

STRENGTHENING FAMILY RESILIENCE

Principles to Inform Social Policy, Programs, & Practice

ASIAN FAMILY CONFERENCE
**STRONG & RESILIENT ASIAN FAMILIES:
 CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**
 Ministry of Social & Family Development
 Singapore ~ 6 & 7 November 2024

Froma Walsh, PhD

Professor Emerita, University of Chicago
fwalsh@uchicago.edu

1

Family Life Today: “New Normal” ~ Diverse, Complex

- **Cultural Diversity; Family Households; Socio-Economic Resources**
- **Rapid Societal & Family Demographic Changes**
 - E.g. ↓ family size & ↑ life expectancy / eldercare needs
- **Families Face Many Stressful Life Challenges**
- **Research on Family Resilience:**
 - Shift focus: from Family Dysfunction, Deficits to
 - **Family Challenges, Strengths, & Potential:**
 - **How Families, Under Stress, Can Succeed & Flourish**

Walsh, F. (Ed.)(2012). *Normal Family Processes: Diversity and Complexity*.(4th ed) Guilford Press. DOI: 10.13140/2.1.3740.5765. Chinese edition, Shanghai Joint Publishing.

2

FAMILY RESILIENCE

Capacities in Overcoming Adversity

Coping + Adaptation + Positive Growth

When Facing Stressful Life Challenges:
 More than Surviving;
 Able to Flourish

3

Understanding Human Resilience:

3+ decades: Advances in Resilience Theory & Research

- ...From focus on Individual Traits in resilient children & adults
- **Relational / Family Supports are Vital for Resilience**
 - **The Family is Central & Essential for Resilience**
 - For individual members, communities, and society
 - **Resilience Involves Dynamic, Multi-level, Systemic Processes**
 - Individual - Family – Community – Social Influences: Interconnected

Masten, A. & Monn, A. R. (2015). Child and family resilience: A call for integrating science, practice, and training. *Family Relations*, 64(1), 5-21.

Ungar, M. (ed.)(2021). *Multisystemic resilience: Adaptation and transformation in contexts of change*. Oxford University Press.

4

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY RESILIENCE

Developmental Perspective

- **Varied Life Challenges & Pathways in Resilience Over Time**
 - Varied Family Values, Aims, & Resources
 - No Single Model or Set of Traits for Resilience

Dynamic Systemic Processes:

- **We Can Build Resilience across the Family Life Cycle**
 - Marriage - Child-rearing – Life Crisis/Transition ~ Elder Support
 - Facilitative Beliefs & Practices; Build Skills; Mobilize Resources

5

FAMILY SYSTEM
Stressful Challenges with Adversity:

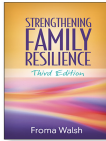

- **Affect all Family Members, Relationships, & Family Functioning**
 - Multiple stressors compound distress over time
- **Family Approach & Response: Can Support Resilience for all members, their bonds, & the family unit.**

6

Strengthening Family Resilience
Building Family Capacities to Overcome Adversity

Coping + Adaptation + Positive Growth

- **Strengthen Bonds & Family Functioning**
- **Manage & Overcome Stressful Challenges**
- **Positive Development to Thrive**
- **Become More Resourceful in Facing Future Challenges**
 - so: Intervention also has Prevention Benefit!

7

Walsh Family Resilience Framework

- **Integrates 3+ decades of theory, research & training/practice**
- **Framework & Assessment tool (WFRQ) for research, family policy & programs, community services, & mental health / health care**
- **Wide range of adaptations globally (15+ translations of WFRQ)**
 - In East Asia: Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, S. Korea, Indonesia
- **Relevant to varied types of adversity, populations & social contexts**
- **Identify & target key family processes for resilience**
- **Practice Principles & Intervention formats: Couple / Family Counseling; Multi-family Groups; Workshops; Community Forums**

8

Family Resilience
 Strengthen Family Functioning with Stressful Challenges

Couples as Partners
 Workplace / Family Balance
 Parenting & Elder Care


Build Team Effort:

- Shared Beliefs & Practices
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Collaboration & Mutual Support



9

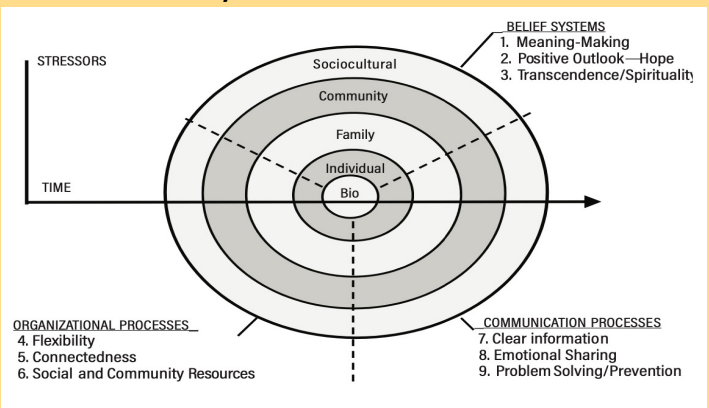
Key Processes in Family Resilience



Framework & Scale (WFRQ) in Walsh, F. (2016). *Strengthening Family Resilience* (3rd Ed.) Guilford Press.

10

Multilevel Systemic Influences in Resilience



BELIEF SYSTEMS
 1. Meaning-Making
 2. Positive Outlook—Hope
 3. Transcendence/Spirituality

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES
 4. Flexibility
 5. Connectedness
 6. Social and Community Resources

COMMUNICATION PROCESSES
 7. Clear information
 8. Emotional Sharing
 9. Problem Solving/Prevention

11

Belief Systems
 How Families View Their Adverse Situation and Future Possibilities

Encourage facilitative beliefs and actions:

- 1. Making Meaning of Adverse Experience**
 - To Understand, Manage, Overcome Shared Challenges
- 2. Positive Outlook: Reorient & Practice Hope**
 - Together, we can get through this!
- 3. Transcendence -- Values, Larger Connection, Inspiration**
 - Transformation – Learning, Change, & Growth:
 - Reorder Priorities, ↑ Appreciation, Family & Social Bonds
 - Compassion & Outreach to Help Others

12

Organizational Resources
Systemic Shock Absorbers

- 4. Flexibility -- to Change & Adapt**
 - And: Provide Stability -- Structure, Reliability
 - Leadership - Nurture, Protect, Guide
- 5. Connectedness -- Mutual Support, Collaboration**
 - Commitment and care
- 6. Social, Community, Larger System Supports**
 - Workplace, Schools, Healthcare, Childcare / Elder care
 - ❖ **Overcome odds / Change odds to thrive**

13

Communication Processes

- 7. Clear, Consistent Messages**
 - Information sharing; truthful
- 8. Share Feelings; Respect Differences**
 - Pain, Struggle, Fear, Regrets
 - Pride, Appreciation, Joy, Humor, Fun
 - Refuel Energies & Spirits
- 9. Collaborative Problem-Solving & Prevention**
 - Learn from setbacks, Celebrate Successes
 - Be Proactive: Plan, Prepare, "Plan B"

14

... and Find Humor Amidst Difficulties

Active Initiative

A cartoon illustration of a black dog sitting on a floor in front of a window with vertical blinds. A sign on the floor says "TRY IT!". The dog has a speech bubble that says "NO!". The artist's signature "S. Gibbs" is in the bottom right corner.

Persevere

A cartoon illustration of a brown dog standing on a ledge, looking up at a high, solid wall that it cannot reach.

15

Chicago Center for Family Health
Resilience-Based Program Applications 1991-2020

Community Agency Consultation / Partnerships
Program Design, Implementation, Staff Training - Services

- **Crisis, Trauma, Loss**
 - Complex or Traumatic Death, Bereavement
 - Major Disaster Recovery; Refugee Adaptation
- **Disruptive Family Transitions**
 - Family Separation; Divorce & Stepfamily Adaptation
 - Job Loss & Transition / Financial Insecurity
- **Multi-Stress, Persistent Conditions**
 - Chronic Illness; Disabilities
 - At-risk Youth: Family - School Partnership for Success
 - Positive Youth Development in Low-income Communities

16

CCFH Program Illustrations (1)

❑ Crisis, Trauma, Loss Experiences:
Training & Consultation: Resilience-based Counseling; Multi-Family Groups

- **Complex & Traumatic Family Bereavement**
- **Disaster Recovery**
 - e.g. Earthquake Response ~ Turkey, 2023
- **Refugee Adaptation**
 - Multi-family Groups: *CAFES* - Bosnian & Kosovar refugees in Chicago

Walsh, F. (2023). *Complex & Traumatic Loss: Fostering Healing & Resilience*. Guilford Press
 Walsh, F. (2007). Traumatic loss and major disasters: Strengthening family and community resilience. *Family Process*, 46 (2) 207-227.

17

CCFH Program Illustrations (2)

Disruptive Family Transitions

- **Family Separation; Migration** – Video-conference
- **Divorce & Remarriage**
 - Family Mediation; Stepfamily Adaptation
- **Job Loss & Transition / Financial Insecurity**
 - Multi-family workshops: Resilience-based themes
 - ↓ Family Stresses & ↑ Coping Strategies, Mutual Support, Re-employment Success

Walsh, F. (2002). A family resilience framework: Innovative practice applications. *Family Relations*, 51,130-137.

18

CCFH Program Examples (3) Multi-Stress, Chronic Conditions

Serious & Chronic Illness; Disabilities

- “Resilient Partners” - Couples Groups
- Childhood Disabilities; Genetic Disorders - Multi-Family Groups
- Diabetes; Mental Illness: Family - Community Workshops

At-risk Youth, Vulnerable Families & Communities

- “Family - School Partnership for Success” Monthly Staff Consultation Groups
- Positive Development of At-Risk Youth
 - GRYD: Los Angeles: Program design + staff/counselor training /Eval
 - Emerging Minds - Australia –2023: Program Design / Training /Evaluation
www.emergingminds.com.au

19


Los Angeles GRYD Program: Positive Youth Development

Resilience-based Training for 150 case managers,
 working with 1000 youth (age 10-15) assessed at high-risk

Multi-level Systems Approach:
 Individual & Peer Group Counseling
 Community Mentors, Activities, Skill -building
 Family Sessions: Strengthen functioning

Refocus from Problems to Possibilities -- Future Vision


- Reframe Problems, Risks as Obstacles to Overcome
- Involve Family Members, Mentors, Social Network to Support Youth Resilience & Positive Aims
- Strengthen Family Functioning to Support Active Steps toward Goals



20

Recent Prevention Programs- Examples

- **The Proactive Relationship Checkup for Couples' Relational Resilience**
 - On-line questionnaire & interactive exercise for couple discussion -
 - **Adaptation of Walsh Family Resilience Framework- 2023**
James Cordova, PhD icordova@clarku.edu www.arammu.com
- **Families Tackling Tough Times Together** – Online interactive tool
 - Pandemic-related Family Stresses - 2020
 - 10 Weekly video sessions & activities
 - Themes linked to the 9 key processes in Walsh Family Resilience Framework –
Purdue University, Family Social Sciences



21

Facilitating Family Resilience : Basic Practice Principles

- Express Conviction in Strengths, Potential of all Families, alongside Vulnerabilities, Limitations
- Use Language, Framing to Humanize, Depathologize Difficulties
- Contextualize Distress; Decrease Shame, Blame
- Compassionate Witness: Suffering, Struggle, Losses, Best Intentions & Efforts
- Struggle can yield Learning, Transformation & Positive Growth
- Shift Focus from Problems to Potential for Mastery, Ability to Thrive
- Repair Relational Conflicts or Estrangement
- Encourage Steps toward Positive Future Vision:
 - Learning, purpose, priorities, relational connections

22

Walsh Family Resilience Questionnaire (WFRQ)

Mixed methods research: highly recommended, including qualitative approaches to advance understanding of family resilience and to inform policy and practices.

WFRQ Assessment Tool for Family Research, Planning / Evaluation of Programs & Services:

- To rate population and within-family relational processes in facing adversity -- and changes over time.
- Pre- and post-assessment in practice effectiveness research
- Combined with semi-structured interviews for fuller exploration of items & key processes for resilience
- Caution not to "profile" or label families in reductionistic, stereotypic typologies.

Note:

- Some processes, e.g. good communication, tend to promote resilience across contexts; others may be situation-specific or vary with cultural values.
- Different strengths might be more or less helpful to deal with varied challenges, as in acute crisis events or with multi-stress conditions over time, (e.g. child death, divorce, chronic illness, or major disaster)
- Psychometrics should be established for WFRQ adaptation in varied study / social contexts.
 - (e.g. Italian adaptation: Rocchi et al., <http://dx.doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S147315>)
- For WFRQ questionnaire information or use, contact: fwalsh@uchicago.edu

23

Many Varied Pathways in Resilience Navigating the Road Ahead



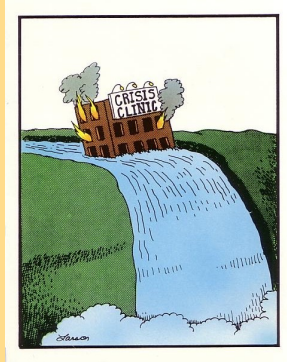
24

Child, Family, & Community Services:

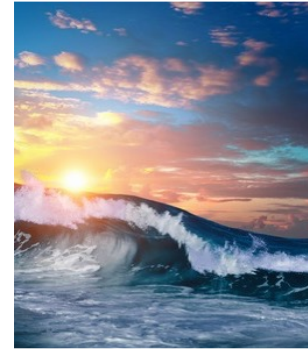
from
Crisis-Reactive Response

By Building Family Resilience:

- Intervention is also Prevention
 - Strengthens Relational Bonds
 - ↑ Capacities to Meet Future Life Challenges



25



Strong families can shelter us
through the storms of life

They don't make the storm go away

But they hold us steady through it

And they guide our journey forward

26

References

- Walsh, F. (2023). *Complex & Traumatic Loss: Fostering Healing & Resilience*. Guilford Press
- Prime, H., Walsh, F., & Masten, A. (2023) Building family resilience in the wake of the global pandemic: Looking back to prepare for the future. *Canadian Psychology*, DOI: [10.1037/cap0000366](https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000366)
- Walsh, F. (2021). Family resilience: A dynamic systemic framework. In M. Ungar, (Ed.), *Multisystemic resilience: Adaptation and transformation in contexts of change*. New York: Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190095888.003.0015
- Walsh, F. (2020). Loss and resilience in the time of COVID-19: Meaning-making, hope, and transcendence. *Family Process*, 59(3), 898-911. DOI: 10.1111/famp.12588 .
- Walsh, F. (2016). *Strengthening Family Resilience* (3rd ed.) Guilford Press.
- Walsh, F. (2016). Applying a family resilience framework in training, practice, & research: Mastering the art of the possible. *Family Process*, 55, 616-632 . Doi:10.1111/famp.12260
- Walsh, F. (2016) Family Resilience: A developmental systems framework. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, DOI: 10.1080/17405629.2016.1154035

27

- Masten, A. & Monn, A. R. (2015). Child and family resilience: A call for integrating science, practice, and training. *Family Relations*, 64(1), 5-21.
- Walsh, F. (2012). *Normal Family Processes: Diversity and Complexity*. (4th ed.). Guilford Press. DOI: 10.13140/2.1.3740.5765. Chinese Edition, Shanghai Joint Publishing.
- Walsh, F. (2011). Resilience in families with health challenges. In Kraft-Rosenberg, & M.S.-R. Pehler, (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Family Health* (pp. 895-899). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Walsh, F. (2007). Traumatic loss and major disaster: Strengthening family and community resilience. *Family Process*, 46, 207-227.
- Rolland, J. S., & Walsh, F. (2006). Facilitating family resilience with childhood illness and disability. Special issue on the family. *Pediatric Opinion*, 18, 1-11.
- Rolland, J.R. & Walsh, F. (2005). Systemic training for healthcare professionals: The Chicago Center for Family Health Approach. *Family Process*, 44 (3) 283-301.
- Walsh, F. (2003). Family resilience: A framework for clinical practice. *Family Process*, 42 (1), 1-18
- Walsh, F. (2002). A family resilience framework: Innovative practice applications. *Family Relations*, 51 (2), 130-137.
- Walsh, F. (1996). The concept of family resilience: Crisis and challenge. *Family Process*, 35, 261-281.

28