



## Building Resilience, Self-Esteem, and Confidence to Support Well-Being

Presented by Maureen Bennie  
Director, Autism Awareness Centre Inc.

[maureen@autismawarenesscentre.com](mailto:maureen@autismawarenesscentre.com)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What is resilience?

- bouncing back through adversity
- working through challenges in a proactive way
- supports personal growth, good mental health
- contributes to positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Building Blocks for Resilience

- Self-confidence
- Self-esteem
- How?
  - Through interests
  - Enjoyable activities/leisure activities
  - Strengths based learning
  - Physical exercise




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Why Does an Autistic Person Need to Be Resilient?

- Resilience is a self-replicating skill
- Once a challenging situation is managed, confidence grows
- The non-autistic world is overwhelming and frightening.
- Setbacks and challenges




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Resilience Helps

*Without resilience, autistic people often find life increasingly challenging, they may not be able to cope with new things or changes, and may want to withdraw from social situations. Building resilience early on in life can help a person feel confident to take on new challenges and succeed.*




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Being resilient can help an autistic person:

- make their way through life's milestones in a positive way
- build self-confidence and self-esteem
- build a strong self-identity
- manage change or unpredictability
- recover from setbacks or disappointments




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Being resilient can help an autistic person:

- reduce stress and anxiety
- succeed in challenges and also accept and learn from mistakes and failures
- understand the need for practice to develop a new skill
- set the stage for a more independent adulthood




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Being resilient can help an autistic person:

- understand social-emotional boundaries and limits and work within those
- foster a sense of place in the world and a feeling of belonging
- build the confidence to take on new challenges
- transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What Hinders Resilience?

- Invalidation
- Assuming Incompetence
- Overprotection
- Negative messages
- Past failures
- Perfectionism




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## How Do We Build Resilience?

- Practice - also called critical mass
- What is critical mass?
- Achieve resilience through a series of controlled challenges
- Small increments
- Think sports training!




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Key Teaching Concepts

- Just because something seems difficult, that isn't a reason not to do it.
- With some help, you'll be able to overcome difficulties.
- No one masters a skill right away – they have to practice. Don't give up just because a skill takes practice to learn.
- When trying something new, it's ok to ask for help from a parent or someone you trust.




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Key Teaching Concepts

- Overcoming something hard will make you feel really good and will mean you can do it again in the future and it will probably be easier.
- It's ok to compete and it's also fine if you don't win.
- If you don't get it right the first time, it's fine.




---

---

---

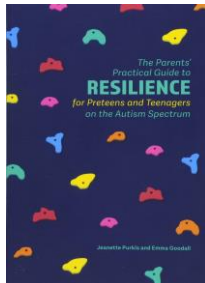
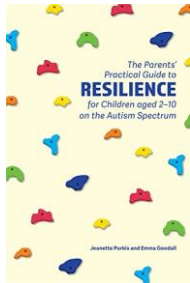
---

---

---

---

## Resilience Resources




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Skills for Resilience

- Asking for help
- Flexibility
- Developing self-esteem and confidence
- Using a person's interests to increase self-esteem and confidence
- Identifying strengths and interests




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Skills for Resilience – Asking for Help

- Knowing when and how to ask for help is an important life and self-advocacy skill
- Over time, asking for help can be seen as a strength and a good thing to do.
- How do we teach this skill?




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## How to Teach Asking for Help

- Point out situations where people are asking for help.
- Build a support network of siblings and friends.
- Make a list of the things that the person is good at, and some questions that they can ask so that the interactions will be successful.




---

---

---

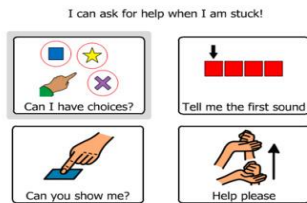
---

---

---

---

## Asking for Help Visuals




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Asking for Help Visuals




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Video Modeling

- combines the visual supports strategy with technology
- television watching skills don't need to be pre-taught
- videos provide predictability
- viewer has control over the speed, repetition and volume




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Types of Video Modeling

- **Basic Video Modeling (BVM)**
- **Video Self-Modeling (VSM)**
- **Point-of-View Modeling (PVM)**




---

---

---

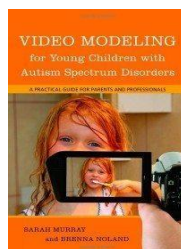
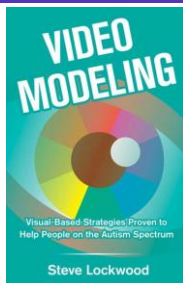
---

---

---

---

## Books on Video Modeling




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Skills for Resilience – Flexibility

- Adapting to change is a part of life
- Need to be able to adapt to changes both planned and unplanned
- Flexibility builds resilience and helps a person to overcome changes and challenges.




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Flexibility – How?

- Small changes
- Enough change to give an achievable challenge




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Learning to Be Flexible

- Change the routine order occasionally.
- Make a physical change.
- Introduce a new activity into the routine.
- Prepare for those unexpected moments.
- Play games that have an element of chance.




---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Self-Esteem and Confidence – An Integral Part of Resilience

### A confident person can:

- cope when things go wrong
- more willing to try again
- may feel less anxious in new or unexpected situations.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## How do we build confidence?

- Experiencing success
- Using their strengths and interests
- Knowing what they're good at
- Don't have to be good at everything to have self-confidence
- Know their strengths and how to use them effectively

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Examples of Strengths

- Strengths don't have to be academic.
- Can be anything a person is good at and enjoys doing.
- **Examples:**
  - building things
  - connecting with animals
  - photography
  - a memory for details
  - cooking

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Figuring Out Strengths and Interests

Find interests by:

- observing
- making lists
- asking questions
- taking notes



*How can we expand on interests that we're aware of?*

---

---

---

---

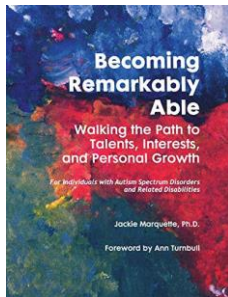
---

---

---

## Becoming Remarkably Able

- Book by Jackie Marquette
- Out of print – but available secondhand




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Marquette's guiding questions to help recognize strengths and interests

1. Is there something that excites the person each new day? If so, what is it?
2. What can the person do well?
3. What could the person do well if they had time to practice and learn?
4. What is their interest/passion?
5. If all fears and anxiety could be wiped about the person's future, what dreams would they explore or have help exploring?
6. If the person could do one thing in their life, what would it be?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Marquette's guiding questions to help recognize strengths and interests

7. Does the person lose track of time when involved in an activity? If so, what is the activity?
8. Do they love the challenge of figuring out a problem? If so, what?
9. Are they curious about a specific thing? If so, what is it?
10. If there is a choice between learning something or being entertained, how often is each one of these options chosen?
11. Does the person pursue an interest beyond the time others might pursue it?
12. Does the person delight in learning something specific?

---

---

---

---

---

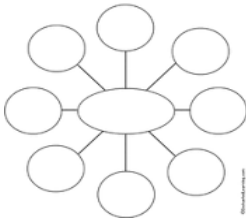
---

---

---

## Supporting and Expanding on Interests

Graphic Web Organizer




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ten Tips for Expanding on an Interest

1. Leave things lying around to be discovered. (LILA)
2. Introduce things that are related or connected to a topic of interest.
3. Visit places of interest.
4. Volunteer
5. Read and visit the local library. They offer many programs and supports beyond just borrowing books and materials.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ten Tips for Expanding on an Interest

6. Attend all kinds of events from sports, music, lectures, plays and films.
7. Participate in many different activities.
8. Travel if you can, even if it's just an hour's drive outside of your city or town.
9. Build on an interest.
10. Talk to people.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Tools to Support Resilience, Self-Esteem and Confidence

- Power Cards
- The positives of autism
- Positive Scrapbook
- Chores
- Developing leisure time skills




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Power Card Strategy

- involves using interests with visual aids to teach skills
- most effectively used with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities
- paired with a social narrative
- Show what the person should do, not what they shouldn't do
- practicing the power card strategy

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Creating the Power Card

1. Choose a behavior or skill to teach
2. Use a person's interest to choose characters
3. Write and illustrate a brief social narrative
4. Create the power card
5. Review the power card
6. Give the person feedback




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Power Card Example

### Superman Asks for Help

Even superheroes like Superman need to ask for help sometimes. He doesn't always know how to start an activity. When Superman can't do it all on his own, he can ask for help from a teacher or classmate.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Superman's Rules

**When you need help, Superman wants you to:**

1. Raise your hand.
2. Ask a trusted person for help by saying "I don't know what to do."
3. Ask to be shown what to do by saying "Show me what to do."

Superman is proud of you for asking for help when you need it!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Building Self-Esteem Through Strengths




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Positive Scrapbook

This can be a collection of anything that celebrates the person in some way.




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Helping Out with Chores and Tasks

- improve or foster self-esteem
- ultimately lead towards more independence in the future.
- great activity to share with grandparents, family and friends who might not necessarily know how to interact with an autistic person.
- Some chores may eventually be tackled independently
- some may always need to be a shared experience with a parent or caregiver.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ideas for Chores

- Watering plants
- Folding laundry.
- Emptying the dishwasher
- Vacuuming
- Making the bed.
- Simple food preparation.
- Feeding a pet.
- Odd jobs.




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Importance of Leisure Skills

- fosters a person's well-being, happiness and satisfaction in life
- supports and expand a person's interests
- social benefits
- brings together a group of people who share an interest and like to talk about it

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Specific Qualities of Activities

### Understandable:

1. Clear, static rules
2. Well defined beginning and end
3. Predictable or repetitive quality
4. Clear visual representation of what to do
5. Minimal verbal instruction
6. Structured activities

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Specific Qualities of Activities

### Reactive:

- materials provide reinforcement through sensory feedback
- when you do an action, something happens and it looks different




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Specific Qualities of Activities

### Comfortable:

1. Challenging without being over-stimulating
2. Suitable for the person's ability level
3. Limited demands for complex social interaction
4. Opportunity for a sense of control or mastery

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Specific Qualities of Activities

### Active:

- Gross motor
- Rhythmic – swinging or swimming
- Physical activity helps reduce stress and anxiety, builds muscle, and increases flexibility and balance.
- Good for sleep too!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Specific Qualities of Activities

### Visual Spatial:

- Repetitive manipulation of objects
- Putting things in order
- Fitting objects into spaces




---

---

---

---

---

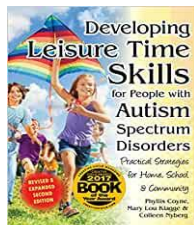
---

---

---

## Figuring It Out

- **Leisure Lifestyle Profile**
- assess what family and friends like to do




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Final Thoughts

- Every person is unique and has their own interests.
- In caring and supportive roles to an autistic person, it is our job to help create a path that leads to a meaningful, fulfilling life by supporting the things that bring happiness and a sense of well-being.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Final Thoughts

- Think of self-esteem and confidence as very strong protective factors for long term well-being.
- By creating a framework through observation, recording, and visually organizing information, autistic people can be included, discover things about themselves and make decisions about their lives. Their voice is heard and their dreams supported with the assistance of these tools.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---