
Self-Regulation, Stress Reduction, and Positive Psychology

The Bridge to Successful Inclusion

IACC Services Workshop
Enhancing Supports for People with Autism and Their Families:
Community Integration and the Changing Delivery System

September 15, 2011
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The Groden Center, Inc., Providence, RI

Groden Center Network Service Components

Four Corporations

1. Groden Center, Inc.

- Day Treatment and School
- Parent programs
- Academics
- Respite
- Community Outreach
- Residential
 - ❖ Group homes
 - ❖ Foster family
 - ❖ Supportive living
 - ❖ Independent living

2. Kingston Hill Academy, Inc. - Charter School

Groden Center Network

Service Components

3. Cove, Inc. (Rhode Island – Adult)
4. Halcyon, Inc. (Massachusetts – Adult)

Day Programs

- Vocational Training
- Assessment
- Community Placement
- Support

Job Coach

Natural Supports

Enterprises – examples:

- The Ladle
- Window Washing
- Business Center
- Greenhouse and related plant services
- Recycling

Residential

The Bridge to Successful Inclusion

One of our interests from the beginning of our program was to focus on programs that promote self-control in the individuals we support. We've become well known for our work in developing relaxation, picture rehearsal, and other imagery-based and scripted programs.

This philosophy of positive programming has now been extended to include topics under the rubric of positive psychology.

1. Stress reduction and self-regulation
2. Positive psychology

Our population: Autism and other pervasive developmental disabilities with severe and challenging behaviors

Stress Reduction & Self-Regulation

The most overlooked problem in the population with autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities is stress and anxiety.

Stress Definition

The physiological reaction of the body to life situations which can be both happy events or unhappy events. For example: Divorce, Death, Marriage, Promotion; both Painful experiences and Pleasurable (eustress) experiences can create stress. However, recent research has been reasonably consistent in showing that the association with psychiatric illness is usually confined to unpleasant or undesirable events.

Hans Selye

Demand placed on the individual that disturbs homeostasis and requires an adjustment on the part of the individual.

Joseph Cautela

Characteristics of Autism Related to Stress

- **Communication:** inability to express feelings, handle frustrations, take other's perspective
- **Socialization:** ambiguous cues, rules, gestures, and solitary life
- **Sensory:** visual, auditory, tactile
- **Physical Factors:** seizures, infections
- **Executive Function:** lack of this goal-directed, future-oriented cognitive ability affects planning, organization, flexibility, self-monitoring, inhibition
- **Hardiness:** lack of accepting challenge, having commitment and control

Multi-Modal Assessment

Functional assessment

Direct observation

Scales and interviews

Physiological measures

Functional Assessment

UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Groden, G., Stevenson, S., & Groden, J. (1996). *Understanding challenging behavior: A step-by-step behavior analysis guide*. Providence, RI: Groden Center, Inc.

Number 1

Detailed Behavior Report (DBR)

CLIENT John	STAFF Lisa
PROGRAM Adolescent 2	HOW RECORDED: <u>Continuous</u> / Sample _____

Purpose: This form is used to record objective information regarding the target behavior, its antecedents and its consequences.

B E H A V I O R	Target Behavior (Describe in detail)	Aggression: hit Bob Roberts (staff) fairly strongly on the chest with both fists and was about to hit him again.		
	Severity Rating	5(severe) <u>(4)</u> 3 2 1(mild)	DURATION 1 - 3 seconds	
	Precursors-body state, thoughts, emotions, verbals	Tense - stiffened body; tight lips		
G e n e r a l	Schedule	DATE 3/14/92	DAY Saturday	TIME 4:00 p.m.
	Location	Residence living room, in front of TV, on couch		
	Activity	TYPE: Watching TV - favorite game show LENGTH ENGAGED: 30 min. MASTERED: <u>Yes</u> / No CHOICE: <u>Yes</u> / No MOVEMENT: High / <u>Low</u> RELEVANCY TO CLIENT: <u>High</u> / Low		

Scales and Interviews

THE STRESS SURVEY SCHEDULE FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The Groden Center, Inc.

Groden, J., Diller, A., Bausman, M., Velicer, W., Norman, G., & Cautela, J. (2001). **The Development of a Stress Survey Schedule for Persons with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities.** Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 31(2), 207-217.

Goodwin, M., Groden, J., Velicer, W., & Diller, A. (2007). **Validating the Stress Survey Schedule for Persons with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities.** Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22 (3), 183-189.

Please rate the intensity of the stress
reaction to the following events by
filling in the appropriate circle:

None to mild

Mild to Moderate

Moderate

Moderate to severe

Severe

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Receiving a present..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 2. Having personal objects or materials out of order..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 3. Waiting to talk about desired topic..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 4. Having a change in schedule or plans..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 5. Being in the vicinity of noise or disruption by others..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 6. Waiting for preferred events..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 7. Having a cold..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 8. Being touched..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 9. Having personal objects or materials missing..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 10. Having a change in task to a new task with new directions.... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

Stress Survey Components

Component 1

Ritual Related Stress

Component 2

Social/Environmental
Interactions

Component 3

Food Related Activity

Component 4

Sensory/Personal Contact

Component 5

Pleasant Events

Component 6

Anticipation/Uncertainty

Component 7

Changes and Social Threats

Component 8

Unpleasant Events

Physiological Measure

Why Study Heart Rate?

- There are a number of observable stress-indicators, including breathing rate, blood pressure, heart rate, and hormones.
- Heart rate seems to be the best stress indicator for individuals with autism--most robust measure of arousal
- It gives us another measure of stress
 - ❖ Overt Behavior
 - ❖ Covert Psychological Behavior
 - ❖ Covert Physiological Responding
- Objective measure--due to communication deficits
- More precise, non-invasive, well-tolerated instrumentation

Heart Rate Results

Groden, J., Goodwin, M.S., Lipsitt, L.P., Hofmann, S.G., Baron, M.G., Groden, G., Velicer, W., & Plummer, B. (2005).

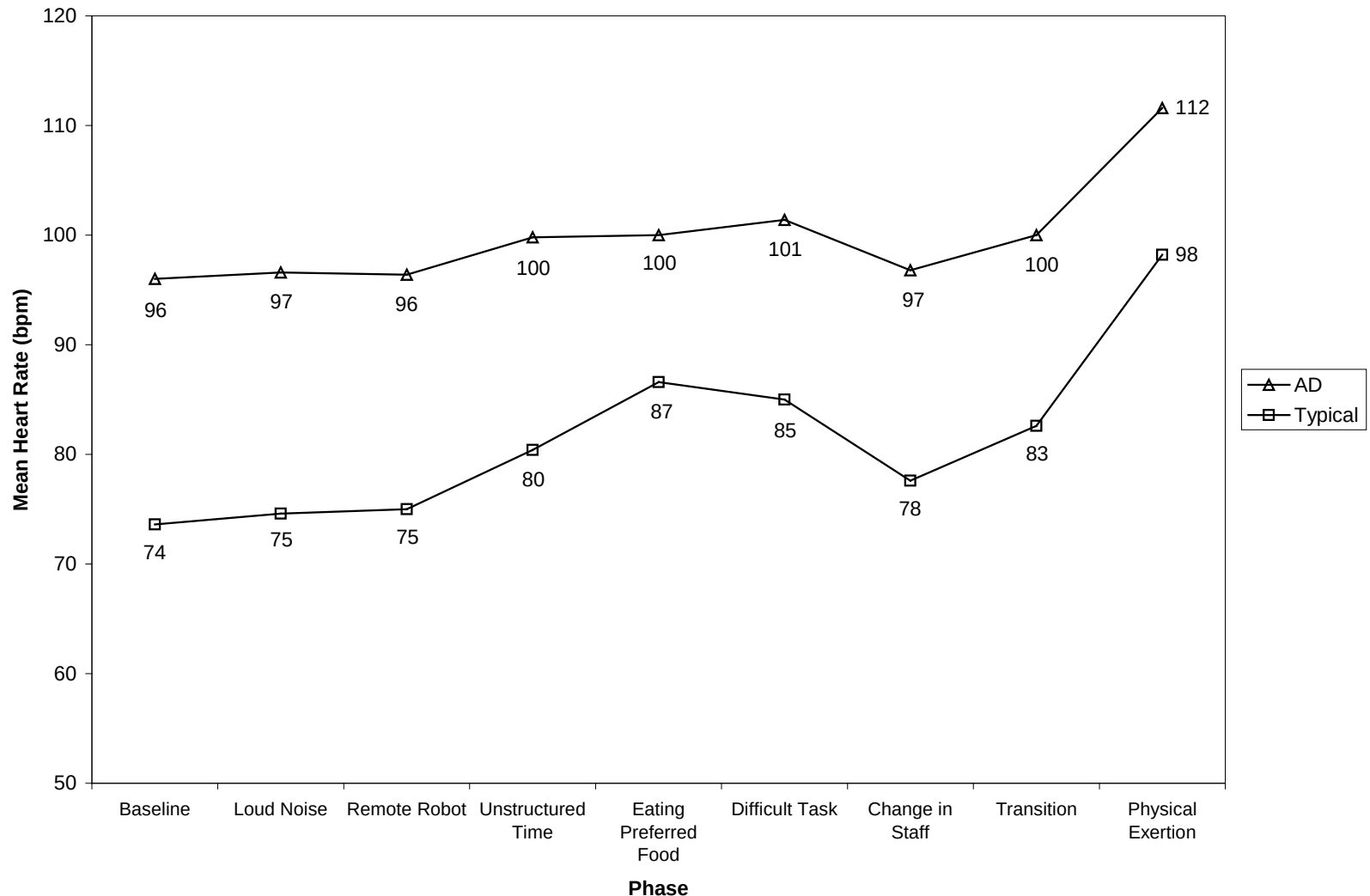
Assessing cardiovascular responses to stressors in individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 20 (4), 244-252.

Subject	Order	Baseline Heart Rate M	Baseline Heart Rate SD	Physical Exertion	Unstructured Time	Receiving Tangible Reinforcement	Change in Staff	Losing at a Game
P1	1	111.9	3.7	✓	✓			
P2	3	107.0	3.3	✓	*			*
P3	2	81.3	4.4	✓	✓	✓	*	
P4	3	80.9	6.1	✓	✓	✓		
P5	2	80.2	4.8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P6	1	84.6	4.3	✓				
P7	2	81.7	4.0	✓				*
P8	1	80.5	3.7	✓		✓		
P9	3	78.3	5.8	✓				
P10	2	68.1	2.7	✓	✓	✓		✓

✓ Heart rate during this task was significantly greater than heart rate at baseline.

* Heart rate during this task was significantly less than heart rate at baseline.

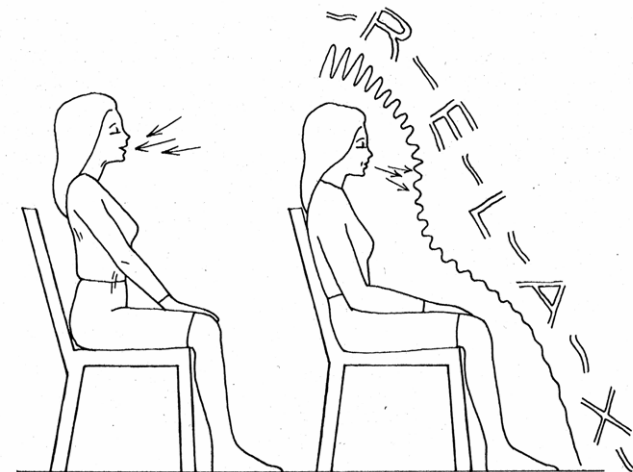
Average Mean Heart Rate Level by Phase for ASD and Typical Group



COPING STRATEGIES

Relaxation

By deliberately tensing and relaxing their muscles, children and adults learn to discriminate the presence of muscle tension. They are taught to perform a relaxation response whenever their muscles tense or before, during, or after a stressful event. Relaxation enables the individual to remain in control in stressful situations and is incompatible with most maladaptive behaviors.





VIDEO

Picture Rehearsal

Definition:

A procedure in which the clinician verbally presents a carefully developed script, accompanied by pictures. The learner uses the pictures as cues to repeat the scene in daily rehearsals.

Target population:

- children
- people with special needs
- people who report difficulty forming mental images
- people with obsessive thoughts that interfere with more abstract imagery-based procedures



VIDEO

Coping with Stress Through **PICTURE REHEARSAL:**

A How-to Manual for Working with Individuals
with Autism and Developmental Disabilities

June Groden, Ph.D.
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Joseph Cautela, Ph.D.



Illustrations by Eric Southworth

STRESS AND COPING IN **Autism**

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THE GRODEN CENTER

RELAXATION

A COMPREHENSIVE MANUAL FOR ADULTS,
CHILDREN, AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

JOSEPH R. CAUTELA
JUNE GRODEN

Illustrations by
Phyllis Kandel



Stress Prevention Pyramid

PREVENTION
of maladaptive
responses to stress,
facilitating the promotion of
good behavioral and physical health

Development and Implementation of
PROACTIVE COPING STRATEGIES
Used before stress occurs. Examples are relaxation,
picture rehearsal, assertion and environmental changes.

IDENTIFICATION OF STRESSORS
Antecedents or precursors to stress. Examples from the
Stress Survey are: changes, anticipation, being told no.

MULTIMODAL STRESS ASSESSMENTS
Which include: observations (e.g., DBR), pencil and paper tests, interviews
(e.g., Stress Survey Schedule), and physiological measures (e.g., heart rate)

Applying Positive Psychology to Autism



Definition of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is: “an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions.”

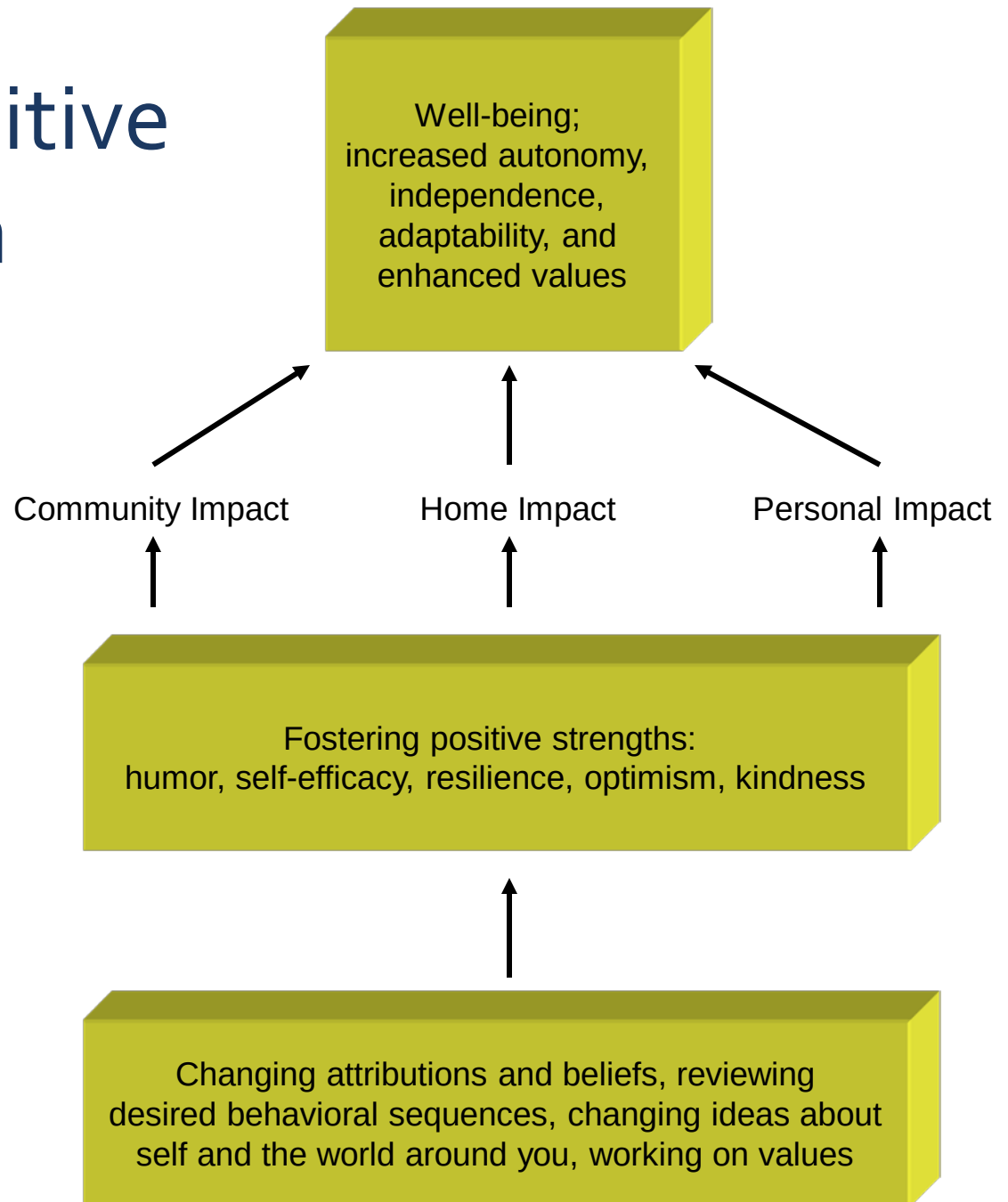
Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson (2005)

Positive psychology begins to: “catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities.”

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

Many positive psychology traits relate to prevention, as they serve to buffer the damaging effects of experience, personal challenges, and mental illness.

Fostering positive psychology in special needs populations



Resilience in Autism



Resilience Definition

Ann Masten defines resilience as:

“The process of, capacity for, or outcome of, successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances”

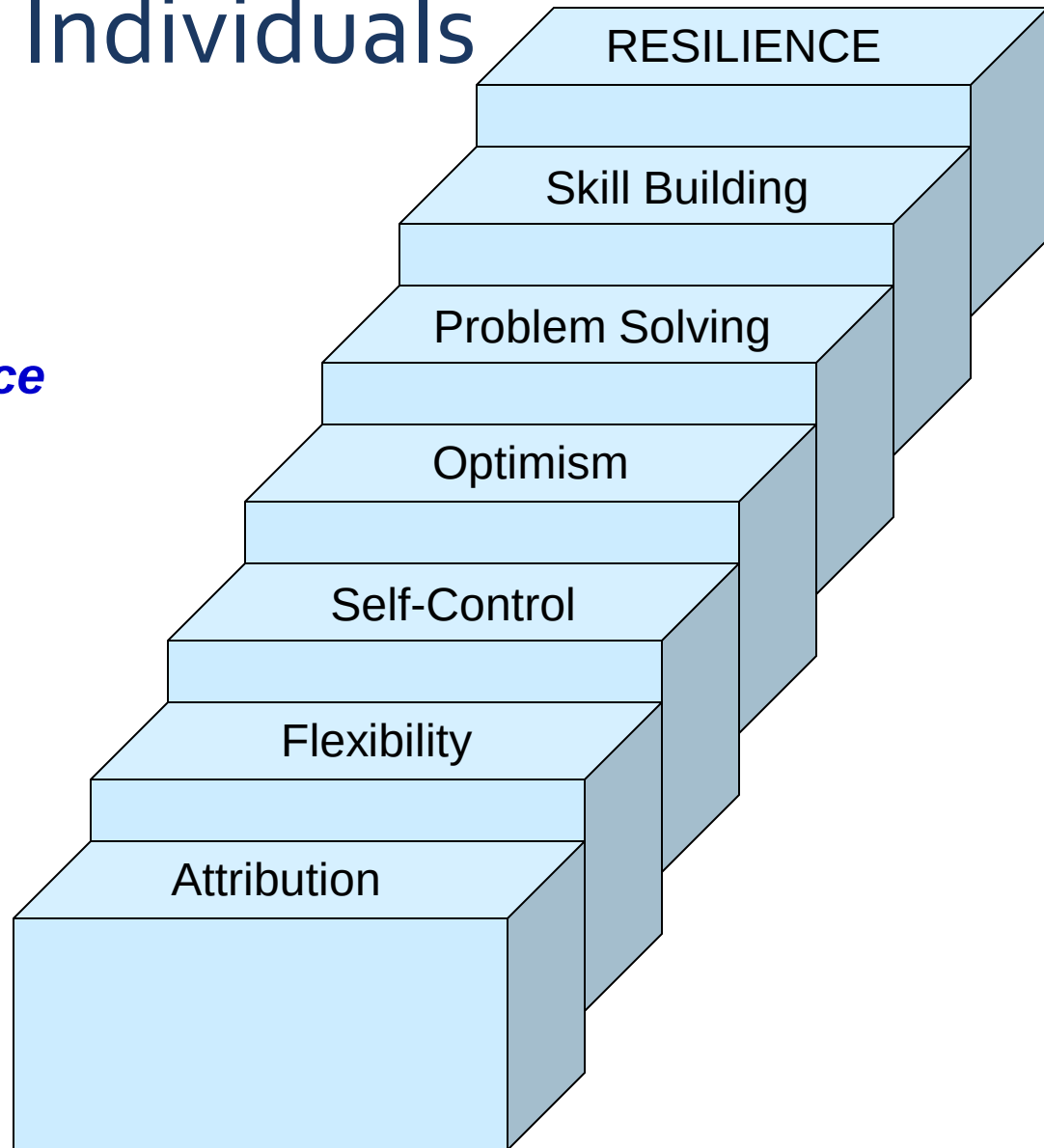
(Masten, Best and Garmezy 1990)

Resilience Definition

Brooks and Goldstein (2002), in their book on *Raising Resilient Children*, offer this definition: Resilience is the capacity to cope and feel competent. The resilient child deals more effectively with stress and pressure, responds effectively to challenges, “bounces back” from adversity and trauma, and develops clear and realistic goals. This child would also deal better with social situations and enjoy more social acceptance.

Important Steps in Increasing Resilience in Individuals with Autism

Stairway to Resilience



Important Steps in Increasing Resilience in Individuals with Autism

ATTRIBUTION

Interpretations of situations, and how we interpret our experiences. Our goal is to change negative attributions and provide positive attributions which would build Resilience.

Using Self-Control

For persons with autism and other developmental disabilities, it is not enough to learn self-controlling responses to reduce stress. Learning to **use** self-controlling responses in various life contexts is necessary to effective coping (Lazarus, 1993).

Use Relaxation

- Identify stressors
- Incorporate relaxation into IEP
 - ❖ Teacher-cued – reinforce the relaxation response
 - ❖ Self-cue – reinforce the relaxation response

Important Steps in Increasing Resilience in Individuals with Autism

PROBLEM SOLVING

Creating Opportunities for Resilience

Problem solving is a mental process that involves discovering, analyzing and solving problems. The ultimate goal of problem solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue (Reed, 2000).

Important Steps in Increasing Resilience in Individuals with Autism

PROBLEM SOLVING

Consists of:

- Flexibility
- Reflection on emotions and behaviors
- Ability to try different solutions
- Social thinking; effect on others
- Choice making
- Understanding and expressing likes and dislikes
- Healthy expectations
- Goal directed
- Hardiness – having commitment, taking challenges and being in control



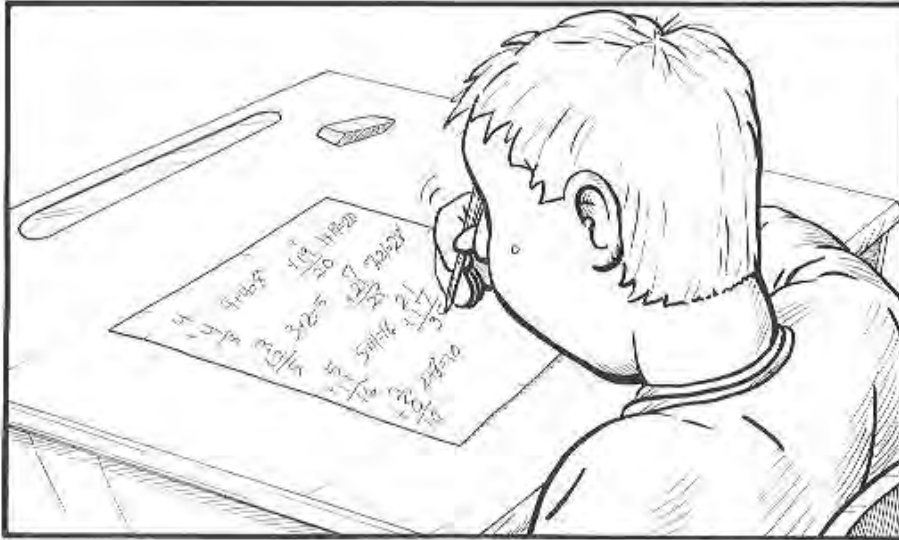
Activities to promote

resilience

Activities to Increase Resilience

- Focusing on
 - ❖ Attribution
 - ❖ Flexibility/Choices
 - ❖ Self-Control
 - ❖ Problem-Solving
 - ❖ Skill Building/Islands of Competence

Attribution



1.

I am in the classroom.



2.

My teacher asks me to do something new that I have not done before.

Attribution, cont'd



3. I take a deep breath and relax. I know I can handle it. Trying new things is a great idea.

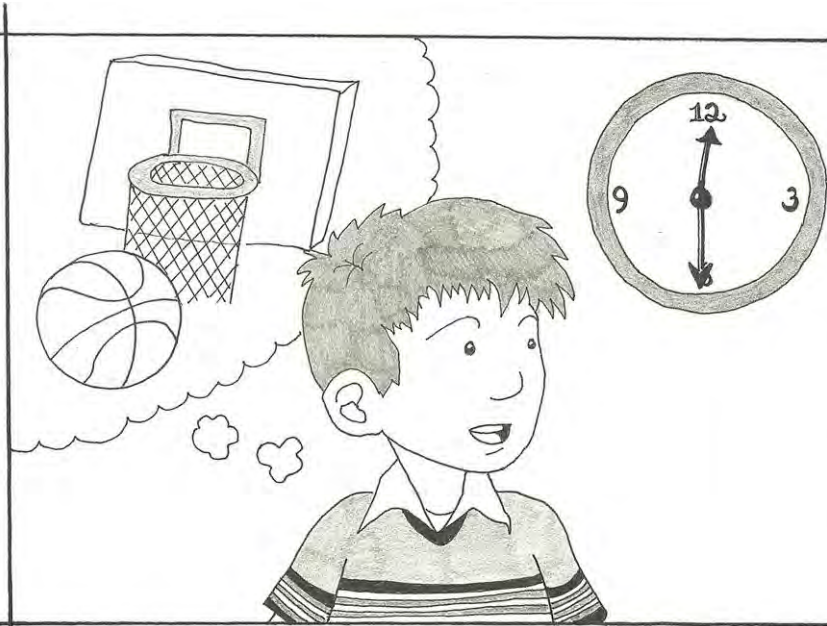


4. I say "Sure" and do a good job learning the new activity. Now I imagine . . .

Anticipation Using Flexibility, Self-Control And Attribution



1. I am finishing up my reading program.



2. It is time to line up for gym.

Anticipation Using Flexibility, Self-Control And Attribution



3. I get in line. I don't have to be first.

(FLEXIBILITY)



4. I wait patiently and then walk with relaxed hands to the gym.

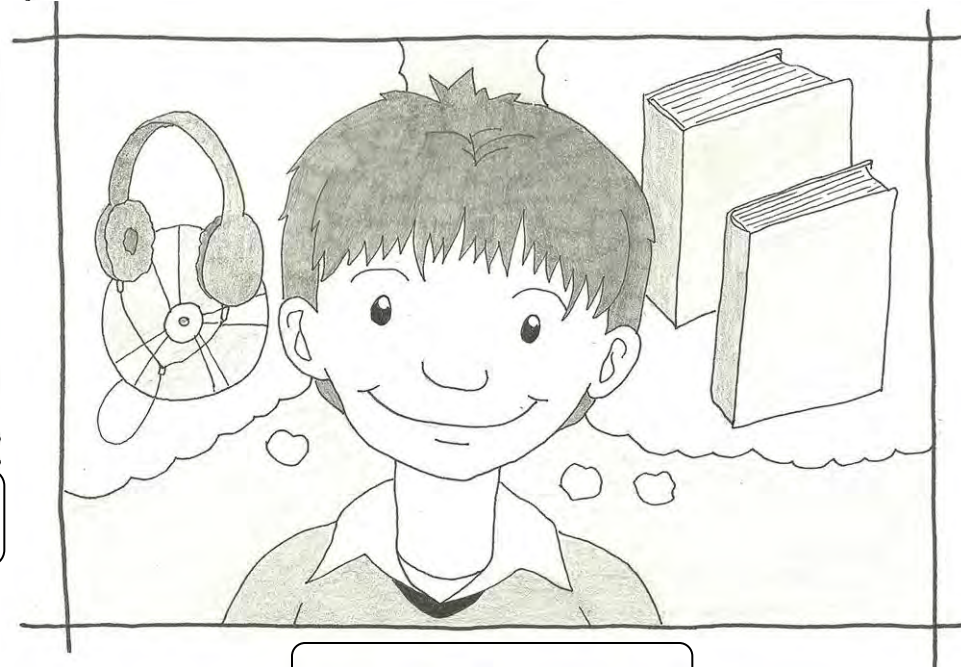
(SELF-CONTROL)

Anticipation Using Flexibility, Self-Control And Attribution



5. I am happy to be at the gym. What fun.

(ATTRIBUTION)



6. Now I imagine . . .

Problem Solving Activity

Choose an assignment or activity that the student cannot complete with asking for assistance. Examples of simple tasks are:

- Ask student to perform a writing assignment, but do not offer a pencil
- Offer a box of crayons that cannot be opened
- Serve food items without appropriate utensils
- Give student an empty jug to fill cups with water
- Ask student to retrieve an item from a locked cabinet
- Ask for an item from a shelf too high for student to reach
- Give student another student's personal item "by mistake"

Learning About Preferences and Being Able to Communicate Likes and Dislikes (To Make Choices and Problem Solve)

Category	 Likes	 Dislikes

Leisure Time



Using the computer



Reading a book



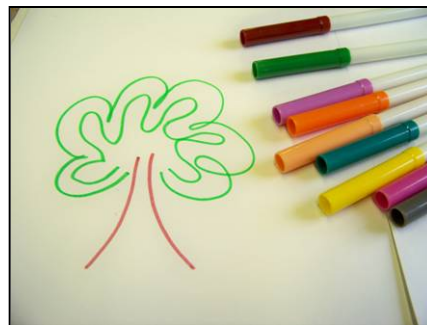
Making a puzzle



Watching TV



Listening to music



Creating art project



Molding playdough

Chores



Emptying dishwasher



Sweeping



Putting away towels



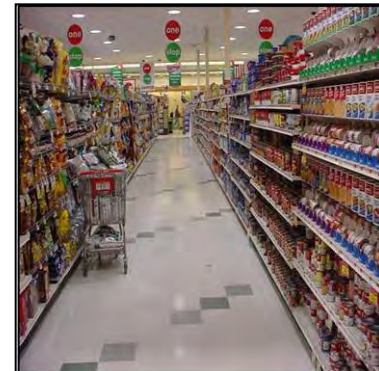
Doing laundry



Gardening



Taking care of pets



Grocery Shopping

Physical Activities



Swimming



Bicycling



Playground Activities



Gym Activities

Building An Island Of Competence

Build upon “islands of competence” (i.e., special interests). Identify and nurture special abilities and talents. “Islands of competence” are special abilities and talents that individuals with autism might have, even when facing difficulties in other areas of functioning. Build upon capabilities that can be appreciated by others.

My Own World

The Photography Project

An example of building 'Islands of Competence'

Debra Romano

Gerren Martin

&

Students at The Groden Center

Tommy K. (adult)

My Own World Description

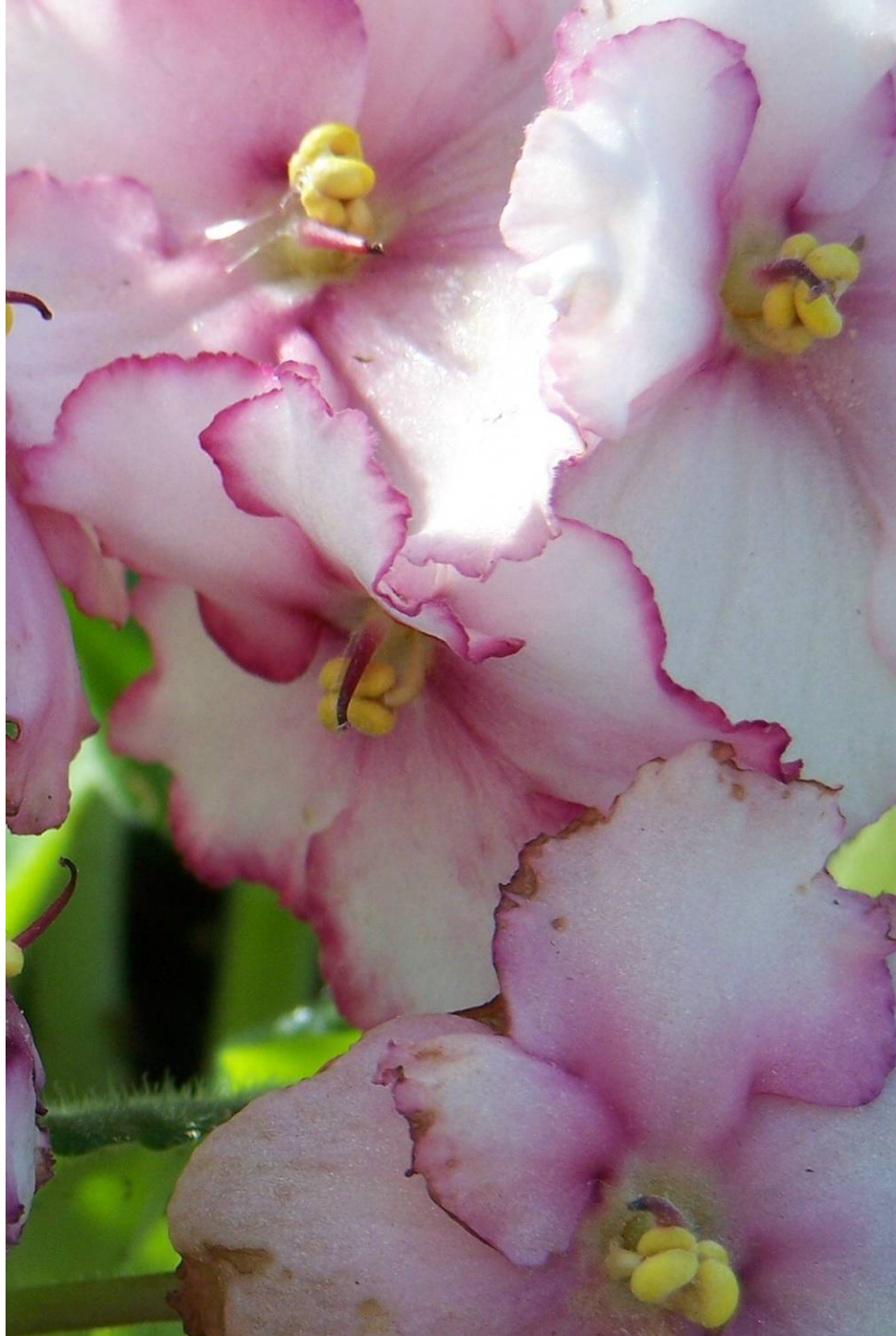
Students with autism are taught how to use digital cameras, computer printing processes, matting, framing and photographic display.















Brice L. age 17



Rebecca P. , Age 13

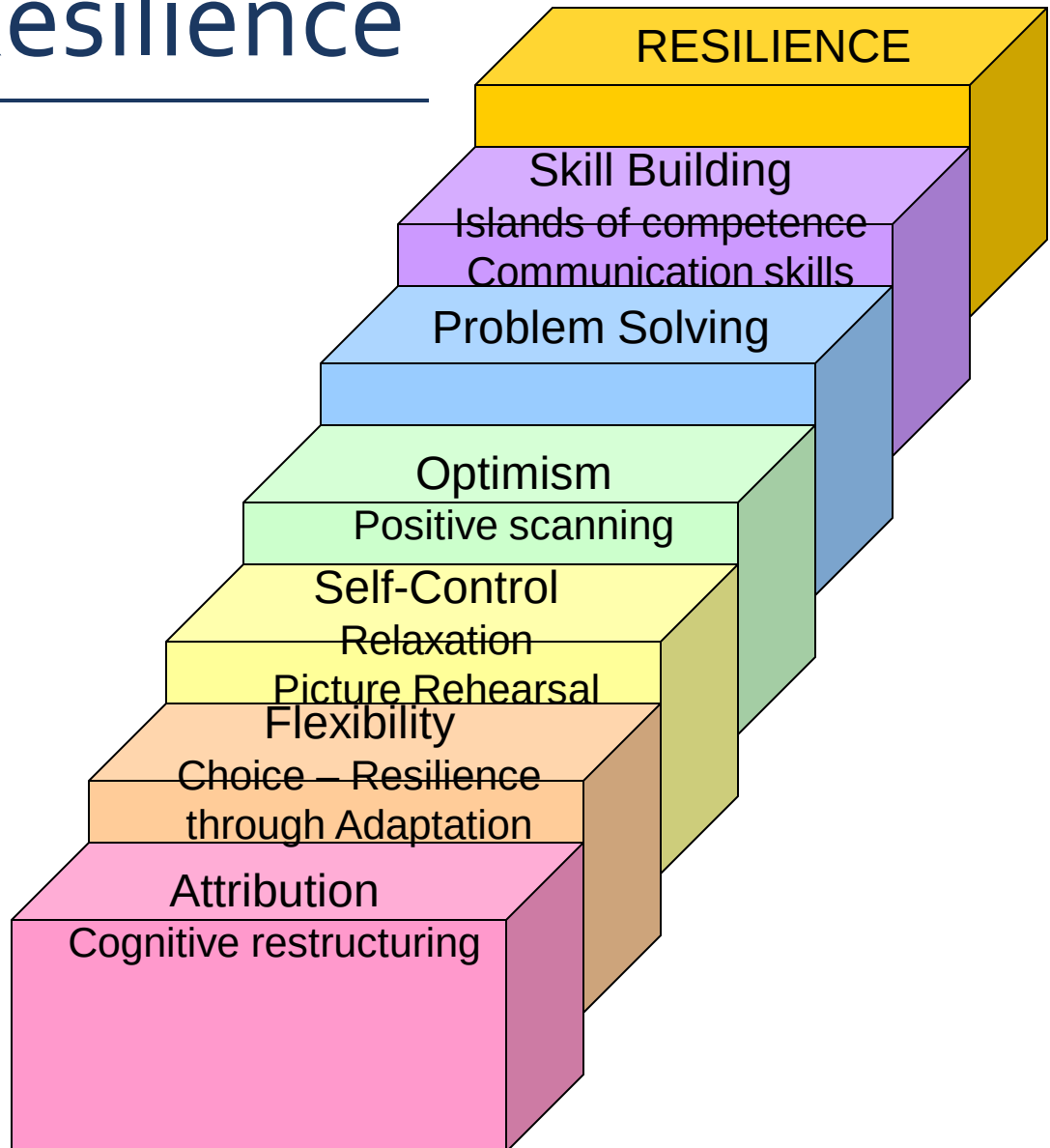
Rhode Island Flower & Garden Show



Mayor Cicciline Presents Awards



Stairway to Resilience



Resilience in Industry

- 48 agencies varying in size reduced \$24 million 2011-2012
- The Cove Center was cut \$350,000 two years ago; \$744,000 in July 2011; and \$830,000 as of Oct. 2011 which will bring this year's reduction to \$1.5 million
- Groden Center school programs
 - ❖ DCYF discontinued our \$1 million contract which cancelled our Saturday program and our After School program. We are currently working to maintain the After School program
 - ❖ Children's residential and foster family was cut \$500,000
 - ❖ Other cuts in all our programs

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