

Resilience Portfolio Clinical Interview

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Beta Version, October 2016

Instructions for providers:

This is a semi-structured interview, designed to help providers and advocates of all types include strengths and resources in assessment. The topic areas are based on the Resilience Portfolios research program (learn more at <http://lifepathsresearch.org>). This is an ongoing project to identify the most important strengths for coping with adversity. The questions focus on the most promising strengths from this research as of October, 2016.

There are no right or wrong answers and no one should be expected to be good at every strength listed here. The end of the interview includes a few brief suggestions for matching needs to interventions. Every effort has been made to provide suggestions consistent with the current state of scientific knowledge, but please note that this area of research is in its infancy.

This is the Beta version of this questionnaire. We have used these and similar questions in focus groups, interviews, and surveys, but this is a new version for clinical settings that will be going through a review and evaluation process and will almost certainly change with feedback.

Introduction:

In times of stress, your strengths and resources are very important. These next questions will help us identify the strengths and resources you have available now, and some areas where you might need additional support. You might be surprised to learn how many strengths you have. We will use these to help develop a plan for coping with your problems and moving forward with your life.

We have found it useful to talk about strengths by focusing on specific stories from your life. It sometimes takes a minute or two to figure out which story to tell so take your time, but something will likely come to mind. *[Note to interviewer: If needed, encourage them to describe a specific event and not make general statements such as, “My family is a big help to me.”]*

Part 1: Stories about Coping and Support

1) Sooner or later, everyone has to deal with some kind of problem, often a serious problem. Let's start by thinking about what helps you when times are tough. We have found that it is helpful to talk about a specific problem or challenge, and how you handled it. *[Note to interviewers: It does not have to be the reason for referral and an older problem may be more informative].* What happened, where and when did it take place, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a few words about how you handled what happened and how it shows how you cope with challenges.

[Interviewer note: Make sure to ask about the various ways the client responded to this challenge, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses and any changes over time. You want to get as much as possible about their coping processes.]

2) Who do you know that is most supportive of you? Think about family, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, ministers or others in your community. Tell me a story about a time that someone really helped you. Who was it, and what kind of support did they offer you?

Part 2: A Portfolio of Strengths

Next, I am going to ask you about some specific strengths that have been especially helpful to other people when they deal with hard times. No one is good at everything, and I don't expect you to be good at all of these. We can use this information in two ways. First, we want to make sure we are taking advantage of your best coping skills. Second, we can identify any areas that might need strengthening and make sure our work includes those areas.

We will discuss three areas: meaning making, self-regulation, and interpersonal relationships.

Meaning making

3) Let's talk about finding meaning in your life. You might find meaning through religion or spirituality, but you may also find meaning through your role in your family or community, or your commitment to some goal or group. How do you find meaning?

4) Optimism. Optimism means feeling hopeful about the future. Tell me a little about whether you see yourself as more optimistic or pessimistic, and any areas where you feel particularly optimistic or pessimistic.

5) Purpose. Where do you see yourself on the path to finding a purpose for your life?

6) Religious or spiritual involvement. I know that some people do not attend church or belong to a religion, but if that is an important area for you, it would be helpful for me to know more about that. If it's not, that's ok too and then we will know to focus on other types of meaning making.

Self-regulation

7) Emotional awareness. Would you describe yourself as someone who is "in touch" with your feelings most of the time, or does it sometimes take you awhile to realize that you are upset or angry?

8) Emotional regulation. We all get upset and angry sometimes. Learning to control our behaviors when we are upset can be challenging, but is an important part of effective coping. Tell me a little bit about how things usually go when you get upset or angry.

9) Psychological endurance. Endurance is the ability to keep going even when times are tough. For example, to stick to routines and to see something through to the end, even when it turned out to be much harder than you expected. It also can mean staying true to your values even when that is hard to do. Describe how well you keep going during difficulties and hard times. Again, I'd like to hear about a specific time in your life.

Interpersonal relationships

Now let's turn to your relationships with other people. I'd like to know about your approach to relationships, and also a little bit about your family, friends, and community.

10) Compassion. Compassion means being aware of and caring about other people's feelings. Compassion can also mean wanting to help others when they are in need. Do you think of yourself more as someone who keeps to yourself, or do you tend to notice what is going on with other people?

11) Generativity. Generativity refers to investing in the next generation or the future of a community. Parents invest in their children, of course. There are many other roles that are about helping young people or investing in the future, including teachers, coaches, and many volunteer or community group roles. Tell me about some of the ways that you try to “pay it forward” to the next generation.

12) Social support. Social support can come from many places, including family and friends and also from the broader community where you live. Describe your social support or ways in which you would like to have stronger relationships with others.

Using the results to plan prevention and intervention:

It is beneficial for the therapeutic alliance to work on positive goals together with your client. There are many techniques for improving strengths, but here are a few examples of evidence-based strategies for improving some of the key strengths identified in the Resilience Portfolios research program.

Narrative: Improves many aspects of meaning making and self-regulation. One of the most effective brief interventions with a large evidence base.

Mindfulness meditation: Improves compassion, emotional awareness, emotional regulation

Exercise: Improves psychological endurance (and physical) and increases optimism

Volunteering: Improves generativity and helps build social and community support

Spirituality/religious involvement: Increases meaning. Note: Of course it is not appropriate to suggest that a non-religious person become religious, but if someone is religious, encouraging them to reconnect with their spiritual traditions or reach out to their church congregation can be helpful.

Goal setting: Can help with purpose, endurance

Note: Regulatory strengths are often the “weak leg of the stool.” In our interviews, person after person after person told about how getting married, having a child, finding a church, or getting a good job motivated them to better regulate. Use interpersonal and meaning-making strengths to build up self-regulation.