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Building Resilience in Adolescents

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How to build and enhance resilience in an adolescent who has experienced Domestic & Family Violence

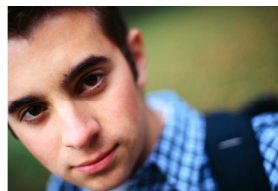
A Strengths-based Invitational Approach



Adolescents & Domestic Violence (DV)



- ❖ Presenting issue/s
 - Behaviour, Thoughts, Feelings



How does an adolescent who has experienced DV present to your service?

Presenting issues of an adolescent:

- *Behaviour - acting out ? Withdrawn?*
- *Thoughts - “life is crap” , “no one can help “*
- *Feelings – helpless, angry, confused, lost, sad, distress, guilt, hopeful that they can change dad or help mum to leave DV.*

“THE BULLY”:

- Adolescents who have experienced DV may display “bully” behaviours themselves – Acting out, hitting others, swearing, disrespectful, not listening to mother/father, disengaged from homework, school
- Substance misuse- drug &/or alcohol
- Staying out late, hanging out with unhealthy friends, peer pressure
- Underlying feelings: angry, frustrated, confused, helpless, unsupported, alone, misunderstood etc...

“THE WITHDRAWER”

- Adolescents who have experienced DV may withdraw and internalise feelings.
- “The Parentified Child” - reassuring the parent that they will be all right when upset, protecting parent from the emotional consequences of the other parent’s abusive actions/abuse.
- Displaying behaviours such as: quiet, compliant, isolate themselves, low self esteem, low self confidence etc
- hopeful that they can “fix it” - to stop dad and his impact on mum. Thinking and feeling as though they have the power to influence/change parents or need to help mum/dad.
- Underlying feelings: sadness, confused, helpless, distress, depression, anxiety, guilt (if children believe they can stop the abuse, when their ‘attempts’ fail they may experience guilt/shame) etc

Self-reflection:

- ❖ What might you initially think about this young person?
- ❖ What comes up for you when thinking about working with him/her? (*thoughts/feelings*)
- ❖ How might these thoughts/feelings *impact*:
 - how you work with him/her?
 - what you do or say to him/her?



Adolescent- focused

- ❖ What adolescents really need and want

- ❖ The Practitioner's Strengths:

- Engaging Respectfully & Relationally



- **What adolescents really need and want:**

To be respected, to feel heard, to experience an increased sense of safety, to experience, boundaries, safety, confidentiality,

- **The Practitioner's Strengths:**

Engage Respectfully and relationally: you can be curious, listen, build rapport, understand, acknowledge their strengths, believe them, assist them to think about their own choices; help them what they can/cant control.

Building Resilience:

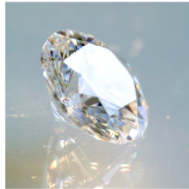
A Strengths-Based Invitational Approach



A Strengths-Based Invitational Approach



❖ “Polishing the diamond that they already are”



❖ What are the potential strengths and skills that adolescents have?

Bruce:

“Polishing the diamond that they already are”

- Adolescents have attributes/skills/abilities which need to be tapped into- acknowledged, affirmed & validated.
- Assisting the adolescent to identify their own strengths.
- They need help/assistance in gaining awareness and to identify what they are good at, what they CAN do and what they like to do, what is within their power and control and what is not.

What are the potential strengths that adolescents have?

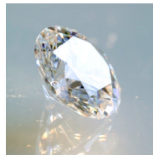
- Can be a great friend/support to others e.g., their best friend- reliable, available etc
- Can take initiative
- Creative - talents/abilities/competencies
- Know right from wrong
- How to protect themselves- they already have developed coping skills (their current coping might not be helpful or healthy but they have learnt to ‘survive’ somehow)

... Etc ...

A Strengths-Based Invitational Approach



- ❖ How to help adolescents recognise their own strengths, in their own words.
- ❖ Invite adolescents to make better, helpful and/or safer choices



A strength's- based Invitational Approach within the Context of Domestic Violence:

Help adolescents recognize their OWN strengths (abilities, skills and competencies) and what they CAN DO- in their own words.

Invite adolescents to make helpful, safer or better choices (An Invitational Approach- Alan Jenkins).

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- ❖ Helpful versus unhelpful ways to work with an adolescent who has experienced DV

Helpful: Listening, inviting, acknowledging their strengths. Invite an adolescent to consider their inner qualities and invite them to recognise and acknowledge their own strengths and internal resources, things that they DO have power and control over.

Help adolescent create their own sense of personal boundaries, assertiveness- if safety is not an issue.

Versus

Unhelpful: Reassuring the young person, doing things FOR them; promising things you can't achieve, telling them what to do, forcing change, telling them their options

---Provide Case examples---

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❖ Other issues:



- Safety
- Support network (friends, family and other services)
- Working with the family (mother / father)
- Provide appropriate referrals



Taking into consideration the Context of Domestic Violence:

Issues such:

- Safety - helping an adolescent create their own sense of personal boundary, limits of confidentiality if their own or someone else's safety is compromised
- Support network (friends, family and other services) – link adolescent up with appropriate services
- Working with the family (mother / father) – is the mother/father/other siblings obtaining help or support? It is important to engage parents in the process or provide appropriate referrals to family members
- Provide mother and/or father with contact numbers of DV services, make warm referrals where appropriate.



Question & Answers

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Thank you

Bruce: