Building Our Superpowers! Strengths Research to Practice

ADVANCING SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

CLAUDETTE FETTE

PATTI DERR

Objectives:

1. Participants will compare strength-based models.

2. Participants will identify their own strengths and practice strength based strategies.

3. Participants will analyze common pitfalls in attempts to practice from a strengths perspective and develop solutions.

Who are we anyway?

The value of authentic experience

Mental **HEALTH** is:

Positive affective or emotional state (**feeling happy**)

Positive psychological and social function (self esteem/control, **relationships**)

Productive activities (**doing things that are important to you**)

Resilience (bouncing back)

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)

What is Strength-Based?

"Raising children is vastly more than fixing what is wrong with them. It is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths.“

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p6)

What is Strength-Based?

- Basis of strength-based service delivery is "premise that even the most troubled youth have unique talents, skills, and other resources that can be marshaled in the service of recovery and development" (page 287-8).
  - Cox (2006)
- Even the most troubled systems have strengths.

Strengths that support elementary to middle school transition

Personal traits

- Temperament
- Cognition
- Optimism
- Interests
- Creativity
- Attention to tasks
- Positive identity
- Health

Contextual Supports

- Relationships
  - Peer
  - Family
  - Caring adults
- Environment
  - Community participation
  - School environment (current)
  - School/academic foundation
  - Cultural factors
  - Material possessions
  - Respect from others

Fette (2011)

Strengths in Wraparound

Strengths based. *The wraparound process and the wraparound plan identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, their community, and other team members.*

Bruns, Walker, Adams, Miles, Osher, Rast, VanDenBerg, & NWI Advisory (2004)

Cathy Cox

- Identify
  - Capacities
  - Interests
  - Resources
- Recognize
- Intervene
- Create Enabling Niches

Table 1. Personal Strengths Grid

Youth's Name: _____ Age: _____

Sources of Information Regarding Strengths:
□ Youth Interview □ Caregiver Interview □ Other
□ Teacher Interview □ Observation

Strength Domain	Social	Academic	Athletic
Capacities	□ Initiates relationships with ease □ Sustains relationships over time □ Good interpersonal boundaries □ Relates well with peers □ Relates well with adults Comments:	□ Good reading skills □ Good writing skills □ Good math skills □ Good verbal skills □ Good computer skills Comments:	□ Good at team sports (e.g. basketball, football, baseball) □ Good at independent or non-competitive sports (e.g. swimming, gymnastics, jogging, rock- climbing, yoga) Comments:
Interests	□ Wants to have friends □ Wants relationships with caring adults □ Wants to belong to peer groups, clubs □ Likes to help others □ Enjoys caring for animals Comments:	□ Enjoys reading □ Enjoys writing □ Enjoys math or science □ Enjoys computers Comments:	□ Wants to play team sports □ Wants to learn individual or non-competitive sports Comments:
Resources	□ Has close (pro-social) friend(s) □ Has access to adult mentor □ Has access to naturally occurring groups, clubs, volunteer work, opportunities etc. Comments:	□ Has access to opportunities to display, share, or enhance academic abilities Comments:	□ School offers athletics programs □ Neighborhood offers athletics programs Comments:

Personal Strengths Grid *(Continued)*

Strength Domain	Artistic/Creative	Mechanical	Cultural/Spiritual
Capacities	□ Talent in visual arts (drawing, painting, etc) □ Talent in performing arts (singing, dancing, drama, music, etc.) □ Skills in domestic arts (cooking, sewing, etc. Comments:	□ Able to assemble & disassemble bikes, appliances, computers, etc. □ Skills in using tools for carpentry, woodworking, etc. □ Skills in car maintenance/repair Comments:	□ Knowledge of own heritage □ Knowledge of spiritual belief system □ Practices cultural/ spiritual customs/rituals Comments:
Interests	□ Desires to develop talent in visual arts □ Desires to develop talent in performing arts □ Desires to develop talent in domestic arts Comments:	□ Enjoys fixing appliances, etc. □ Enjoys building, woodworking □ Enjoys working on cars or desires to learn mechanics Comments:	□ Likes to attend church or other place of worship □ Desires to learn about own heritage □ Desires to participate in cultural or spiritually oriented activities Comments:
Resources	□ School offers programs in type of art preferred □ Neighborhood offers programs in type of art preferred Comments:	□ School offers vocational program in mechanical area of interest/skill □ Has opportunity to serve as apprentice in mechanical area of choice Comments:	□ Connected to place of worship □ Has access to opportunities to participate in culturally oriented activities Comments:

Other strengths: _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Supervisory Review: _____ Date: _____

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Strengths Promotion in Schools

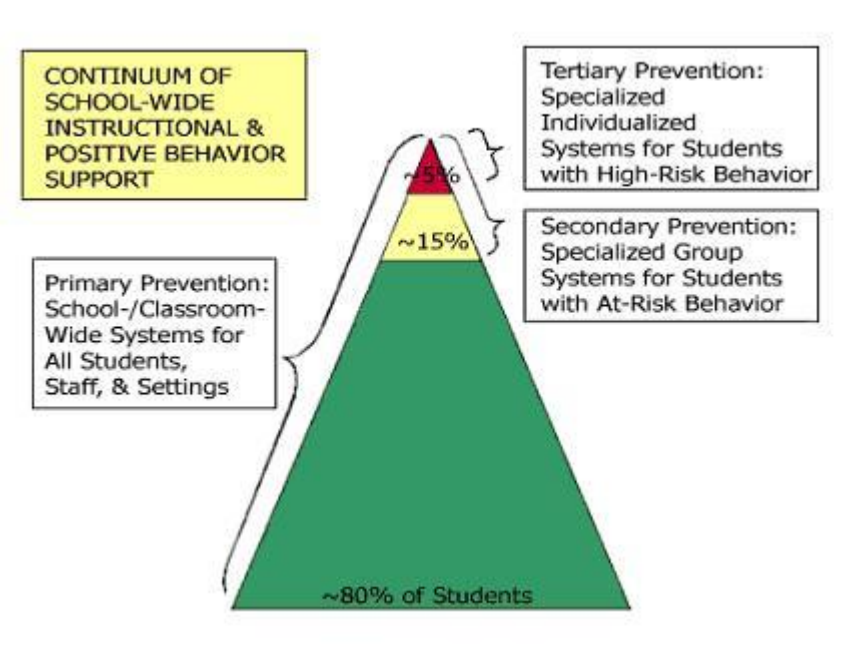
Strengths in Schools

The identification of strengths is mandated in student's individualized education plans (IEP) within special education.

Can be difficult to ground IEPs in child strengths within a system for which deficits are the key to access.

Applying Public Health Approach to Mental Health

PBIS → Integrated Systems Framework



Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

http://www.apbs.org/new_apbs/SWDesc.aspx

Tier 1 Universal Mental Health Promotion & Prevention

"Promotion efforts focus on competence enhancement and positive mental health in the whole population within the context of their everyday lives”

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013, p 21)

Tier 1 supports

- Social skills programming; Social and emotional learning curriculum https://casel.org/
- Positive behavioral interventions and supports https://www.pbis.org/
- Building opportunities for structured leisure activities https://everymomentcounts.org/
- Response to Intervention as a classroom/teacher support http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti
- Trauma sensitive schools https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package

Tier 1 for Families?

Mental Health First Aid

Trauma Informed Care

Anti-stigma Efforts

Family Resource Centers

Family to Family education

Tier 2

Targets at risk youth who may not be diagnosed but may have behavioral changes; or youth with diagnoses but asymptomatic; at risk youth

- Recognition of trauma: historical, intergenerational, systems based …
- Prevention (grading down demands/stressors) + promotion of competences to minimize early symptoms (Downing, 2011)
- Often small group interventions … support groups, activity groups, skill development groups

Tier 2 supports

RtI in school settings

Instructional Support Personnel

- to modify tasks, environment to facilitate success
- to identify strengths
- to build and facilitate supportive activities

EBP

- social skills for antisocial behavior, ADHD, ID
- Play, leisure, recreational programming for ID, anxiety

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)

Tier 2 for Families?

Families with their own histories or who are at risk of difficulty based on the challenges they are facing.

- Recognition of trauma
- Prevention
- Family to Family supports

Need a welcoming environment, opportunities to connect to others with their experiences … to find "**our own**"

Tier 3

- Systems of care/wraparound
- Youth empowerment/create opportunities
- Identification of strengths and promotion of wellbeing
- Intensive play, leisure & recreation programs
- Accommodations to enable participation

(Bazyk and Arbesman, 2013)

Strengths in Positive Psychology

Clifton Strengths Explorer

Measures 10 “talent” themes for youth (34 for adults):

1. Achieving
2. Caring
3. Competing
4. Confidence
5. Dependability
6. Discoverer
7. Future thinker
8. Organizer
9. Presence
10. Relating

https://www.strengths-explorer.com/home.aspx

Character Strengths: Values in Action Project

1. **Wisdom and knowledge** (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)
2. **Courage** (honesty, bravery, persistence, zest)
3. **Humanity** (kindness, love, social intelligence)
4. **Justice** (fairness, leadership, teamwork)
5. **Temperance** (forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation)
6. **Transcendence** (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness)

https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths-via

Compare

Cox

- Capacities
- Interests
- Resources

Domains:

- Social
- Academic
- Athletic
- Artistic /Creative
- Mechanical
- Spiritual /Cultural

Clifton

Achieving
Caring
Competing
Confidence
Dependability
Discoverer
Future thinker
Organizer
Presence
Relating

VIA

Wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)

Courage (honesty, bravery, persistence, zest)

Humanity (kindness, love, social intelligence)

Justice (fairness, leadership, teamwork)

Temperance (forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation)

Transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness)

Multiple Intelligences

Naturalist (nature smart)

Musical (sound smart)

Logical-mathematical (number/reasoning smart)

Existential (deep thought/meaning of life smart)

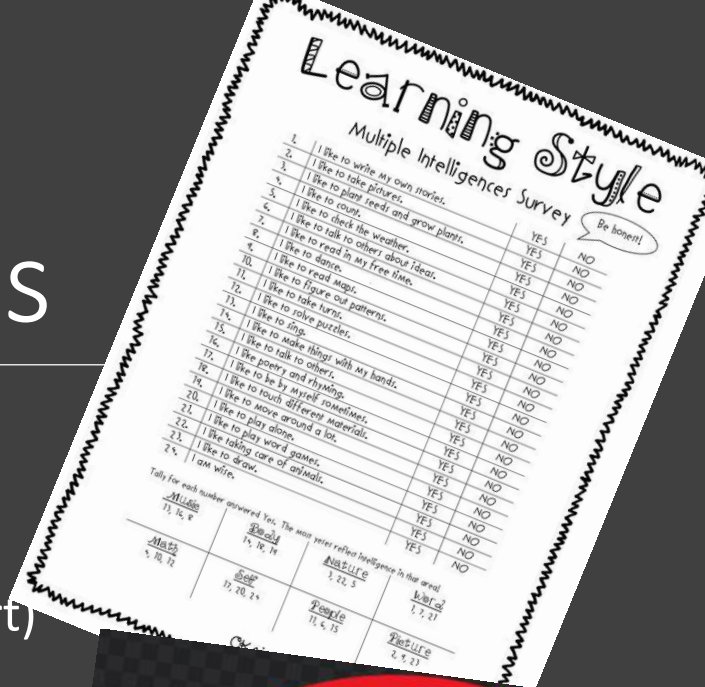
Interpersonal (people smart)

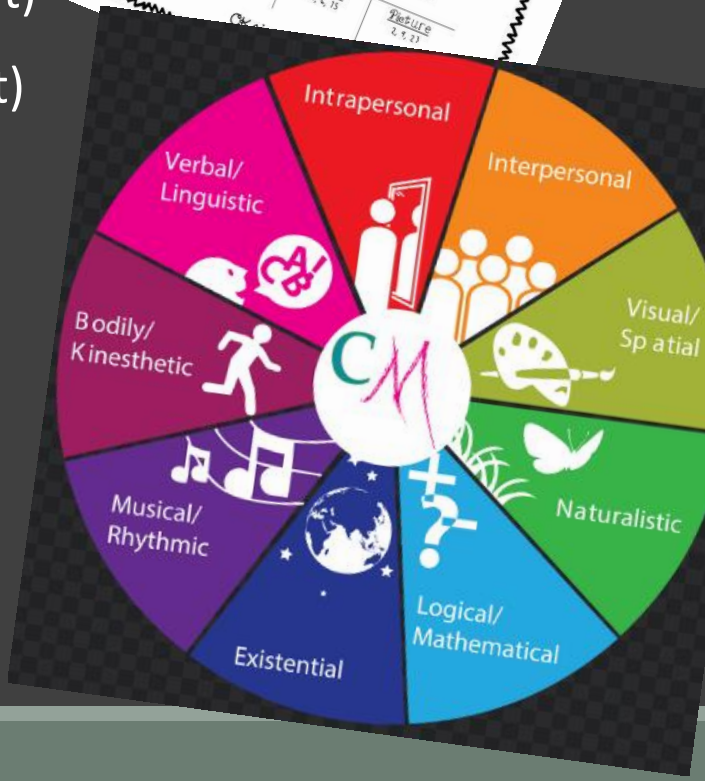
Bodily-kinesthetic (body smart)

Linguistic (word smart)

Intra-personal (self smart)

Spatial (picture smart)





What is your Superpower?

Strategies!

Build Identity!

- Teach strengths, embed into curriculum
- Model naming and deliberately using your strengths
- Identify strength heros
- Name strengths in action “strengths spotting”
- Give strength based homework assignments
- Encourage use of strengths in new ways every day!

Strengths as Solutions!

- When there are challenges, look for how students can apply their strengths to build solutions
- Create interdependent teams that rely on strengths
- Practice reframing what you see as negative traits or behaviors from a strengths lens

Start with Yourself!

Self Care

Mindfulness

- Notice the ordinary; 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
- Notice/watch thoughts, feelings
- Meditation, yoga, tai-chi

Precautions - trauma

- *Pay attention to responses, incorporate movement*
- *Use different anchors, focus outside the body*
- *Give choices, (Invite rather than command)*
- *Hit the brakes and respect boundaries*

Treleaven, 2018

Self Care

Gratitude

Kindness

https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-videos/19-kindness-can-be-the-norm

Happiness Challenge Workbook:
http://www.actionforhappiness.org/media/15876/the%20happiness%20challenge%20workbook%20updated.pdf

Goals

Give us back a sense of control

Help keep us moving

Goal Attainment Scaling

Pitfalls

Should individual people be carrying the largest part of the responsibility? Where does the environment need to step up?

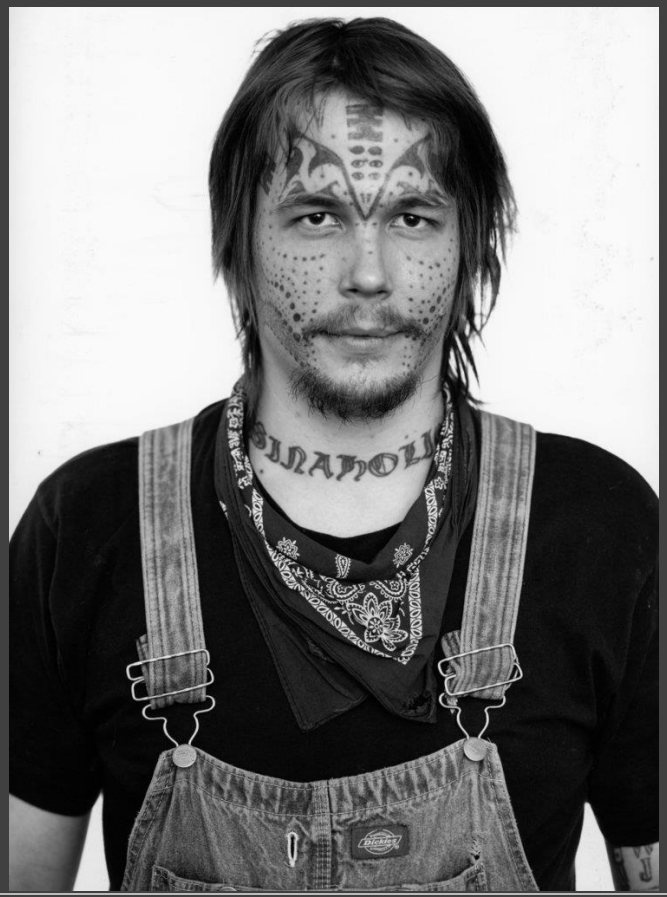
- Do all children have opportunities to feel competent/successful?
- Do we know trauma and respond appropriately?
- Do I blame myself when I fail?
- Do I blame when my students fail?

Unger, 2018

Parting thoughts

- Reframing negatives; being persistent
- Habits and Routines; being persistent
- Exhaustion; being persistent
- Humor
- Exploring interests & building passions …
- What are your challenges?
  …. How can you use your strengths there?

Questions?



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