

# Should Children Rely on External Care after Mental Trauma?

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**Abstract:** Resilience refers to the ability of humans to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the development of a positive life course or the ability to resume one following a period of adversity (Bellis et al., 2018). It is an essential skill that helps children to face challenges in the future. This article mainly discusses the effectiveness of external and internal factors to help build children's resilience.

**Keywords:** Resilience, children's education, family, charity.

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## 1. Introduction

Mental damage may be a common phenomenon that happens to human beings for plenty of frustration in one's life. For example, in Haiti 2010 earthquake, many people lost their family members during the disaster, and their experience of seeing their friends, families, or other familiar people killed just beside him will bring considerable psychological damage to them. However, they can finally pick up the hope not only for adults to overcome the mental damage but children, though they are too young to accept and withstand these things (Bell & Romano, 2015). Resilience is the central pillar for them to restore from the vast mental hurt. According to a human science professor at Bangor University, Mark Bellis, resilience is defined to describe the ability to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the development of a positive life course or the ability to resume one following a period of adversity (Bellis et al., 2018). A famous painting in the Museum of Modern Art called *Migrant Mother* also refers to resilience. Much attention is paid to the mother, but the children in her arms also play a big part in the image.

Since children are much more vulnerable than adults, it is critical for them to get resilience to prepare for their future. Unfortunately, many children are now in extremely wicked psychological health, and resilience is inevitable for them in order to get through the mental disaster. The lack of resilience can lead to harmful consequences such as deviant behavior at school and many kinds of health problems such as asthma (Bellis et al., 2018). So where can children get resilience? Suniya S. Luthar, a professor at Teacher's College, provides three main factors that will influence children's resilience, which are children themselves, families, and society (Luthar, 2013).

Consequently, the research question arises, since children can get resilience on their own, should the external people pay a lot to help them or give less help to let them restore mental hurt on their own? Which way can children be the most beneficial? This question can lead to better care for children. The answer is external. Then the issue is divided into three parts, individual, social, and internal.

## 2. Family Effect

Children can develop resilience from another person. The most suitable to achieve this effect might be the person closest

to them, which means their family. That is to say, the main person they could rely on is one of their parents or relatives. For children with mental trauma, a warm and supportive attitude towards them and a close relationship with their family will obviously benefit them (Luthar, 2015). In fact, parents with greater warmth and less control can significantly raise children's resilience (Beeckman et al., 2019). When children experience mental trauma, encouragement and love will promote their healing and supportive words will help them feel they are not alone.

On the other hand, the lack of support and love from a family will have a significant negative impact on children's mental health. According to a professor at Medical School, Hangzhou Normal University, children who lack love from parents, will be more likely to suffer mental health disorders such as depression, loneliness, and hyperactivity. This kind of problem may be the cause of the improper behavior of students in school and the extremely awful result is suicide (Zhou et al. 2021). By contrast, good parent-child communication can significantly improve children's mental health and resilience.

Not only from parents but also from foster families, children can still receive warmth and build their resilience, regardless of the mental harm from the loss of their natural parents. From the study of the relationship between life in out-of-home children's resilience and social welfare held by two psychological professors at the University of Ottawa, Tessa Bell, and Elisa Romano, "It would seem that a positive relationship with a constant flow of communication gives children the freedom to form attachments with members of their foster family while maintaining ties with their family of origin" (Bell & Romano, 2015). In other words, children can receive encouragement and confidence by being loved and cared for, no matter where that love comes from. Children's mental damage can be treated, which would eventually improve their ability to face and be resilient to difficulty and adversity.

However, although the family is an important factor for children to develop their resilience, and it is shown above that its effectiveness is decent as well, but some potential problems still exist. A psychology professor at Shandong Normal University, Lumei Tian, states that conflict in the family has been considered a risk for children's resilience (Tian, et al. 2018). As a result, in order to ensure the effectiveness of children's protection, appropriate measures

need to be implemented to avoid tragedies such as family mistreatment. That is to say, if the family cannot help children and provide them with the love needed to overcome trauma, another part should step in — the community or charity.

### 3. Social Effect

Children may experience catastrophe and as a result, experience psychological damage, and sometimes their families will not be able to care for them. Their family members may even ignore them or treat them in a negligent manner. To solve this problem, the communities are able to appeal to families to take care of their children. An online training course started by a government shows motivational interviewing strategies to address common emotional-behavioral and mental health concerns in families, aiming to help families improve children's care. In addition, many projects supported by governments focus on the method to improve the quality of family relationships. (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Society including the community has taken action to improve the situation of children in families and encourage a supportive environment for them.

Likewise, the public also helps children in unhealthy family situations. Professor Bellis and his peers conducted research on children who have gone through trauma from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These children usually experience abuse and neglect or live in domestic violence. Consequently, children with ACEs may lack their parent's love and the resilience that can develop from family. Bellis et al. (2018) concluded that "public services can provide support capable of preventing ACEs and potentially develop resilience assets that offset some of their harmful consequences," meaning the public can help in developing resilience in children and in their recovery process. In fact, society has already taken some specific action. UNICEF made six key strategies to prevent violence in the family based on its experience to direct parents. (Mckelvey et al., 2011). Two professors at the University of Ottawa have found the practical effort to improve parenting, such as finding a foster family and finding some tutors for children. (Bell & Romano, 2015).

Another type of aid from society comes in the form of social welfare workers. Due to the study of two psychology professors at the University of Ottawa, although social workers are not the substitution for parents, they can still be someone kind of parents who can support and love the children. (Bell & Romano, 2015). In other words, the actions of welfare workers and society can bring about many positive effects. If children suffer from homelessness, the government can find a foster family and the necessary help that the children need. Then social workers can take the role of ensuring the foster family provides up-to-standard care to children. With the accompany of social workers, children who suffered from mental health problems will be less discriminated against. No matter what happens to children, they will be protected as society serves as a backstop. Thus, with the attention of the public, children will feel kindness and care from everyone, and their resilience will develop. In sum, society can have an essential role in helping children recover from mental harm.

### 4. Individual Effect

Indeed, external care from family and society can help children with their mental trauma, but if that happens, will

children become reliant on others instead of solving problems on their own? Judith Locke, a clinical psychologist at the Queensland University of Technology, found that "there will be immediate or eventual harm for children who are parented with an excessively cultivating parenting approach, as...it does not allow children to develop independence or become fully-functioning, community-minded adults" (Locke et al., 2012). Children who are given too much protection will fail to become independent. The consequence is that children will be unable to achieve their goals on their own, and they will become used to relying on their families and others to help them.

However, if children can receive less external care and develop resilience themselves, this kind of reliance can be avoided. The effect of internal resilience development can also lead to positive effects. Tessa Bell, a psychology professor at the University of Ottawa, claims that beyond the good relationship with external people, children with mental health problems can also restore on their own, especially if they are intelligent, appealing, and have a positive outlook on the world. (Bell & Romano, 2015). Characteristics such as being optimistic about the world and society can significantly help children be satisfied and build a sense of happiness. Then the painful memory can be covered with happier memory and children can get rid of past. Bell's claims are confirmed by a group of researchers from the Psychology Institute of the University Lumière, who investigated children's mental health after the 2010 Haiti earthquake and found that the children had strong resilience and recovery abilities (Cénat & Derivois, 2014). These results prove the ability of children to develop resilience on their own.

Nonetheless, is the answer to my research question internal? Absolutely not because internal resilience may have some vital disadvantages. Sue Bond (2018), a sociology professor at the University of Johannesburg, found the risks for children who failed to receive early care for getting mental and physical health problems. To say more specifically, the possibility for males to be arrested and females to be pregnant earlier is higher for non-early-care people. Children who lack the care and direction of others may be more susceptible to miscreant behavior. Thus, if society does not care for children when they are young, they may negatively impact it later.

On the other hand, if children with mental trauma can be appropriately treated, they can benefit society, instead of relying on others and becoming a burden to society. According to welfare workers, children who are taken care of properly have much better mental health and hope for their future. Tessa Bell, through her research, finds that "Those kids that are able to develop relationships and go into relationships where they can give and take, like a healthy relationship...would create a family of their own" (Bell & Romano, 2015). Children who are taken care of will have positive attitudes toward their life.

### 5. Conclusion

For children with mental health issues, a lack of resilience will have a negative impact on them and their future. For example, they can experience health problems such as higher levels of asthma, gastrointestinal conditions, and headaches. In addition, their adverse experience can influence their behavior at school such as absence from school and refusing to meet others (Bellis et al. 2018). Consequently, it is urgent to improve the resilience of children in society. Fortunately, there are some actions that have already been taken, but there

still needs to be more. These actions include encouraging parents and providing them with financial aid if the family is too poor to support a child, and recruiting more charities to help both parents and children. Hopefully, there will be more people who realize the importance of helping children who have experienced mental trauma and participate more in charity.

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