

Resilience can be defined as:

'Normal development under difficult conditions' (Fonagy *et al* 1994).

In their three workbooks on assessing and promoting resilience in vulnerable children, Daniel and Wassell describe the protective factors that are associated with long term social and emotional wellbeing in the child's whole world.

The existence of protective factors can help to explain why one child may cope better with adverse life events than another. The level of individual resilience can be seen as falling on a dimension of resilience and vulnerability. (See Figure 1).

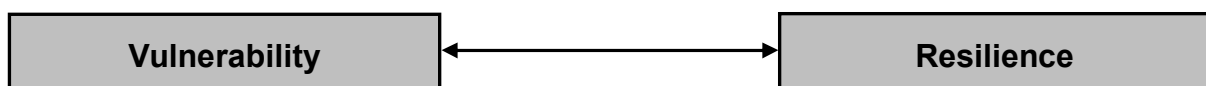


Figure 1. Dimension on which individual resilience can be located

This dimension is usually used to refer to intrinsic qualities of an individual. Some children are more intrinsically resilient than others because of a whole range of factors.... For example, an 'easy' temperament is associated with resilience in infancy.

A further dimension for the understanding of individual differences is that of protective and adverse environments; this dimension covers extrinsic factors and is therefore located in the parts of the My World Triangle that are concerned with wider family, school and community. Examples of protective environment might include an adult in a child's wider world, such as a teacher or youth leader, or a grandparent (see Figure 2).

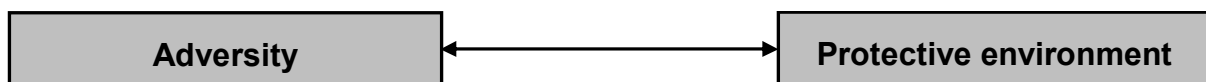


Figure 2. Dimension on which factors of resilience around the young person can be located

When considered together, these dimensions provide a framework for the assessment of adverse and positive factors in every part of the *My World Triangle* (see Figure 3).

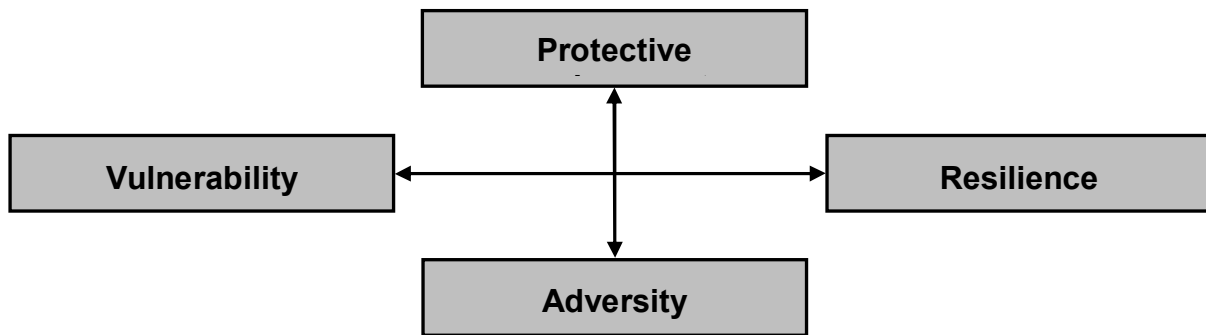


Figure 3. Framework for the assessment of resilience factors

The two dimensions will interact, and an increase in protective factors will help to boost a child's individual resilience.¹

Daniel and Wassell do point out that resilience is a complex issue and that nothing can be taken for granted when assessing how resilient a child is. Although pointers to resilience may be present these have always to be taken in the context of an individual child's situation. For example, some children may appear on the surface to be coping well with adversity, but they may be feeling very stressed internally (Daniel and Wassell 2002, p.12). This is why it is important to get to know a child during the process of assessment and also why views of the child from different adults in their world are so valuable.

There are many factors associated with resilience, but Gilligan (1997) suggests that there are three fundamental building block of resilience:

1. A secure base whereby the child feels a sense of belonging and security.
2. Good self esteem, that is an internal sense of worth and competence.
3. A sense of self efficacy that is, a sense of mastery and control, along with an accurate understanding of personal strengths and limitations.

¹ Adapted from Daniel and Wassell, (2002) *Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children Vols. 1, 2 & 3*, London & Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
See also: Daniel, B., Wassell, S. and Gilligan, R. (1999) *Child Development for Child Care and Child Protection Workers*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

How can the resilience matrix be used in *Getting it right for every child*?

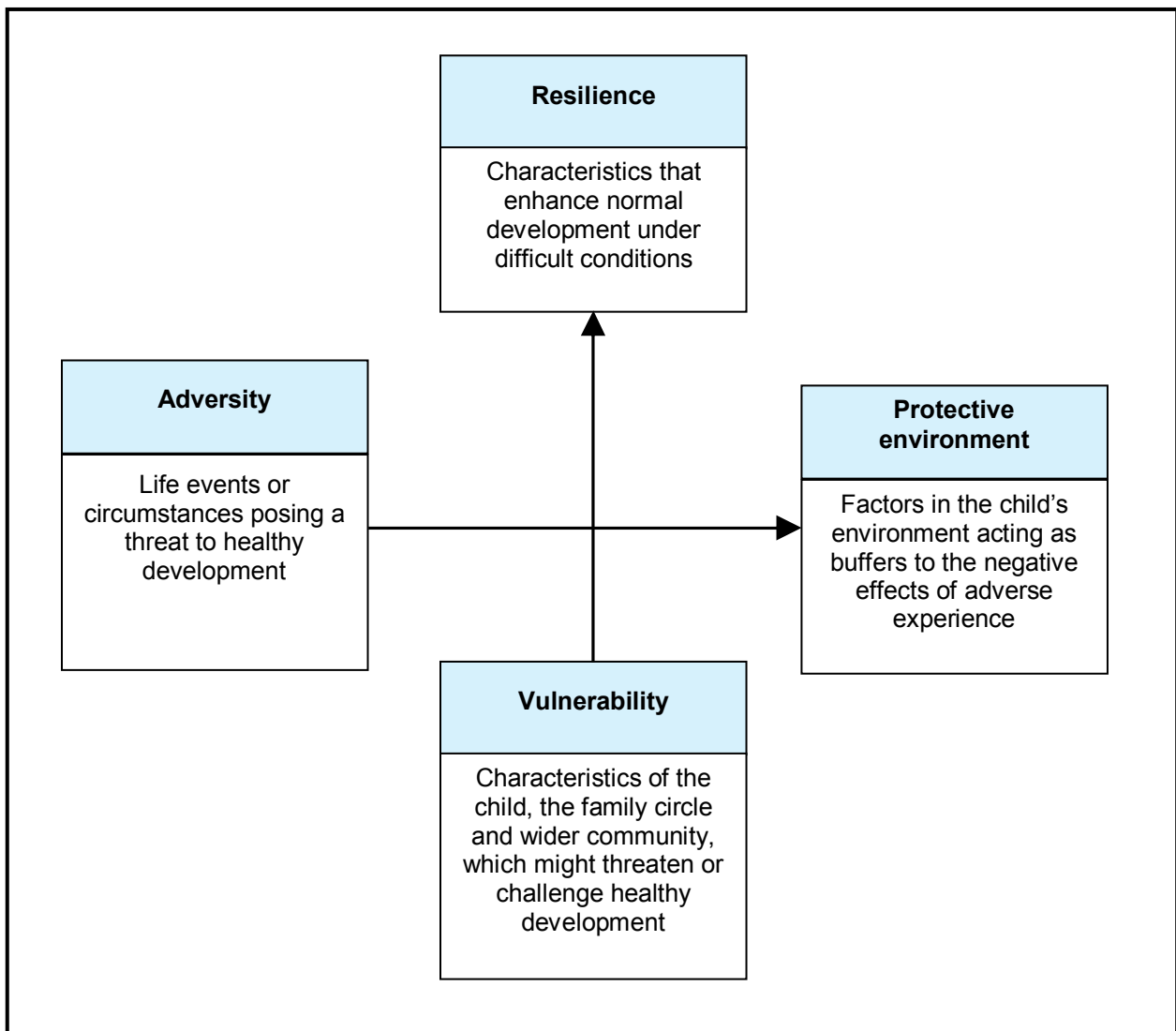
Practitioners will have gathered information around the *My World Triangle* and may also have more specialist information about certain aspects of an individual child's wellbeing. It is important to see every child in a family as an individual because each child may experience the same conditions in a very different way.

One way practitioners have found helpful to make sense of this information and identify resilience and vulnerability, as well as adversity and protective factors is to take a blank matrix and 'plot' on this matrix the strengths and pressures the child is experiencing in relation to the two sets of factors at each point of the matrix. Yellow 'post-its' are a good way of writing down and grouping the information.

Along the axis of adversity and the protective environment, all the factors that provide strengths in the environment, such as the child getting in well at school should be placed from the centre along the protective environment axis. Likewise, all the factors in the environment which are causing adversity, such as insufficient money or a dangerous neighbourhood should be placed from the centre along the adversity axis.

The same process can be repeated for factors with the child that are likely to promote resilience and for those, which are making a child vulnerable. Below is the template for the blank *Resilience Matrix*.

The Resilience Matrix for Analysing Information



There are some factors which may be both protective and also suggest vulnerability or adversity. In making decisions about where to plot this information where the meanings may be not so straightforward, practitioners need to exercise judgement about how to make sense of these different aspects of information and weigh the competing influences. Judgement will be needed to weigh which factors are most important. It will also be helpful to look at the interactions between factors because this may also be a dimension that influences whether the impact is negative or positive.

Once these judgements have been made, it will be possible to see what needs to be done to help the child and family in order to strengthen protective factors and

resilience, and reduce adversity and vulnerabilities. Achieving small improvements is a good way to accumulate success rather than having over ambitious aims.

Having plotted the factors on the matrix and given some thought to the child's needs and possible actions, the needs and actions can be plotted briefly against the eight wellbeing indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Action may not be needed against every indicator and the help has to be proportionate to the issues identified.

This analysis then forms the basis for discussion with the child, family and other practitioners on what should go into the Child's Plan. This will include what needs to be done and who is going to do it.

Reviewing a child's progress will be an essential part of a child's plan. In some circumstance, especially in complex cases, it may be useful to revisit the *Resilience Matrix* in reviewing the child's progress.

References

Daniel, B., Wassell, S. and Gilligan, R. (1999) *Child Development for Child Care and Child Protection Workers*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

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Fonagy, P., Steele, H., Higgitt, A. and Target, M. (1994) The Emmanuel Miller Memorial Lecture 1992: 'The theory and practice of resilience', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 35, 2, 231-257.

Gilligan, R. (1997) 'Beyond Permanence? The importance of resilience in child placement practice and planning', *Adoption and Fostering*, 21,1,12-20.