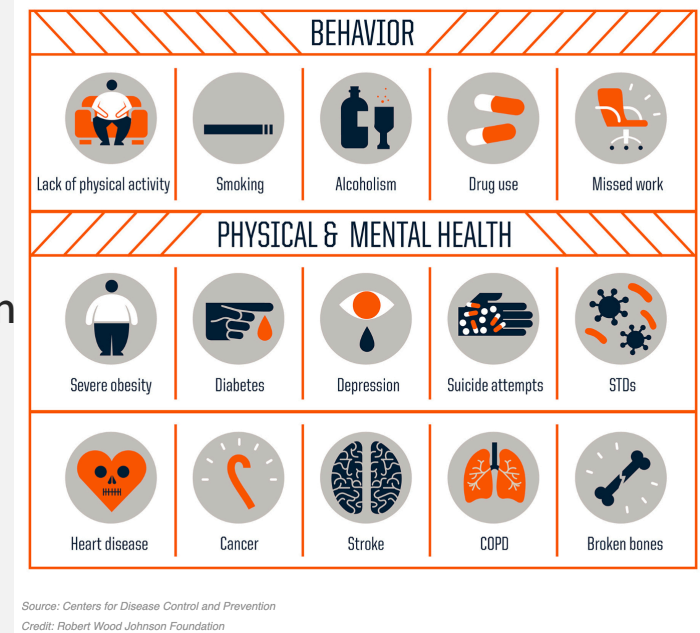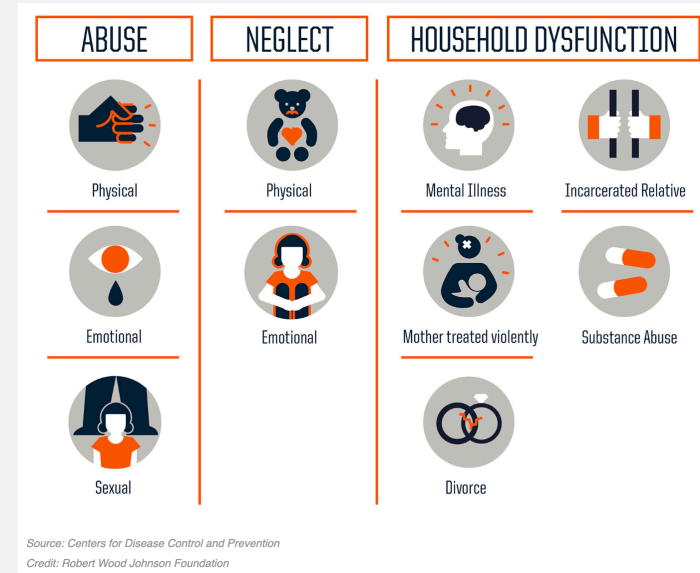# ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF YOUTH SUCCESS

By Youn Jo (Jay) You

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

- There is no one definitive answer to say that there is a specific outcome that determines if a child has successfully developed.

- However, upon research conducted one can determine a child has successfully developed by looking at a few categories. For example, we can look at the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences a child has encountered as well as a child's capacity to learn and develop non-cognitive skills.

- As mentioned by Paul Tough in the book "How Children Succeed", a child's success in adulthood can be predicted by their development of non-cognitive skills, such as self-control, grit, curiosity and self confidence and character.
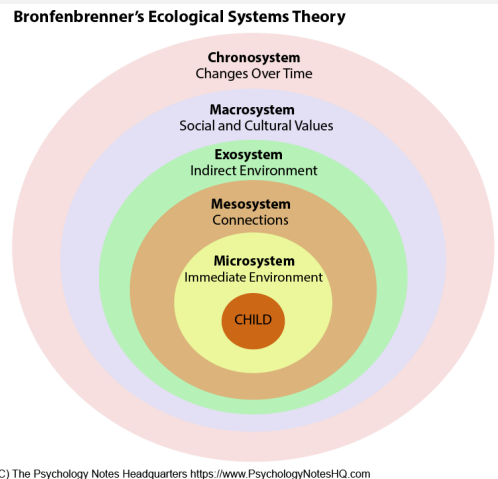
- There are three types of ACEs a Child can experience (Felitti, V., 1998.):
  - Abuse, Neglect, Household Dysfunction
- Analyzing the number of ACE's a child has encountered can determine if a child has successfully developed because as research has shown that the higher the ACE score there is a higher probability of developing long term health complications (Felitti, V., 1998.):
  - Heat Disease, Stroke, Cancer, Diabetes ("Adverse Childhood Experiences", 2020.)
  - According to the CDC, "1.9 million case of heart disease and 21 million cases of depression could have been avoided by preventing ACEs.
- With this mind, the successful development of child can be determined by ACEs because it can prevent the development of health and mental illnesses in children and development of health issues in adulthood.
- The exposure of ACEs can be reduced through early childhood home visitation, mentorship programs, and intervention by Child Services.
- By lowering the exposure of ACEs in children, parents and guardians can then focus on developing a child's non-cognitive abilities. This will in turn allow a child to do well academically and serve as effective member in society.

ABUSE | NEGLECT | HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

Physical, Emotional, Sexual | Physical, Emotional | Mental Illness, Incarcerated Relative, Mother treated violently, Substance Abuse, Divorce

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

BEHAVIOR: Lack of physical activity, Smoking, Alcoholism, Drug use, Missed work

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH: Severe obesity, Diabetes, Depression, Suicide attempts, STDs, Heart disease, Cancer, Stroke, COPD, Broken bones

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

- In regard to Paul Tough's Book, "How Children Succeed", the author states that there is a common misconception that "success today depends primarily on cognitive skills" (Tough, P., 2012, p. 13)

- However, Paul Tough refutes this claim by saying that a child's non cognitive abilities and character development is a better determining factor for a child's success.

- If a child has a heightened non-cognitive skills, such as self control, and cognitive flexibility, these are skills that translate into the real world context. These skills outweigh a child who excels academically. He proves this with the work done at Stanford University (Tough, P., 2012, p. 65)
  - Professor Mischel tested the IQ of children under two scenarios. The first scenario was the child took the IQ test without any sort of extrinsic motivation. During the second test, the child was given an M&M for every correct answer.
  - His research showed that children who scored about the same in both scenarios had a better character trait. This is because they worked hard on both exams whether they were rewarded or not. The children who improved with the M&M reward showed that in order to work hard on the IQ test it had to be incentivized.

- In turn, a child's development of non-cognitive abilities and good character traits, can show a successful outcome in a child's development.

FRAMEWORK FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- As mentioned before, in order to create a successfully developed child it is essential that the number of ACEs a child is exposed to is limited.

- In order to create a framework for positive youth development, there needs to be a strong relationship between parental figures and a child.

- A child must be taught essential skills, more specifically non-cognitive abilities.

- As a whole, regarding the ecological model, the framework for positive youth development should include developing essential skills (non-cognitive abilities), creating healthy relationship between parental figures and peers, creating a safe and enabling environment

- The table in the following sides will break down the ecological model for these categories: micro, macro and meso.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Chronosystem
Changes Over Time

Macrosystem
Social and Cultural Values

Exosystem
Indirect Environment

Mesosystem
Connections

Microsystem
Immediate Environment

CHILD

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Framework for Positive Youth Development			
Micro	Meso	Macro	Examples from Class
• Structure activities between peers in order to create support group for each other and opportunity to develop non cognitive skills through verbal communication • Educate parents or guardians regarding the important of non-cognitive abilities. Incorporate adults into skill building exercises.	• Encourage the participation for kids to be involved in the community through sports, art, dance, debate etc. • Create opportunities for children to involved with local community programs, such as bake sales, friendly sport competitions. • Encourage the involvement in community service.	• Integrate skill development into school curriculum • Update policies and laws, in order to create funding for creating extra-curricular activities within school and youth centers.	• As seen in the film "Drop Out Nation", develop club such as the "real-life" club that Sparkle was involved in. • Encourage the involvement in sports teams like Marcus. Sports can be used a way to relieve stress and develop non-cognitive skills such as grit and self control.

Framework for Positive Youth Development

Micro	Meso	Macro	Examples from Class
• Create code of conduct within school and clubs to foster positive interaction between peers • Educate parents on effective parenting and proper way to discipline children. • Create parent support groups to exchange ideas on positive rearing of children	• Create mentorship relations between student and authority figures (teachers, coaches, pastors, etc) • Educate and train mentors on the development of adolescent • Implement and engage support programs for kids who lack parental figure	• Create guidelines and teaching programs for parenting of children (how to support children) • Spread message and awareness that not seeking help and support from programs is nothing to be ashamed of	• As seen in "Interrupter", the relationship between students were toxic. They lacked code of conduct, and they lacked supervision from teachers and police officers. • As seen in "Drop Out Nation", create mentorship between students and counselors. Similarly to Brandi and Marcus.

Framework for Positive Youth Development

Micro	Meso	Macro	Examples from Class
• Train youth on effective communication, prevent the use of violence to express anger • Teach parents on the proper way to communicate with youth. • Parents must be educated on how to model respectful interactions. Children learn behavior from adults	• Educate mentors and authority figures on warning signs of abused or neglected children. This will in turn will allow for intervention and treatment • Create a safe space for children to confide in mentors in regard to sensitive information • Train law enforcement and judicial officials on discipling at risk youth	• Increase the awareness that children seeking help is not something to be ashamed of • Establish and create support centers for youth who are being abused or neglected • Create standards for sentencing at risk youth or juvenile offenders	• As seen in the film "Interrupters", many of the kids first mode of reaction to confrontational situation was to fight • Also, a lot of fights occurred in the South-Side of Chicago, because of the disrespectful language • As seen in the NY Times article, there should be more involvement with health works like Nurse Luwana in order to identify at risk children.

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Risk factors can arise in any phase within the ecological model

- However, many of the risk factors arise within the micro and meso level

- This is because the level that has the greatest level of influence on a child's development is within the child's proximity

  - Parents, Siblings, Friends, School

- The table in the following sides will break down the risk and protective factors for positive youth development.

Risk & Protective Factor for Positive Youth Development

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors	Examples from Class
Micro	• Parent or guardian figure abuses drugs and alcohol • Parent or guardian is physically abusive to child • Harsh parenting or inconsistent parenting • Parent or guardian has mental illness • Single parent in turn unable to care for child because of job	• Through programs like Nurse Family Partnership Program, at risk children can be flagged down by nurses and inform • Teachers at schools can be taught to look out for signs of abuse, and inform the authorities • Create programs that teach proper method of parenting through community or school • Hospital check in by nurses or doctors can indicate children who may be at risk due to parent illness	• As seen in the "Poor Kids" documentary, Kaylie and Tyler's mom is a single mother who suffers from depression and is reliant on antidepressant drugs. In turn, she is unable to sustain jobs for a long time. According to *The Effects of the Great Recession in Child Development*, children from low socioeconomic families are more likely to have parents who face job loss and in turn are less likely to attend college (Kalil, A., 235) • As seen in the film "Drop Out Nation", Marcus was raised by parents who are alcoholics. In turn, he had to care for his parents every night. This resulted in him sleeping late at night, which resulted him to arrive to school late. Through the help of the school coordinator, Brandi, she was able to drive him to school and keep him on track with school.

Risk & Protective Factor for Positive Youth Development		
Risk Factors	Protective Factors	Examples from Class
Meso • Meso Level Risk Factor is a blend between home environment and school (Bronenbrenner, U. ,40) • Children from low socioeconomic families lack supervision at home. In turn, parents may not be able to bring their kids to school. Because the child is late to school, the school in turn punishes the student. This results in negative association with attending school • Lack of care by schoolteachers, could results in students to slip through the cracks	• Teachers need to flag down at risk students and create support groups and resources to help students from poor families via safe space • Mentorship between teachers and students can allow for students to inform teachers of their struggles at home so that they do not get disciplined unnecessarily • Create a system to keep track of students academic standing in order to flag our potential drop out candidates.	• As seen in the documentary, "Drop Out Nation", Brandi coordinated a statistics table of all the students in the school to keep track of their academic standing. In turn, she was able to flag out students who had the potential of dropping out of school and get them the help they need through tutoring and mentoring. • As seen in the "Poor Kids" documentary, Tyler was punished for arriving late to school on multiple occasion. Tyler's tardiness was a result of his mother working late shifts and in turn being able to drive him to school on time. In turn, Tyler kept getting discipline by the school, which resulted in his thinking that the school did not care for him. Consequently, he dropped out of school. Had a system like Brandi's chart and mentorship been implemented, Tyler could have the potential to graduate.

Risk & Protective Factor for Positive Youth Development

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors	Examples from Class
Macro	• Discrimination due to sexual orientation, race, disability, etc • Socioeconomic Isolation • Lack of access to support services	• Spread message and awareness for anti-bullying. Create support groups within schools and communities to combat discrimination. • Create programs that integrate disabled and non-disabled people to harmoniously work or play together in various setting such as play to grow awareness and acceptance. • Create programs and provide funding through churches, government services to support families from low socio-economic classes • Update policies and laws, in order to create funding for support services, such as planned parenthood, counselling, food banks.	• As seen in the "Poor Kids" film, the school provided free food for students from poor families. They did not raise awareness for the problems that poor families are facing; however, they kept roster of the children in this list as confidential by calling it the "Nutrition Club". By doing this, they prevented these children from being targets of bullying • As seen in the film about play, "Morgan's Wonderland", the creator of the amusement park created a safe space for all people to play together harmoniously by creating an all inclusive park. • As seen in the NY Times Article, Alexis lacked services like planned parenthood. Had she access she could have prevented an early pregnancy and been more educated on the proper rearing of a child.

PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND TREATMENT FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Mode of Prevention

Prevention

- Extracurricular Activities Participation
    1. Programs like BalletRox or sports programs serves as a mode of prevention because these activities serves as an outlet for children to play and have fun. This not only improves a child's physical and mental health but programs like BalletRox that is funded by grants and donations alleviate financial strain on the family.
    2. Research conducted by University of South Mississippi, has shown that participation in physical programs like BalletRox correlate in students lowers the rate of dropping out of school (Craft, S., 8).
- Night School Incorporation into School Curriculum
    1. Youth who have neglectful parents or youth from low socioeconomic family often have the burden of financially supporting their family. Examples of this can be seen in "Drop out Nation" and "The Interrupters". For example, in "Drop out Nation", Marco works till late at a grocery store in order to support his family. His earnings are just enough for his family but not him. As a result, he doesn't have enough time or money to eat. In "The Interrupters", Capricia's mother is absent and in turn she support her siblings by selling drugs on the street.
    2. To combat this, schools can create a night school program like the school seen in "Drop Out Nation". This will allow for students who are working and studying to choose more reasonable hours of work and studying. This will alleviate the students stress and allow for students to graduate with enough credits.

Mode of Intervention

Intervention

- Nurse Family Partnership Program
  - This type of program serves as mode of intervention for positive youth development because there are times when some kids slip through the cracks and in turn are not properly educated on safe sex. This can often lead to teen pregnancies and programs such as NFPP can assist youth on proper care for their children. They are able to assist new moms on how to properly care for a child so that the newborn does not become neglected or improperly cared for.
  - This program can be seen in the NY Times article "Swamp Nurse". Alexis had an early pregnancy and lacked proper knowledge on caring for a child. Fortunately, through her Medicaid she was given the option to work with a nurse in caring for her child. This program is a form of intervention because as mentioned by the writer the NFPP improves the life of a child from an impoverished background (Boo,K., 2006)
- Planned Parenthood
  - Planned Parenthood serves as mode of Intervention because they can intervene into young relationships from having unwanted pregnancies by educating them on possible methods of birth control. It can also serve as form of intervention because during the health check ups doctors and nurses can ask questions about their relationship with their partner and find out if there is any neglect or abuse taking place in the home.

Mode of Treatment

Treatment
- Substance Abuse Treatment
  - According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, "19.7 million American adults (aged 12 and older) battled a substance use disorder in 2017" (Thomas, S., 2020).
  - As seen in the films such as "The Interrupters", "Drop Our Nation" and "Poor Kids", many kids from the film were living with families that were abusing some sort of drug or alcohol addiction. This results in parents becoming abusive towards their children and negligent in caring for their kids. If the parents of these kids had access to a substance abuse treatment facility that is affordable and accessible, the lives of the kids could have drastically improved. Parents could potentially turn their lives around and become more of a proactive guardian for their children.
- Therapy
  - Children who are living with abusive or negligent parents or even an unsafe neighborhood can result in children to suffer from mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety. The causation of such illnesses could be the result of the "fire house" effect. This essentially means that when the HPA axis is overloaded during childhood, this has negative effects on the child's psychological, and physiological health (Tough, P., 2012, p. 14). This causes the body's stress relieving system to break down.
  - The effects of this can be seen in Capricia's retaliatory act. Her need to use violence is a result of not being able to control her impulses. Through regular therapy sessions, a child can work with a healthcare professional about how to work through their struggles. The use of medication may also be appropriate in severe cases of depression and anxiety.

PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS THAT FOSTER POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Regarding the risk factor regarding children facing discrimination due to sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status or disability can be combated with programs that bring different types of people together in a harmonious atmosphere.

  - In programs such as the Miracle League, a baseball, is a program that creates baseball games for children with disabilities and non-disabilities to come together and play ("Miracle Leauge," n.d). . The program involves people from various socioeconomic backgrounds because the program is run through donations and grants similarly to BalletRox. Programs such as these removes the stigma that kids with disabilities are unable to play baseball. This improves the self esteem of kids with disabilities as they are able to play the game of baseball with children with no disabilities as well. This creates the atmosphere that the presence of a disability should not make a child feel like an outsider in society.

- Regarding the risk factor of lack of access to support services, such as planned parenthood, there are policies under Medicaid that provides reproductive health services to low income people.

  - Under Medicaid, Title X Family Planning Program Section 330, "provide critical support to more than 10,000 safety-net clinics across the country that provide reproductive health services to low-income women, men, and teens"(Ranji, U., 2019). These types of policies will prevent children and young adults from unwanted pregnancies and in turn prevent a potential newborn from being neglected.

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