

Resiliency—The Secret to Longevity and Effectiveness in Ministry

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About the Presenter

Dr. Lois Dodds specializes in the care of cross-cultural humanitarian workers, including missionaries. In 1992 she co-founded Heartstream Resources, along with her husband, the late Dr. Lawrence Dodds. Heartstream was one of the first organizations created to provide multi-

disciplinary care for international workers. Lois is President and Director of Heartstream. HSR is global in outreach, with partner organizations in New Zealand, Korea and the Philippines. It is still developing new partners, as well as hosting retreats and other services for global agencies. The Dodds served thirteen years in the Amazon jungle of Peru, Larry as physician and Lois as writer, counselor and educator.

Dr. Dodds is a leader in the missionary care movement and loves to share her vision and passion for caring for the world-wide missionary force. She has taught people from about 100 nations in graduate courses in 40 countries through Heartstream and as a professor with Azusa Pacific University in California. She is author of fifteen books and over 100 articles. She regularly presents at professional conferences such as the World Congresses on Christian Counseling. Her most recent books are a series of three textbooks on global servants, including their formation, effectiveness and care. Her doctoral studies at UCSB researched the role of the Holy Spirit in life-long formation.

The Dodds have three married children and eight grandchildren whom they love to include in their world travels. Her interests include creativity and personality studies, interior decorating, art, classical music and writing poetry.

See www.heartstreamresources.org for more information.

Presentation: Resiliency—the secret to effectiveness and longevity in ministry

Learning Objectives of this presentation:

1. What is resiliency?
2. How is it acquired?
3. Why is it so important?
4. Relevant research

Introduction

As the efforts in ministry and world mission increasingly include members of many other nations, in addition to the approximate half million sent out from North American and European

countries, the need for understanding resiliency increases. This trend of sending out more non-Western missionaries is laudable, and even exciting, and yet is troublesome in some ways. More and more people are sent out with little or no screening and assessment into an ever-increasingly dangerous world. Many serve within their own vast homelands, such as in China and India, venturing into sub-populations which present immense stresses, pressures, and adjustments for the average person. Identifying and promoting the capacities, qualities, and traits which improve effectiveness and longevity has become more important than ever. Webster's defines *resiliency* as *resilience*, and in common language and literature these terms are most often used interchangeably.Resilience is one of the **personality traits** wise missions look for, and the **process of resiliency** has become of greater relevance as the world is increasingly dangerous.

Part 1: What is Resiliency? (slide 5)

Originally the term resilience came out of physics. "...in the engineering sense [it] is 'the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress'" (Meredith, et al, 2011). Schaefer and Schaefer also note this origin (2012). Another study notes that it has to do with the *energy* stored up in the compressed material. (.....) This is apropos to our emphasis on resiliency in persons, as physical and emotional well-being both relate powerfully to energy; we have defined *stress as anything which requires energy for adapting* (Dodds and Dodds,)

The term resilience was applied to persons in relatively recent decades in the field of human development and adjustment studies, particularly through the longitudinal study in Hawaii ("Children of the Garden Island" find ref).

Most typically agencies and senders have looked at resilience as a trait, rather than resiliency as a process. Definitions vary, but seem to have common ground in the last decade or two around the concepts that resiliency is a trait and resilience is a process. Some psychologists and researchers propose not considering it as a *personality trait*, as doing so may imply that it is not a dynamic process which can be fostered (Meredith, *et al.* (p. 3), noting Masten's position).

Meredith, *et al.*, suggest that resilience is a process of coping involving an interaction between 1) the individual, 2) his or her past experience, and 3) the person's current life context (p. viii, 3)

A useful working definition:

- **capacity to recover** quickly from setbacks, hardships, or trauma
- **ability to spring back** after being bent, stretched, deformed or in some other way distressed
- plasticity, flexibility, elasticity, buoyancy, hardiness, endurance and maintaining "spirit" rather than being rigid and responding with defeat or discouragement

Is it a trait or a process?

Resilience—we could say this is a TRAIT

Resilient the adjective for this trait

Resiliency—we could say is the PROCESS involving 3 things

10 Factors in Resiliency: (Dodds, 2008.... Slides 8, 9, 10

1. Good ego strength and high self-esteem
2. History of previous success in coping with stress; each success raises self-esteem
3. Coping skills, such as self-control, deferring gratification, remaining calm
4. Ability to draw support from others; supportive community
5. Ability to re-frame a negative situation into a positive challenge
6. “Normalizing” difficult experiences and outcomes
7. Optimism as a habit and a mindset
8. Positive habits of communication such as sharing your concerns
9. Faith in God’s goodness and the ability to find meaning in suffering
10. Appropriate self-reliance and interdependency

10 Conditions of Vulnerability (Dodds....Slides 11, 12, 13

1. Lack of ego strength and low self-esteem
2. Prior stress and trauma which are unresolved
3. Lack of coping skills: e.g., falling apart under pressure, being reactive, catastrophizing
4. Feelings of isolation and rejection; failure to draw upon others
5. Feeling powerless and voiceless; fatalism
6. “Critical Intersections of life stage and career stresses
7. Pessimism as a mind set and life stance
8. Mal-adaptive habits: withdrawal, alcohol, substance abuse, violence, anger, etc.
9. Uncertainty about God’s goodness and difficulty in finding meaning in hardship
10. Dependency rather than self-reliance

Part 2: How is Resiliency Acquired? Slide 15

This is a developmental processes involving:

- Early parenting
- Good attachment to parent or caregiver
- Development of “basic trust” and later faith
- Experience with some hardship which leads us to cope and coping skills
- Being allowed to struggle, with support, especially in community
- Modeling by parents and others of good coping
- Practice in coping: each success increases self-esteem and coping capacity

How is resiliency increased? 17-18

For the individual:

- Provide meaning
- Reframe the hardship
- Identify good coping skills
- Resist mal-adaptive coping which creates more dysfunction

For the community:

- Seek together to derive a meaning and purpose
- Look for the positive which emerges in disaster
- Provide on-going support for each other
- Reaffirm your group identity and purpose

For the organization:

- Debriefing by leaders, including what happened
- Significance of what happened
- Benefit of group responses

(Note: Meredith, *et al*, emphasize that having “credible authorities” explain what happened, etc. is very important to community and organization (p. 3). This validates our practice of debriefing people in ministry and missions after field terms or significant events affecting their lives.

Part 3: Why is Resiliency so Important? Slide 19...29

Three realms of impact of resiliency in stress and trauma -- slides

These begin with the **self**, at the center, and expand into the **external, visible stressors**, then outward and upward to include the **cosmos**. In addition we have all the usual life stage and developmental issue, such as “old business” from family of origin, effects of trauma, communication and conflict styles and personality type. Resiliency or vulnerability makes the difference in how we manage all of these!

Practical application:

We must teach reliance upon God and accurate concepts of who He is (such as God describes Himself in Exodus 34:7, 8). Knowing God and living His Truth are our best resources! The Principle we rely on here is that it is not how much stress we face which determines the outcome. It is the balance of stress with resources. Imagine a balance scale with both sides equal.

Why is resiliency so important? Slide 30

It minimize the effects of stress!

- ▶ We have more “bounce” or recovery power.
- ▶ We experience fewer and less extreme symptoms.
- ▶ We are more responsive and less reactive.
- ▶ We have past coping history which allows us to cope more successfully now.
- ▶ We have better coping skills and more belief in our own capacity to cope and to recover.
- ▶ We have more positive attitudes and a healthier way of perceiving the world.

We also have better outcomes!

- ▶ We are less affected by trauma and stress.
- ▶ We recover more quickly.
- ▶ We retain more positive and optimistic outlooks.
- ▶ We continue to gain self-esteem.
- ▶ We view ourselves as more capable of enduring.

- ▶ The “tail” effect of stress is not as long, so that less stress accumulates in our lives.

Better life stances and attitudes:

- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ “I can do it” belief.
- ▶ “I got through it before. I can do it now.”
- ▶ “God is faithful; He will take me through.”
- ▶ “Some bad happens to all people; why not me?”
- ▶ “What can I learn during this difficult time?”
- ▶ “What good is coming out of this tragedy?”
- ▶ Choosing the Philippians 4 principle

Philippians 4 principle:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.and the peace of God will be with you” (Phil: 8,9b, NIV).

Without resiliency? Look what happens!

People succumb to mal-adaptive “coping” which leads to even more problems! Slides 40, 41

- ▶ People use these behaviors in an effort to cope, but they lead to additional problems which exacerbate the original trauma!!
- ▶ Inappropriate use of alcohol
- ▶ Overuse of drugs, prescribed, OTCs, or illicit
- ▶ Having an affair
- ▶ Addiction to sex and/or pornography
- ▶ Addiction to escapes such as gambling
- ▶ Violence towards others, especially in the family

Every mal-adaptive choice causes a spiraling down, a cascade effect:

- ▶ The original trauma or stress is not coped with.
- ▶ This leads to worsening stress and trauma.
- ▶ The mal-adaptive behavior takes on a life of its own.
- ▶ It causes additional problems which adds to the first problem.
- ▶ The accumulation continues; the person feels worse and worse, copes less and less well, loses self-esteem and experiences guilt.

We have the best ways to stay resilient:

1. The Word of God—knowing and claiming God’s promises
2. Memorizing the Word!!
3. Music of and from the Word
4. The Body of Christ—helping to “bear each others burdens”
5. Your friends—talking it out with those whom know you well.

How to reframe danger and loss:

- ▶ Look at the situation from a different perspective
- ▶ Through a different “lens”

- ▶ Through a different frame:
 - E.g. Dr. Larry Dodds—comments when diagnosed with ALS
 - E.g. Lives saved? More important than possessions?
 - E.g. Losing everything in the fire might not be all bad—what freedom have you now gained (fewer papers to file? More time for other things? Not having to deal with items of the past.)

Remember God Himself is our best resource:

“I, the Lord...will take hold of your hand...” Isaiah 42:6, NIV

“I will turn the darkness into light before (you); and make the rough places smooth.” Is. 42:16

“When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

Isaiah 43:2, NIV

Things will never be the same, but they might be better:

- ▶ Example: You “lose” your children when they get married. You “gain” them back, plus a spouse and grandchildren.
- ▶ Your own example: What will never be the same? What might be even better, or is already better? What can YOU do to make life better?

What the enemy intended for evil, God will use for good.

- ▶ The Greek word for “trial” or “hardship” is “thliptsis” which is the same word used for “node” in a plant.
- ▶ The same trial may be experienced:
 - as a challenge from the enemy to destroy us... or...
 - as a “quality” test from God to show how we are able to endure.

We overcome by the power of Word.

- ▶ We can follow the example the Apostle John who saw in the end-time battle with the Great Dragon, the Devil, Satan himself:
- ▶ “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.” Rev. 12:11 NIV
- ▶ Our WORDS to each other proclaim God’s goodness and bring about healing for each person and for the community.

Why not write A Book of Remembrance?

- ▶ Collect the stories of God’s faithfulness during and as a result of the fire.
- ▶ Thus you would proclaim God’s Faithfulness!
- ▶ You would give hope and encouragement to many others!

Add slides 53, 54, 56 if room

Part 4: Relevant Research

Most research on resiliency so far relates to school or community settings, especially regarding immigrants. Few resources are specially devoted to people in ministry, cross-cultural work, or international missions. Of those I have reviewed the book by Meredith and Sherbourne, which appears to be the most useful and relevant to us, as the military population shares a broad range of realities with foreign workers. The authors reviewed 270 source documents and selected those more relevant.

Most notable in that work and the few others identified in the references are the important findings that social support and spiritual resources are of the highest benefit. These findings validate that the missionary care movement has been on the right track over the two-to-three decades since it came into being. Promoting healthy teams and enriched community life inherently focus on social relationships. Encouraging and developing spiritual resources, such as prayer, shared values, meditation, religious traditions, and mutual commitments is another major emphasis in the missionary care movement. We definitely are on the right track, according to the findings of the literature related to creating, sustaining, and enhancing resiliency.

Four arenas identified in the literature reviewed by Meredith, *et al* (2011). The factors in bold below indicate the strongest factor in each level (p. xv).

Individual level factors: **positive coping (including spiritual), positive affect, positive thinking, realism, behavioral control**, physical fitness, and altruism.

Family level factors: emotional ties, communication, **family support**, closeness, nurturing, adaptability.

Team or unit level factors: **positive command climate**, teamwork, cohesion.

Community level factors: **belongingness**, cohesion, connectedness, collective efficacy.

Spiritual resources, though not one of the four identified by the above authors, are frequently identified as vital. This finding in the research also supports what we have been practicing in the care of pastors and missionaries. We emphasize that ongoing spiritual renewal is a major means of keeping one's balance and becoming more resilient. It validates the crucial importance of strong faith in the screening and selection process.

The wisdom literature and other spiritual resources, such as faith, meditation, and prayer, are crucial in the resiliency of health care workers, according to Wicks, whose work includes references to many other researchers. For instance, he quotes Piedmont, "...a person who has well-developed spirituality is more apt to have a positive outlook..." (Wicks, p. 85). He notes that not only Christian faith, as exemplified in the New Testament, but also other religions include the concept that spirituality enables one to cope better. He says the Sanskrit word for faith means to "breathe freely, to be without fear" (p. 87). Wicks list of twelve "needs" relevant to the inner life as a source of resilience. These are worth studying (p. 87).

Wicks also points out that according to psychiatrist Anthony Storr modern psychotherapy has neglected to include the fact that "the capacity to be alone is also an aspect of emotional

maturity” (p. 90, quoting Storr). In Heartstream Resources and in the field of “member care” we have advocated for meditation and periods of solitude and silence as means of renewal. Henri Nouwen wrote that “silence and solitude are the furnace in which transformation takes place” (Wicks, p. 90, quoting Nouwen *Way of the Heart*, p. 16).

Murphy-Gill writes a compelling personal story of the importance of faith in resilience, identifying the ways her Catholic faith community is crucial in maintaining family strength—in contrast to the pop culture of denigrating faith and family (2015).

Organizational:

John Fawcett, formerly of World Vision, has been concerned about enhancing resilience and coping in organizational settings. He says, “...research confirms that organizational processes are the causes of the greatest amount of psychological distress in disaster work. Conversely, organizational processes offer considerable protection if designed and implemented appropriately” (p. 2). He emphasizes that the enhancement must take place via the leaders already in the organization, not someone from outside. Fawcett notes that ninety percent of persons engaged in emergency aid are hired locally; they are not “white expatriate aid worker[s]” (p.3). “The most stressful locations are generally those in headquarters or regional office, not the front line” (p. 3). Our work at Heartstream, with over two decades caring for expat workers indicates this is true; we see far more people overwhelmed by “home office” or team conflict than by burnout from front line aid work.

Bryant-Davis illuminates the process of resiliency in trauma in her guide “Thriving in the wake of trauma: a multicultural guide (2005). This is illustrated with personal anecdotes. In her article, “A resilient bunch...” Ladika shares her discoveries that some organizations are providing support and resiliency training. She mentions World Vision, whose former psychologist, John Fawcett (quoted above), has written powerfully about this very need (2011). She quotes Rick Augsburg, managing director of aid organization KonTerra, on why leadership is so important: “For resiliency efforts to take root and thrive, staff must ‘have the support of an organization’s leadership who will be advocates for resilience and see it as a strategic element for their organization.’” (p. 2). This kind of training and leadership both contribute to longevity.

Immigration and Migration:

In *Profiles of Resilience* Rumbaut explores the impact of stress and outcomes of resiliency on immigrant children in Southern California (...). He notes that the words *travel* and *travail* share a common root. This insight is very relevant to our international workers context, as such a life style and career includes much travel, often under situations of extreme stress. Rumbaut notes that since the 1960s Filipinos are the second largest immigrant population in the United States and that “as a whole they have the lowest poverty rate of any sizable ethnic group” (p. 260). This is relevant for the world of international outreach, given that the Filipino church sends out thousands of missionaries, and the country itself exports hundreds of thousands of workers to about 200 nations. Heartstream Resources of the Philippines serves thousands of these workers, enabling them to increase resilience in their multiple contexts, especially needed because most work day jobs and conduct ministry in their “after hours”—a double load of stress! We note that

the strong family systems of Filipinos is a predictive strength in their resilience; at the same time separation of family members due to work abroad increases stresses immensely.

References

Five most relevant works:

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Garner, Laura Mae. 2015. Healthy, resilient, and effective in cross-cultural ministry. Indonesia: Gyayasan Gloria Katalis. Contact Gardner at email: Larrie_Gardner@sil.org.

Schaefer, Frauke C. and Schaefer, Charles A. Eds. 2012. *Trauma and resilience: a handbook.* US: Condeo Press.

The most useful research:

Additional references: