

# *Resiliency and Child Witness Support*

*Written and developed by:*

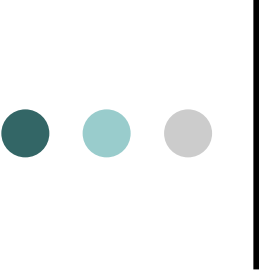
*Wendy van Tongeren Harvey*

*October 2004*



# *Objective of Workshop*

- *Encourage a dialogue on the experience of a child victim of crime, to promote natural resiliency which is available to that child.*
- *Introduce the American Psychological Association model as guidelines to promoting resilience in children*

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- *The views of this presenter do not reflect the position of the Attorney General of British Columbia*
  - *The presenter is a lawyer in B.C. and does not offer any opinions that suggest an expertise in psychology.*



# *Resiliency*

- *The American Psychological Association has recently published materials on their web page to assist the people in the context of the September 11, 2001 experience.*
- *The psychological survival of many people has lead some to believe strongly in the human being's ability to resist trauma.*



## *Other research*

- *National Child Traumatic Stress Network (handouts)*
- *George Bonanno – Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events? (2004)*



## *Bonanno suggests:*

- *It is incorrect to assume all persons react to aversive conditions the same way,*
- *To provide blanket interventions (such as grief counselling) could in some cases interfere with the natural resilience process,*
- *The characteristics that allow resilience may not be helpful in normal conditions.*



# *The APA and resilience:*

- **What Is Resilience?**

- *“Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress -- such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.”*

- *apa.helping.org*



## *Resilience:*

- *Does not mean recovery*
- *Does mean perceiving the situation in a manner that is less harmful to self.*



# 10 Ways to Build Resilience

- *[apa.helping.org](https://www.apa.helping.org)*



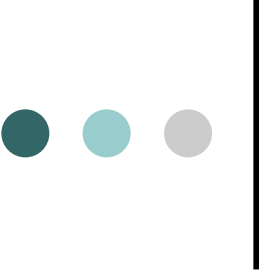
# Make connections.

- *Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.*
- *[Apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.

- *You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.*
- *[Apa.helping.org](http://Apa.helping.org)*



# Accept that change is a part of living.

- *Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.*
  - *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Move toward your goals.

- *Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"*

*[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Take decisive actions.

- *Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.*
  - *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Look for opportunities for self-discovery

- *People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.*

- *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Nurture a positive view of yourself.

- *Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.*
  - *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Keep things in perspective.

- *Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.*
  - *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Maintain a hopeful outlook.

- *An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.*
  - *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



# Take care of yourself.

- *Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.*

- *[apa.helping.org](http://apa.helping.org)*



*Applying these tips to the  
child/youth witness experience*

- *Putting this in context.*

# WHY WE THINK IT IS VALUABLE TO USE THE CRIMINAL LAW TO PROTECT of CHILDREN AND YOUTH!!

Some persons  
will stop  
behaviour  
if they know  
it will get them  
in trouble.



Certain offenders  
are put in detention  
for dangerous  
illegal behaviour.

The court can order a  
person to stay away  
from another person



*In a trial, the evidence must usually be given vive voce.*

- *For children it is difficult experience to testify.*
- *See London Family Court Clinic findings.*



# *Inviting a contextual shift – ask the questions*

*Can a child participate as a  
victim/witness of a crime in our  
Canadian Criminal Justice System  
and complete the experience with a  
positive outlook.*

*What relationships, competencies,  
perspectives, behaviours,  
conversations are called for to  
process the experience in this  
manner?*



## *Promoting Resiliency:*

- *Shift in perspective from damaged to resiliency.*
- *Shift from hopelessness to celebration of achievement.*

- 
- *TAKING A CHILD THROUGH THE CRIMINAL COURT PROCESS.*
  - *Some contextual information*



# *The Basic Objectives in Supporting Children and Youth:*

- *Minimize trauma*
- *Elicit valid evidence*
- *Maintain the integrity of the process*
- *Maintain the appearance of integrity*



# *Principles of court preparation*

- *Components: evidence, emotional, knowledge of the procedures and system*
- *Child and individual integrated*
- *Multidiscipline*
- *Team (people already known to the child)*
- *Empower by sharing information and giving choices*
- *Embrace the reality that the preparation may be challenged*



# *Steps of Preparation:*

## *○ Precourt*

- Assessment*
- Design, schedule*
- Communication and support strategies*

## *○ Mid litigation*

- Court accompaniment*

## *○ After court follow up*

- Debrief*
- Prepare victim impact*

# *The Crown Counsel/Victim Assistance Preparation Design:*

- *Team objectives and roles*
- *Background of the child*
- *Child's description of the events*
- *Review previous statements*
- *Integrating feelings with support*
- *Introduction to courtroom and supports*
- *Debrief after court*



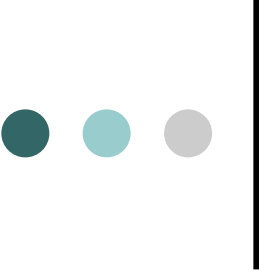
*Let's try integrating these  
two:*

- *Tips for building resilience*  
*With*
- *The realities of child/youth witness  
preparation.*



# *Preparing the Child for Court:*

- *Contemplate multi perspective objectives*
- *Be mindful in reaching objectives*
- *Integrate the child's choices in the support*

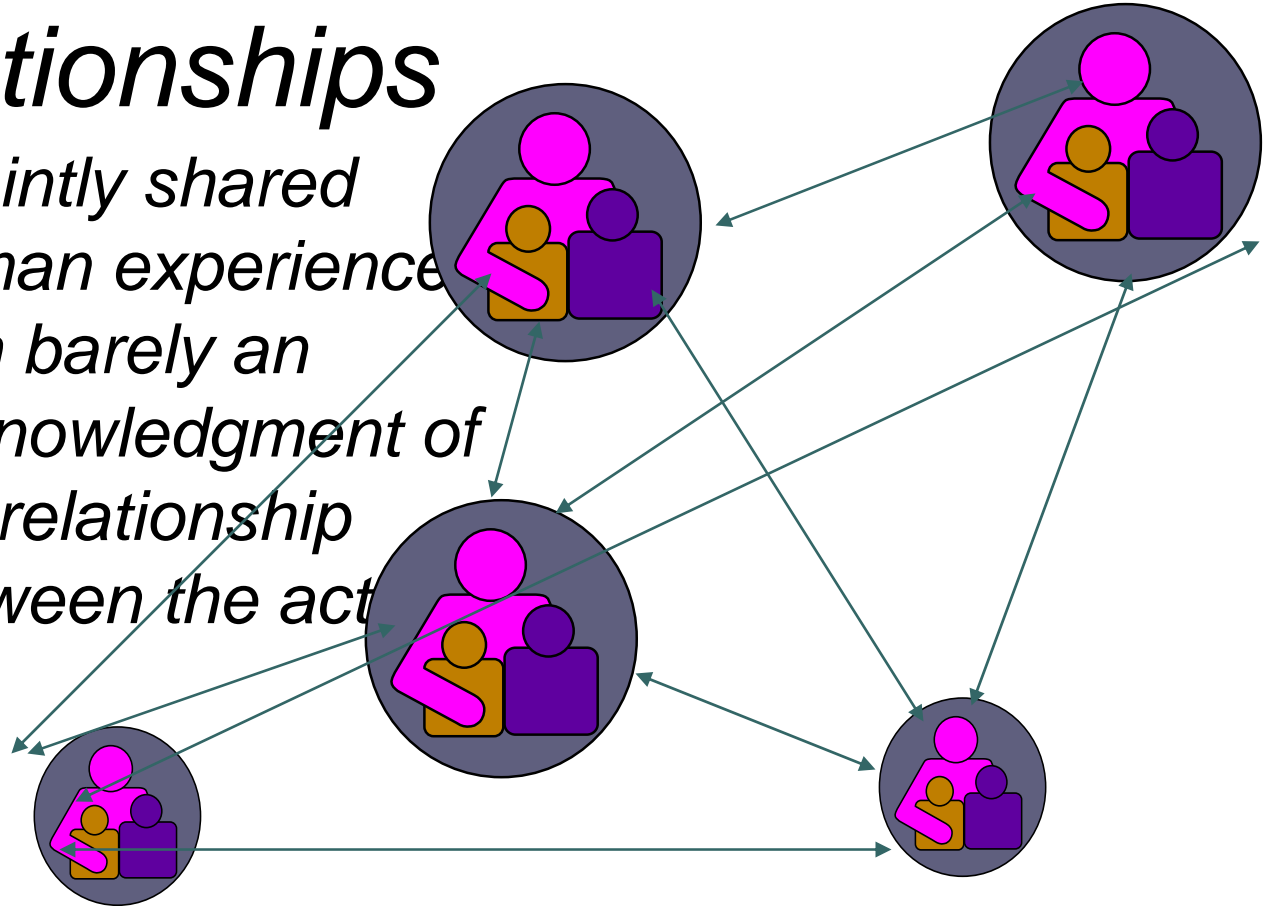


*The fundamental objective requires looking at the lens through which you see the child or youth:*

- *a problem*
- *walking damage*
- *lots of work*
- *illuminates my incompetence*

# *Engaging in the court process is really about relationships*

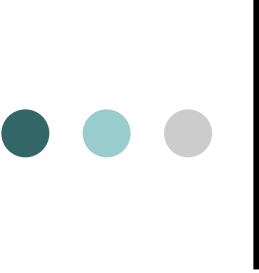
- *A jointly shared human experience with barely an acknowledgment of the relationship between the act*





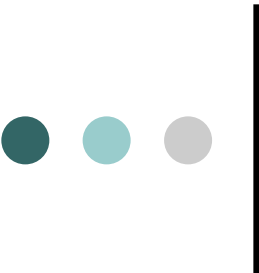
# *Awareness of the conversations*

- *Proactive in the steps:*
  - *Connecting – finding the mutuality*
  - *Creating a direction in the relationship*
  - *Interface the direction with realities*
  - *Make it happen with promises and requests*
  - *Acknowledge and appreciate*
  - *Contribute to others what was learned*



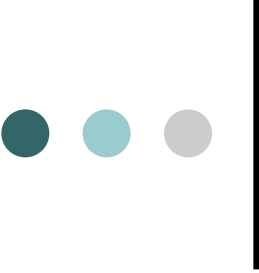
## *Specific examples of reframing:*

- *The investigation - truth*
- *The trial – the telling*
- *The sentence – healing and forgiveness*



*Specific Examples where a developmental approach appeared:*

- *The development of team*
  - *Example of woman deciding to report*
- *Finding the strengths*
  - *Example of child public speaker*
- *Integrating the child's choices*
  - *Example of how the first visit might look*



*A group exercise using the  
APA tips*



# *The teen version of the ten ways:*

## *1. Get together*

- *Talk to your friends and parents*
- *See parents as people to help*
- *Express your opinion*
- *Ask questions and listen to answers*
- *Get connected to others in the community*



## *Exercise:*

- *Turn to your partner and discuss how encouraging a child to talk to others about the trial process would assist a child witness.*
- *Give examples of to whom she might talk.*
- *How might it negatively impact the proceedings.*



## 2. *Cut yourself some slack*

- *You have a lot going on*
- *Go easy on yourself and friends*
- *(do less, take on less, relax)*



## *Exercise:*

- *Turn to your partner and discuss how encouraging a child to “cut themselves some slack” would assist a child/youth witness.*
- *Give examples of how she might cut some slack.*
- *How might it this tip negatively impact the proceedings.*



### *3. Create a Hassle-Free Zone*

- Create a space where you have a haven free from stress and anxieties*
- Remember parents want to spend more time with you now.*



# *Exercise*

- *As a group*
- *How can our children witnesses benefit from this tip?*



## 4. *Stick to the program*

- *Map out a routine and stick to it.*
- *Go back and do some of the routines that give you comfort.*



## *Exercise:*

- *Discuss how the comfort of routines can be used to support a child/youth witness.*
- *Is there any downside to the prosecution to this approach>*



## *5. Take care of yourself*

- *Food*
- *Sleep*
- *And other creature comforts*



## *Exercise:*

- *What is our role in justice to look after the child's creature comforts.*
- *How can this be done.*
- *Is there any downside to the prosecution to do this?*



## *6. Take Control*

- Move towards goals a step at a time*



## *Exercise:*

- *How can we assist children/youth in gaining some control over this process?*
- *Is there a downside to the prosecution?*



## 7. *Express yourself*

- *If talking isn't working try something else like writing a journal, poems, or create art.*



## *Exercise:*

- *Discuss how in child/youth we can assist them to express themselves.*
- *How can this go wrong in a prosecution?*



## 8. *Help somebody*

- *Helps get this off your mind*
- *Volunteer in the community*
- *Help a friend with homework*



## *Exercise:*

- *Talk to your partner about how this might be exercised with a child/youth witness?*
- *Are there any downsides to the prosecution?*



## *9. Put things in perspective*

- Thinks about when things normal*
- Bad times will end*
- Learn relaxation techniques*
- Learns songs to help with stress*
- Think of important things that have stayed the same.*



## *Exercise:*

- *Do a role play with your partner on what you would say to a 13 year old witness who tells you “this will never end” and “she just wants to die it hurts so much.”*



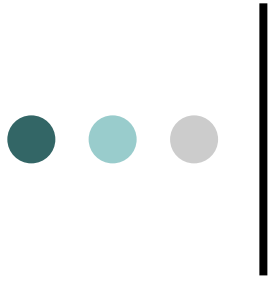
## *10. Turn it off*

- Limit the amount of news you take in*
- Watching the news over and over adds to the stress.*



## *Exercise:*

- *Is this useful for a child/youth witness?*
- *How might it apply.*
- *Is there any downside to the prosecution?*



○ *End of slides*