

Foreword

As I read and considered Mike and Annie's richly practical workbook on making resiliency happen I was reminded of long discussions that Mike and I had forty years ago when Phil Runkel and I were training the Highland Park Junior-High faculty to specify and solve its own educational problems. Mike and I wondered, then, if Phil's and my organization-development design and methods in suburban Beaverton, Oregon, could be spread to the much more urban schools in Buffalo, New York. The complicated answer, considerably simplified, was *yes*. Now, two generations later, the simple answer *yes* can be given to the question of whether resiliency concepts and resources can be disseminated from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Ashland, Oregon, to down under in Nelson, New Zealand. But, let me present a bit of intellectual history first.

Throughout my long professional career as an applied Lewinian social psychologist (Kurt Lewin, University of Iowa, mentored Ron Lippitt, University of Michigan, who mentored me), I learned and taught that one's nagging frustrations must be converted into clearly defined problems for constructive change to occur. I used the word *problem* to mean a discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a more preferred state of affairs, sufficiently more preferred that one is ready and willing to spend energy to get there. I professed, as Lewin and Lippitt did with different language before me, that without the two parts, the current situation and the more desirable target, a problem has not been pinpointed.

Although irritation, anger, confusion, and tension frequently are features of frustration and therefore part of the situation, they are not in themselves problems. An early step in problem solving, therefore, must be to ascertain with some precision the images that the people concerned have of their situation and target. In other words, a frustration is turned into a problem once a target state can be imagined that satisfies one's values more than does the present state.

In applying that sort of thinking to planned improvement in schools, Phil Runkel and I argued that the proper starting point for school change is the students', educators', and parents' own educational problems as they view them, not those problems that may be conceived by outsiders. Constructive and successful action, we thought, can spring only from the reality perceived by the participants in the specific school themselves, who also would be carrying forward the change process. Thus, present constructive action can start only from the participants' present images of their reality. We saw it as essential that the school participants' own frustrations serve as the launching pads for the specification, analysis, and solving of their problems.

Moreover, along with the participants' awareness of a discrepancy between situation and target, "having a problem," we argued, also meant optimistically contemplating change and together taking action. In other words, school participants with a problem specified are energized to move collaboratively from the current situation to a more satisfying target. Thus, Phil and I taught that a problem has three basic aspects: the present situation, the more valued target, and the paths or proposals that might be planfully taken to reduce the discrepancy between situation and target. That problem-solving paradigm we labeled, STP.

Unfortunately, any of the three aspects may be unclear when the school participants first experience frustration. A problem begins to take shape and become clear when the school participants collaboratively conceptualize situations and targets and explain to one another their images of them. Indeed, school participants often do become energized when they can conceive alternative proposals to bring the situation closer to the target. A school's achieving clarity about the three aspects of problem solving, we argued, is necessary for effective action and for true school improvement to occur.

Part of the reason, I think, that Mike and Annie's concepts and resources on resiliency will continue to disseminate internationally resides in their implicit adaptation of the STP paradigm in organizing their invigorating book. With clear, straightforward, no-nonsense prose, not only have they been guided by STP thinking, but they have contributed well beyond it by deftly pinpointing positive targets of contemporary importance and by creating practical proposals or paths for moving beyond the situation of low resiliency.

Mike and Annie start their workbook by defining, as highly desirable targets for everyone, the basic concepts of resiliency. Their Part I is appropriately titled, "Basic Concepts." In Chapter 1, they warn readers about the pitfalls of approaching problems by dwelling on deficits, deficiencies, and pathologies. Instead of thinking pessimistically, Mike and Annie propose that we accentuate the positive targets of resiliency: prosocial bonding, clear and consistent boundaries, life skills, caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation. With an attitude of optimism, they show readers how to apply each sub-target of resiliency to themselves. Mike and Annie go on in Chapter 2 to elaborate on what resilient communities are like nowadays, how to visualize resilient communities precisely, and why schools can serve as strategic cultures for building and spreading community resiliency. Part I, thus, defines the primary targets of micro- and macro-resiliency.

Part II accentuates the highly practical nature of this guide to planned change. Here, Mike and Annie offer concrete proposals for promoting resiliency in students (Chapter 3), educators (Chapter 4), school cultures (Chapter 5), and communities (Chapter 6). In each of those four chapters, they present creative exercises and useful strategies for enhancing resiliency. Part III gathers all ingredients of the foregoing six chapters by proposing an overarching meta-strategy for administering and measuring the change process (Chapter 7) and by offering illuminating case studies of actual community resiliency projects (Chapter 8).

With this achievement of a book, Mike and Annie offer, both, a clear rationale for advocating resiliency as a target and a practical guide for acting to progress on the path toward resiliency. In a way this important book has been forty years in gestation; the answer to our shared dissemination question way back then applied to today is a resounding *yes*.

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