

# The Response to Stressful Experiences Scale (RSES)

*A Measure of Psychological Resilience*

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# Psychological Resilience

- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- Are we measuring the default?
- Can we teach it?
- Can we train it?
- Can we bottle it up and administer it?

# Psychological Resilience

	<b>Pathology</b>	<b>Healthy</b>
<b>High Risk</b>	Predisposed	Resilient
<b>Low Risk</b>	Unique Stressor	Resistant



Mastery



Failure

# RSES

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# Resilience Factors

## 1. Positive Attitude

- Optimism and resilience strongly correlated
- Largely genetic, but can be learned (CBT)
- Neurobio: Reward circuits, converse of 'learned helplessness'

## 2. Cognitive Flexibility & Reappraisal

- Finding meaning; learning growth is predicted on failure
- Neurobio: Memory reconsolidation, Cognitive Control

# Resilience Factors

## 3. Moral Compass

- Core beliefs that few things can shatter
- Faith & strong religious beliefs associated with resilience

## 4. Role Models

- Finding someone in life who handles stress well
- Social modeling valuable mechanism for indirect learning

# Resilience Factors

## 5. Facing Your Fears

- Facing fears increases confidence
- Important learning events under stress
- Neurobio: Extinction & Stress Innoculation

## 6. Supportive Social Network

- Those who do best don't do it alone
- Also related to social learning and role models

# Resilience Factors

## 7. Attend to physical well-being

- Physical exercise associated with hardiness, positive mood
- Neurobio: associated with enhanced neurogenesis, improved cognition, emotion regulation

## 8. Training & Practice

- Change requires systematic & disciplined activity
- Facilitates learning, Transfer Appropriate Processing

## 9. Utilize & Foster Signature Strengths

- Leaning on inherent strengths can buffer during stress

# Scale Development

- Currently only one well utilized scale that directly assesses resilience (Connor-Davidson)
- Connor-Davidson limited in scope to the 'state' or outcome of resilience
- Assess processes that promote resilience
  
- Original scale comprised 50+ items
- Reduced to 42 items prior to testing
- Items representative of Resilience Factors

# Scale Focus

- Process of resilience rather than outcome of being resilient
- Measure similarity to resilient processes, not frequency of being resilient
- Tendencies during life's most stressful experiences, not just trauma per se

# Instructional Set

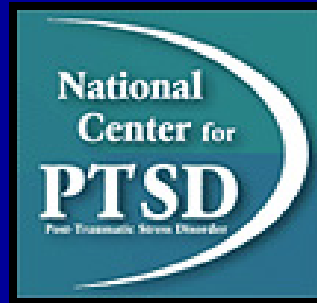
“The following statements describe how some individuals may think, feel, or act during and after the most stressful events in life. Please indicate how well each of these statements describes you during and after life’s most stressful events.”

“During and after life’s most stressful events, I tend to...

# Response to Stressful Experiences Scale

- RSES: currently 42 items, 5-point Likert scale
- Items drawn broadly: *optimism, personality, religion & spirituality, psychobiology, emotion regulation, social modeling, fear-conditioning, cognitive flexibility, and coping.*

# RSES



(N = 902)



**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 25<sup>th</sup> Marine  
Combat Infantry Unit  
New England USMC Reserve  
(N = 275)**



**34<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade  
Minnesota National Guard  
(N = 627)**

# NC-PTSD Resilience Scale

**N = 902 (Sample Composition)**

- Active-Duty, Reserve, & National Guard
- Officer & Enlisted
- USMC & US Army
- Multiple Combat Deployments & Non-Deployed
- Combat Infantry, Support, Aviation, Technicians, Medical
- Time in service range [ 0 – 20+ years]

# Hypothesized Correlates to Combat Resilience

- **Combat Experiences Scale (DRRI)**
- **Posttraumatic Stress Checklist (PCL)**
- **Thought Control Questionnaire (TCQ)**
- **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale**
  
- **3 Question TBI Screening Tool from  
Defense & Veterans Brain Injury Center  
(DV-BIC)**



# Reliability

- Elimination of inconsistent items
- Elimination of poor performing items
- Result = 30 item scale
  
- Cronbach's alpha = .92

# Factor Analyses

- Best Model = 6 Factor Solution
  - 46.3% of variance
1. Positive Outlook & Constructive Appraisal
  2. Spirituality
  3. Active Coping
  4. Self Efficacy
  5. Meaning-making & learning
  6. Acceptance of Limits & Circumstances

# Positive Outlook & Constructive Appraisal

- ... use people who are great at dealing with stress as role models
- ... find opportunity for growth
- ... calm and comfort myself
- ... try to recharge myself before I have to face the next challenge
- ... see it as a challenge that will make me better
- ... find something to laugh about
- ... practice ways to handle it better next time

# Spirituality

... pray or meditate

... lean on my faith in God or a higher power

... rely on a value system or set of guiding life principles

# Active Coping

... take action to fix things

... not give up trying to solve problems I think I can solve

... find a way to get help when I know I need it

... find a way to do what's necessary to carry on

... face my fears

... be cool under fire

... look at the problem in a number of ways

... look for creative solutions to the problem

# Self-Efficacy

... know I will bounce back

... expect that I can handle it

# Meaning-Making & Learning

... find meaning from the experience

... find strength in the meaning, purpose, or mission of my life

... learn important and useful life-lessons

... understand that bad things can happen to anyone, not just me

... draw upon lessons learned from failures and past mistakes

# Acceptance of Limits & Circumstances

- ... put things in perspective and realize I will have times of joy and times of sadness
- ... be good at determining what situations are changeable and what situations are not
- ... accept those things I cannot change
- ... know I have limits
- ... take failures in stride

# On-going Research

- **Marine Resilience Study** (Baker, Litz, Nash)
  - Pre-post assessment of combat deployment
  - Genetic, neuropsychological, physiological correlates of 6-factors
- **Israeli Defense Force** (Solomon)
  - Predictors of resilience and post-traumatic growth
- **US Army Basic Training** (Castro)
  - Predictors of successful recruit adaptation to boot-camp

# Future Directions

- Resilience as treatment outcome measure for PTSD
- Translating resilience constructs into cognitive-based countermeasures for operations induced stress
- Resilience training programs vs. integrating resilience factors into training

A silhouette of a soldier in profile, facing left, holding a rifle. The soldier is set against a dark blue background that features a small, bright circular light, possibly the moon, in the upper left quadrant. The overall mood is solemn and respectful.

**THANK YOU!**

***Semper Fi***  
***Semper Paratus***

# Contact

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