impulses, relax their bodies and minds, and become more mindful.

**A= Anchor yourself.**

Participants explore their signature strengths, meaning and purpose in their life, opportunities to reach out and give back, and sources of social support.

**P= Proactively problem-solve.**

Participants learn skills for becoming more solution focused and dealing with challenges including problem-solving and goal-setting skills.

**T= Take care of yourself**

Participants learn ways to feel more balanced and inner calm practices, daily habits, and self-care to enhance their health and well-being.

For more information on training, please contact:

**Realizing Resilience**

P.O. Box 196,

Manotick, ON K4M 1A3

[www.realizingresilience.ca](http://www.realizingresilience.ca)

613-692-3763 (Ottawa, ON)

709-693-6948 (St. John's, NL)

[info@realizingresilience.ca](mailto:info@realizingresilience.ca)

## Program

### **Context**

*In October 2011, community resources working in the sectors of health, social services, employment and education came together to address new challenges as an increasing number of those seeking their services are showing signs of psychological distress and poor mental health.*

*The forum addressed the impact of this emerging clientele on community programs and explored what strategies should be developed to adapt to the new challenge.*

*The participants began a dialogue around the factors of community resilience that are key to responding to distress of community members.*

*The community resources in the different sectors expressed a desire to continue the process of discovery and engagement.*

*The second Community Network Forum responds to that wish and aims to take us further on the journey.*

### ***The second Community Network Forum on Mental Health***

This is the second Community Network Forum on mental health. The forum will continue a dialogue among community resources working with vulnerable groups on ways to support community members at risk. Participants will look at resiliency approaches and tools for targeted action to turn strengths into strategies to restore and maintain health for themselves and for the people they serve.

#### ***What is resiliency?***

Our society is characterized by increasing levels of stress. Stress in personal and work circumstances may compromise our ability to overcome such challenges unscathed. This is where resilience is key.

Resilience is the process of adapting to circumstances, such as trauma, tragedy, threats or significant stress. It means ‘bouncing back’ from difficult experiences with an ability to move forward and restore positive functioning. Being resilient does not mean we eliminate all adverse conditions, but rather when they arise we deal with them effectively.

Resilience helps people face and manage life events; resilient people persist in the face of obstacles and, when necessary, accept circumstances that cannot be changed.

#### ***Sharing and Learning***

Participants will share their experiences with resiliency and will be the first to learn the results of an evaluation of one resiliency program “Friends for Life”. The forum will have a “hands-on” workshop experience with an expert to learn about resiliency tools and their potential application for participants, personally, and for their organizations.

#### ***Where do we go from here?***

Forum participants will discuss potential resiliency projects and follow up workshops. Community resources will identify opportunities to strengthen their networks and engage in projects and policy initiatives to turn strengths into strategies in order to enhance the health and well being of community members.

<b><i>Morning Program</i></b>	<b>Theme</b>
<i>9:00 – 9:30</i>	<b>Registration</b>
<i>9:30 – 9:45</i>	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>  Anne Usher, Chairperson, Community Network Table
<i>9:45 – 10:15</i>	<b>Introduction to Resiliency</b>  Catherine Austin, Director, Austin Resilience Development, Inc.  <i>What is resiliency and why is it so important?</i>
<i>10:15 – 10:45</i>	<b>Presentation and Discussion</b>  Dr. Robert Savage, Faculty of Education, McGill University  <i>Ella Amir, Executive Director, AMI-Quebec, will introduce Dr. Savage and explain the context of the Dr. Savage's work with AMI-Quebec.</i>  <i>Dr. Savage will present the results of an evaluation of the resiliency program "Friends For Life" implemented in schools in the Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board in Laval.</i>  <i>Participants are invited to comment or ask questions.</i>
<i>10:45 – 11:00</i>	<b>Health Break</b>
<i>11:00 – 12:00</i>	<b>Round Table Discussion</b>  <i>Forum participants representing community resources from the health, social services, employment and education sectors will share current programs, initiatives or strategies addressing their clientele experiencing psychological distress and mental health problems.</i>  <i>Participants will be invited to share views on the factors of resilience they see in the community members using their services, and in the broader communities they come from.</i>
<i>12:00 – 1:00</i>	<b>Lunch</b>

<i>Afternoon Program</i>	Theme
1:00 – 2:00	<p data-bbox="573 199 1414 231"><b>Enhancing resiliency: building tools to improve community response</b></p> <p data-bbox="573 279 808 346"><b>Catherine Austin AnnMarie Churchill</b></p> <p data-bbox="573 394 1474 655"><i>Catherine Austin has worked in the field of social work for the past 25 years in the areas of school-based primary prevention, clinical social work, and social planning and policy. Catherine has been providing training in the FRIENDS program since 2005. She is the director of Austin Resilience Development Inc., the exclusive provider of FRIENDS training in Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut.</i></p> <p data-bbox="573 697 1474 877"><i>AnnMarie Churchill is a trainer and clinician working primarily in the area of resilience development and mental health promotion. AnnMarie has been a mental health clinician and consultant in the US, Canada and Aboriginal communities over the last 25 years. She has been a trainer with the FRIENDS program since 2004.</i></p> <p data-bbox="573 961 1474 1029"><i>Catherine and AnnMarie will introduce forum participants to resiliency concepts and resiliency skills training.</i></p>
2:00 – 2:15	<p data-bbox="573 1077 730 1108"><b>Health Break</b></p>
2:15 – 3:15	<p data-bbox="573 1155 812 1222"><b>Catherine Austin AnnMarie Churchill</b></p> <p data-bbox="573 1270 1474 1337"><i>Participants will experience an interactive learning workshop introducing skills and strategies to cope with stress.</i></p>
3:15 – 3:30	<p data-bbox="573 1392 909 1423"><b>Where do we go from here?</b></p> <p data-bbox="573 1472 1474 1539"><i>Participants will hear about current resiliency projects and discuss potential program follow up.</i></p>
3:30 – 3:45	<p data-bbox="573 1585 812 1617"><b>Conference closure</b></p> <p data-bbox="573 1665 714 1696">Anne Usher</p>

## Participant Feedback

Survey: Mental Health Forum Feedback– March 14 2013  
Via SurveyMonkey.com

### 1. Overall, were you satisfied with the forum?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely satisfied	65.52%	19
Moderately satisfied	31.03%	9
Slightly satisfied	0%	0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3.45%	1
Slightly dissatisfied	0%	0
Moderately dissatisfied	0%	0
Extremely dissatisfied	0%	0
Total		29

### 2. How well organized did you find the forum (registration, length of sessions, setup, etc.)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely organized	24.14%	7
Very organized	58.62%	17
Moderately organized	13.79%	4
Slightly organized	3.45%	1
Not at all organized	0%	0
Total		29

### 3. Was the information presented useful to you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely useful	34.48%	10
Very useful	55.17%	16
Moderately useful	6.90%	2
Slightly useful	3.45%	1
Not at all useful	0%	0
Total		29

**4. Was the workshop useful to you?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Extremely useful	31.03%	9
Very useful	51.72%	15
Moderately useful	10.34%	3
Slightly useful	6.90%	2
Not at all useful	0%	0
Total		29

**5. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the forum?**

Resilience can only be strengthened when "sharing" in this kind of Forum!

great initiative. very helpful!

The forum is an excellent opportunity to network, however the group discussion was very large and therefore not conducive for in depth conversations.

No

Very relevant, can be applied to personal and work life

It was a very enlightening experience – the speakers were all very knowledgeable and interesting in their own fields and had a great deal to contribute. The food was very good and the fruit during the snacks was a welcome addition. The only suggestion I have would be to omit the part where we all introduce ourselves in the beginning. It takes too long and there are too many people to do this effectively.

enjoyed the atmosphere, presentation and interactive workshop.

It should have offered a wider range of topics on mental health.

It was my first year attending and I am glad that I came. It was also the first year that our agency was represented.

Really informative/useful/inspiring (at work & personal life). Thank you very much for organizing this forum.

Sorry I was only there in the afternoon. The exercise was a good way for the small groups to express themselves – great way for participation

I came away empowered as it gave me confidence in being able to say I am resilient, committed, loyal, determined and it is lifes lessons that have brought me this far. Thank you to the facilitators who shared their own struggles and are still able to move forward in their pain. This is what I have done and continue to do despite the days in between where I feel crushed and unable to continue but find the strength within myself to carry on.

I really enjoyed the casual atmosphere of sharing that was created, as opposed to a more formal setting. I felt comfortable and learned some valuable tools that I will carry into practice.

looking forward to next year

The three presentations were great. Good material, excellent delivery. We did not get a Q/A session with Dr. Savage, but instead a rather long drawn out circle with Jim Carter in standing the middle. The circle was big and the question(s) needed to be more focused. There were too many vague topics introduced and the discussion lacked a purpose and focus. The Unitarian Church is lacking in sufficient parking and they did not open the door on time which caused the organizers to set up in a haphazard and rushed manner. Everything should be set up prior to the arrival of the participants which could not be done because of the church personnel. I would suggest another location if possible. They should reduce the fee for the day since they did not live up to their part of the contract.

I was very pleased. Speakers were clear and very interesting. Space was good and also the food. It was done in a relaxed atmosphere that led to good listening. The topic was extremely interesting. Bravo!

**6. Would you like a follow up to this forum? What recommendations would you have?**

yes, The presentation was interesting however a presentation more pertinent to local community concerns might be more helpful

Yes

definitely would like to see more

I think we need another forum with more general applicability. Perhaps you have already held one and i did not get a notice

Yes; useful for our partners who deal with clientele on an everyday basis. Recommendations: variety of topics and speakers.

yes for a follow-up to address other questions related to mental health.

Yes, I would appreciate a follow-up. For some modules, I felt it was rushed. It would have been helpful to have longer periods of time for certain modules. Also, I wanted to know how does our agency perhaps get involved with REISA?

I will be contacting the speakers to learn more about the curriculum for adults and see if we can pilot a group in our territory

Would love to bring it to our south shore community as an all day workshop.

Follow up meeting with participants to share the implementation and results of what was learned at the forum

Continue to hold an annual forum. It is a welcome opportunity to network in a very positive and affirming environment.

Yes

I enjoy the forums generally. Some topics could include: youth challenges in education youth challenges in health and/or social services Bill 14 and its implications in health and education

Yes

## FORUM PARTICIPANTS CONTACT LIST

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