

RESILIENCE – OVERCOMING YOURSELF

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Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes. Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. What enables them to do so? It involves resilience, an ongoing process that requires time and effort and engages people in taking a number of steps

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Each person needs to choose daily – to change and change himself, or to adjust; to prove himself or neglect to do so. The choice depends largely on the specific circumstances, the varying stages in the person’s life, on the social situation, but it always depends on the ability to face the problem, to build up a value system, to overcome difficulties, to surrender selfish interests. Each person makes that choice: nobody is exempted. It is exactly this capacity of man to develop successfully under great difficulties is called resilience. The word *resilians* comes from the area of physics of bodies and characterizes their resistance to a hit. In English, resilience means the strength of body, the steadfastness of character. In French, it means flexibility. The word itself is of Latin origin and means “leap back, jump, erupt.” The first results of research regarding resilience were published in Germany in 1973 and were related to epidemiology, the study of risks and protective factors which determine the resilience of an organism while recuperation from an affliction. /Petrova 2010,p.7/ Resilience is formulated as the **ability, capacity, approach, strategy, resilience of the person, process, quality.** Using it in psychology gives it yet another meaning – the recovery and again-reconstruction, or the aptness of the person to develop successfully under great difficulties. We believe that it will be useful to specify the meaning of the term and the substance of the phenomenon, in order to realise it in the pedagogic practice more efficiently and productively, and so that the pedagogic theory can clarify it conceptually and technologically. Otherwise, it remains unclear what the difference is among resilience, resilient, and resiliency.

These clarifications are important, because, according to us, **resilience follows a path, determined by the participants. It is a road, motion, system of content,**

methods, participants, etc.; we sometimes replace it with “steadfastness”. Resilient is the expected behaviour and its specific measurement, manifestation, and stability; and resiliency is a theoretical generalization of the entire system of procedures, technologies, content, and expectations./Kasandrova,2012/ This ability is not regarded as a constant. It is researched in the process of development and, depending on multiple and variable objective and subjective characteristics and circumstances. In the pedagogic practice, **resilience** is taken as an approach to work and a process of personal formation, successful re-education. The pedagogic approach is realized by specialists in pedagogy /social pedagogues/ and psychologists, who follow the personal development and prepare the pedagogic milieu for the forming of resilience, but the process has a wide social dimension and may be managed by each person who has a significant influence on the person in question, or by the customer himself. In this process, the subject rethinks himself, plans his future, draws conclusions, gathers experience, learns the meaning of failure and success. This is not a clichéd statement. In the specific case, we are discussing decisive changes that the customer is fully conscious of; a change has begun, there is determination and decisiveness, but the finalization of the process is still distant. In many of the cases, there is a shortage of resistance or motivation, support, and circumstances, resources and professionalism for the realization of resilience. A child can not be at all **resilient**, and his conduct /or part of conduct/ and thinking in their specific appearances and relationships, which characterize its event inclusion. It forms, becomes (or does not become) a goal and way of life for the client /student/. To resist difficulties and overcome challenges, all good sides of the personality must be optimized. Sometimes,

the work of the pedagogues is directed to isolated, separate aspects of the conduct, which have a destructive nature.

Resiliency is a phenomenon, a composition of singular manifestations, cases, and events, a generalization of a system of experience collected, customers, and achievements. **Resilience, resilient, and resiliency are, respectively, a process, a quality, and a phenomenon.** It is impossible for resilience, resilient, and resiliency to mean one and the same thing, despite the common in their meaning. And this analysis is important in order to recognize their nuances and examine their pedagogic reading. /Kasandrova, 2012/

Definitions of resilience

The attempts to give a precise definition of Resilience give us an opportunity to discover a variety of positions, which again prove that no social occurrence or phenomenon can be framed, to be turned into a formula or recipe. In the sparse available sources, we have found the following **definitions** for resilience: “**The ability** of a given individual to develop and grow in adverse conditions”: /Petrova: 2010, p. 8/; “is a **new approach** in the social, educational, correction, and therapeutic work with children”; “the traumatized individual is renewed /starts over/ and **builds himself up** again”; “includes the positive **strategies for adjustment** in a more lasting perspective”; /Fozard: 2005/; “Represent a **human ability** to become stronger or even change as a consequence of the adversities in life”; “Resilience is the strength or ability to recover the initial form or position; elasticity.”; “Resilience is the ability to easily recover from an illness, depression, calamity, and such; buoyancy.” /Vanova, 2005,p.28/; In English dictionaries: The resistance of a state or the quality to resist; the ability of an ecosystem to return to its original state after

being disrupted; Flexibility, elasticity, hardiness, plasticity, springiness; The courage to recover; Restarting; Quickening, when the organism is threatened by dehydration; In sayings: "Personal life is surprisingly resilient: it can always be killed, but never completely dies"; "Resilience is faith and model for us all."; In religion, resilience is understood as nurturing the roots of faith, as "refreshing the weary and satisfying the faint"- "I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint." Jeremiah 31:25, NIV

Some authors avoid giving a fixed definition to resilience, but instead use it a synonym to: life path; individual and group success process; they compare it with non-resilient depressing factors such as helplessness, psychological vulnerability, catastrophic attitudes. In all cases, it is accepted that it has positive, statistically significant correlation coefficients between the level of resilience and the following positive factors: **optimistic attitude; acceptance of health advice; managing physical pain; re-evaluation; being proactive when solving problems; seeking out social support; positive affect; satisfaction with life.** Such a cascade chain unlocks all resistance powers assisting overcoming problems. /Ivanov: 2009,p.10/

The fields of resilience are content- and technologically connected with: the person's safety base; social competency; positive values; **talents, interests; friendships; education.** All of those are in the field of the pedagogic processes and phenomena, which gets us nearer to the expectation and hypothesis that it's exactly in the pedagogic practice that resilience does or may happen with best chances of success. That is why we can observe different intensity in these fields: logistically, psychologically, personally, emotionally /the list is not thorough/:

1. Logical level: organizational, coaching (training), variant, with the effect of similarity and dissimilarity, communications workshop, positive emotions workshop; ignoring and rejecting unneeded networks and subjects; **strength of resilience in logistics.** **2. Psychological level: Strength of resilience in a psychological plan:** resistance, steadfastness. **3. Personal level:** satisfaction with personal achievements, art of fun and joy, victory motivation, goal, achievement /scoring a goal in the game/. **Strength of resilience in personal plan** – I can. **4. Emotional**

level: emotional intelligence, coaching for emotional intelligence; understanding the meaning of work, of the occupation; overcoming of the 'unconscious mind', of the momentum that leads to the precipice; **Strength and meaning of resilience with emotions.** /Vanova,2005,p.33/

The key to success with resilience is the merging of levels together. They are difficult to distinguish, measured in varying scales, but they are realized in unity, mutually completing each other and undergoing training in courses, seminars, coaching programs, research, evaluation, analysis, cognitive workshops. At each time, the **strength of resilience** is measured, because it has varying indicators in the separate fields, but the basic purpose of the process is irreversibility, certainty, faith in the self, even though we will maybe have better results in one area and not very satisfactory results in another. The approach does not mean the forming of perfect individuals. More to the point, it aims at positive, real, adequate to the social challenges individuals. The point of resilience is not necessarily in the application of new technologies, methods, procedures, is much as following in a different way the causality of the cyclic or permanent manifestation of social inadequacy, by analyzing and plotting out a road to recovery. We are persuaded that the logistics of this process is exceptionally difficult and risky, because any interference in the personal ideas of the individual about good and evil may be evaluated as an intrusion in the personal space with unacceptable intentions. Sometimes, social adequacy continues to defect, despite all efforts and perfect organization. We believe that it's important to look at the phenomenon not only as a series of achievements and high grades. It is necessary to connect it to all motivational and behavioural profiles, at each point approaching the destination. Otherwise, we could grade high a result that was achieved with dubious /egoistical/ means and motives. It is exceptionally important to stress on the social importance of resilience, because most definitions stress on the lasting, permanence, but they fail to indicate that the significance is in socially acknowledged, positive, constructive qualities of the individual. Only in that way does resilience acquire a pedagogic context, which is in the philosophy of the institutional educational work. Socially important oth-

ers may be engaged, prepared, researched only in the presence of reliable pedagogic social surroundings /group or community/. Otherwise, there may be no resilience. The customer can not form social immunity when the models for asocial behaviour are too appealing and victorious. In pedagogic work, that's the hardest part.

Resiliency is a quality of change, which allows some people, after a complete downfall or failure, to make a comeback stronger than ever, to rise from the ashes. Psychologists describe some of the factors that make people resilient. Among those: positive attitude, optimism, ability to regulate emotions and a capacity to see the problem, to make an objective self-evaluation. Even after misfortune, people are blessed if they can continue to live successfully, without falling back. Hardiness is a process of adaptation after a calamity, trauma, tragedy, threat, or other significant stress sources – such as family troubles, serious health problems, financial and stress factors. It means "bouncing back" from the traumatic experiences. Resiliency is not a characteristic that people either have or don't. It includes behaviour, thoughts, and actions, which can be learn and developed. /Kasandrova, 2012/

We also consider important other qualities that are nurtured in pedagogic surroundings which plan, form, and follow resiliency: The ability to form **realistic plans** and the undertaking of steps to realise those plans; Positive opinion about oneself and confidence in one's own strengths and abilities; **communicative and problem-solving skills;** Capacity to **control strong emotions and impulses.** These are qualities that people can develop if they receive the necessary social support and come across constructive social-pedagogic surroundings.

Strategies for building up resiliency

Developing resiliency is a personal journey. People do not react the same, even to the same life stressors. The motion is at different speed and assisted by different aids. An approach that works for one individual might completely fail for another. Different strategies are used. Some differences may reflect cultural peculiarities. An individual's culture may affect how he or she evaluates his or her feelings in case of

a calamity /for example, whether and how the individual connects with the significant others, including the members of the extended family and communal resources in crisis situations/. With the deepening cultural variety, society has a greater access to a number of different approaches to the measuring of resiliency in the behaviour of groups and communities.

Make a connection. Good relationships with close family members, friends, or other significant adults are exceptionally important. Accepting help and support from those who care for the child improves resiliency. To some people, civil groups, religious communities, or other local organisations provide a strong social support and may help the re-emergence of hope, help new active presence. Helping others in times of need often includes a helper who is close to the customer, a social worker, personal assistant, social pedagogue.

Avoid thinking of crises as insurmountable obstacles. The fact that greatly stressing events occur cannot be changed, but one can change the way in which those events are interpreted and reacted to. Seeking a solution beyond the present, because future circumstances may be better. Paying attention to all the minute ways in which a problem or difficult situation can be resolved. Planning events, projects; joy of waking in the new day; accepting responsibilities.

Accept that change is a part of life: Certain goals may no longer be achievable as a result of unfavourable situations, but accepting that fact may help focus on new projects. Resiliency includes the support of flexibility and balance in life, since the customers understand that stressors and traumatic events are part of life. That happens in various ways; e.g.: living through strong emotions, trying to shield oneself destroys sensitivity; taking actions, dealing with everyday difficulties; spending free time with loved people who support and encourage;

Have confidence in oneself and consideration for others: Receiving professional counsel; sharing information, ideas, and emotions within the group; feeling not alone in the situation via books, publications, discussions of similar events; online resources that are reliable and checked by the coach; licensed, competent professional help, so that the approach can be adjusted to the personal style of the

individual; change is a journey, it is not accomplished by waiting, stagnation, giving up. This journey is guided by a plan, strategy, companions, significant opinions. In such surroundings, the underwater obstacles, the drafts are important, but not insurmountable, qualities are formed such as courage, astuteness, the skills to navigate successfully; naturally, there is also respite, but the end of the journey may not be in the middle of the road. Such is the significance of logistics. Not only to foresee the stages of the road and organise the trip, but also to consider the psychological and emotional resilience, the resiliency of each participant in the process, and to lead it to its endpoint. This applies to both the coach and the customer. Howsoever we may name him – teacher, mentor, coach, guide, counsellor, educator – the adult has personal and professional responsibility for the resilience, which determines a number of his rights and obligations, which are the subject of other studies./Kasandrova,2012/

Conditions for encouraging resilience and the achievement of resiliency

We are attempting to make a pedagogic reading of the phenomenon, but we cannot account for all other influences, interferences, meanings, and analyses. For that reason, in terms of conditions for encouraging, we'll focus on 12 pedagogic competencies for the achievement of resiliency: **1.** To find and attract at least one adult who is reliable, who feels love and takes genuine care for the child; **2.** To ensure love for the child. He or she needs "a lot of tenderness in love to grow stronger"; **3.** "The children should listen to the coach, as part of the learning process, but children also need to be heard"; **4.** To make a difference between "right and wrong", to encourage respect for the adults and independent thinking, as well as sharing their thoughts; **5.** To have the opportunity to debate; the adult must realize that "the children's philosophy may be very useful"; **6.** Positive support in the group and from the educator; **7.** Encouragement to like oneself; **8.** Training in social skills; **9.** Positive outlook; **10.** Hope. Optimistic expectations of the future; **11.** Education. Empowering the child with knowledge; **12.** Entertainment. Even by drama, understanding the world. Make it easy for him or her to joke with him or herself and others. /Vanova,2005,p.19/

Resilience also applies to the group or community. In social pedagogy, that ap-

ples to the integration and socialization of margin groups. For the social practice, that is a great challenge, but also an aspect of many failures. New approaches add to the options available to social educators and social workers, without giving an exhaustive answer to all questions. /Kasandrova, 2012/

Resilience of the group and community

Empowerment – the group's ability to take responsibility following the acquired competencies; **Faith in people** – in their ability to manage their own affairs; **Respect for people** – all people; **Listen** – to the community, it has much to tell you; **The community has the right to self-govern and make decisions** – prompt options, do not take choices away from others; Provide proper **education** for managing the system and within the system; **Initiate** options for non-violent conflict resolution; **Encourage** discussions for children development within the community; **Encourage positive thinking; Have faith in the community** – it really can manage. Support, do not control; coordinate, do not manage; inform, do not order. /Fozard: 2005/

Resilience does not mean the creation of a perfect individual. It is instead a battle with that resistance that some people develop to the meaning of life and the joy in it. For others, it is a natural attitude, way of life. The attempts for intervention with those are, if not doomed, at least exceptionally difficult, time-consuming, both for the customer and the educator.

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