



National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence

March 21, 2017

Thank you for joining us today. We will be starting soon!

Strengths-Centered Advocacy:
Strengthening Hope & Resilience for Children, Youth,
and Mothers in Domestic Violence Programs



Friendship Home
Safe shelter and so much more



ACE-DV
A project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence




The ACE-DV Leadership Forum

Established to amplify the voices and experiences of Adult Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (ACE-DV) to enhance our work to end domestic violence.

Goals

- Promote the leadership of ACE-DV within the movement to end domestic violence and beyond.
- Provide technical assistance, training, and guidance related to this issue.
- Support the development of trauma-informed, culturally-responsive, asset-based research and information to influence policy and practice impacting children exposed.



ACE-DV
A project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Beliefs

1. Children exposed to domestic violence can heal and thrive.
2. Each of us should be allowed and encouraged to name our own experience.
3. There is a difference between loving an abusive person and condoning their behavior.
4. Violence is learned and reinforced by societal norms, yet accountability and commitment to change can create a new path.
5. Our non-abusive parent was faced with limited and complex choices.
6. Our unique experiences bring added value to the movement.



Shifting the paradigm



- Trauma is a common human experience
- Resilience is an innate human capacity
- The deficit model is incomplete
- ACEs develop specialized skills for adaptation



Strengths-Centered Advocacy:



Strengthening Hope & Resilience for
Children, Youth, and Mothers in
Domestic Violence Programs

Presented by Julie Havener, LMHP
Friendship Home of Lincoln

Thank you for what you do!



"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

- Augustine of Hippo (354-430)



- **One** communal living shelter (8 bedrooms)
- **Twelve** single family shelters
- **Seven** transitional shelter units
- Pre-shelter Program
- Continued Contact





- Women's and children's advocacy
- Case management
- Short term mental health counseling
- Women's and children's groups
- **Strengths-Centered Advocacy**



Goals for Today's Webinar

- Highlight the power of **resilience** and focusing on **strengths** and its role in the healing process of survivors.
- Provide overview of Strengths-Centered Advocacy and Gallup tools for discovering natural talent at any age.
- Encourage new thinking, ideas and inspiration in your role as advocates and in your personal life!

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." — Albert Schweitzer



Self Reflection: Who Inspired YOU?

Reflect upon an adult during your childhood/adolescent years who acknowledged what was *right* with you and had a powerful positive impact on you.

Think about the following...

- Who was the person?
- What did they do?
- How did it affect you?

Group Sharing

What are some of the qualities/ characteristics of the individual who came to mind?

Group Sharing

What kinds of qualities did this person's influence help produce in you?

Strengths-Centered Advocacy: What is it?

- A *multi-layered* approach to providing *individualized, empowering* and *strengths-based* support and services to survivors of domestic violence and their children

AND

- an approach that creates a more *supportive, positive, empowering* work environment for advocates.

SCA: How it started...



- Idea born at conference
- **2000:** Friendship Home receives a 3 year grant
- Partnership with Gallup
- First domestic violence shelter to use Clifton StrengthsFinder™ with victims of intimate partner violence

And how it has grown...

Strengths-Centered Advocacy:



- SCA curriculum & toolkits for survivors & advocates,
- strengths-based approach **specific** to working with survivors,
- honors & supports roots of advocacy work and
- multi-layered benefits.

2nd World Conference of Women's Shelters



February 2012 Washington, DC

Strengths-Centered Advocacy Training Overview

Day One	Day Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Strengths-Centered Advocacy & Ethical use in DV programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Positive Workplace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring your Strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Strong Work Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Strengths-Based Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Importance of Self Care/ Remembering Why We're Here
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Strengths-Centered Advocacy into Services

Strengths- Centered Advocacy: What is it?

Empowerment-based services

Positive Psychology

Clifton StrengthsFinder™
 (or another strengths discovery tool)

Positive Psychology

- **Positive Psychology:** the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive and find happiness
-Webster's New Millennium Dictionary of English
- ***"Psychology is not just the study of weakness and damage, it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken, it is nurturing what is best in ourselves."*** – Martin Seligman, PhD

Key research for advocates

- **Trauma & Resiliency:** Dr. Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., found that people recover more easily from trauma when they are able to identify and use their strengths.
- **Korean War POW case study:** Donald Clifton's review of this case study on the deadly effects of "relentless negativity" led him to begin the movement to focus on what is *right* with people.
- **Martin Seligman's research:** Seligman found that using personal strengths as a therapeutic intervention for depression, works as well as or better than traditional interventions of cognitive behavioral therapy, medication, or a combination of both.

Perhaps the most important outcome for our work as advocates

Restoring a sense of
HOPE

- In oneself
- In the future
- In others



Research: Benefits of Hope

- Improved well-being
- Increased success
- Increased purpose-driven action
- Positive correlation with health & longevity

Hope does not depend on income level or IQ
Hope can be learned!

Source: Lopez, S. *Making Hope Happen*, 2013

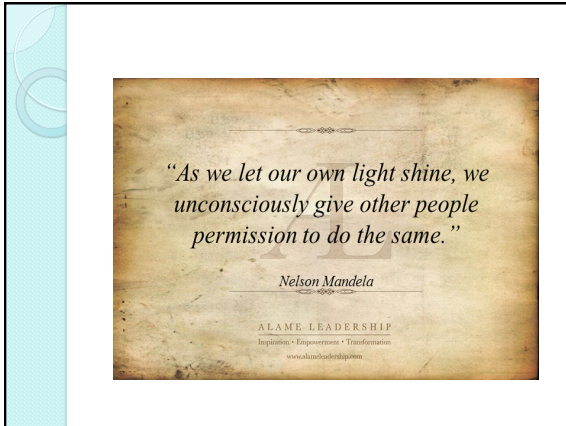
4 Core Beliefs of the Hopeful

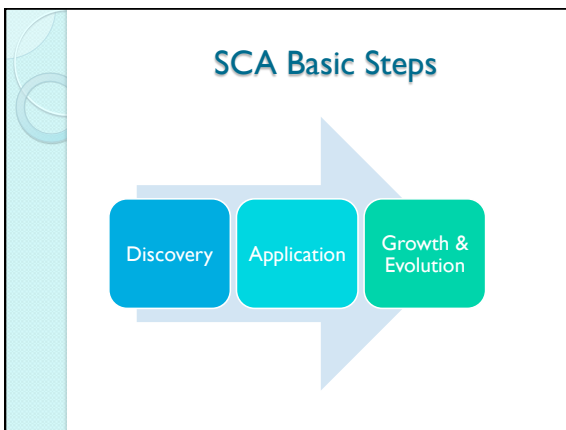
- The future will be better than the present
- I have the power to make it so
- There are many paths to my goals
- None of them is free of obstacles

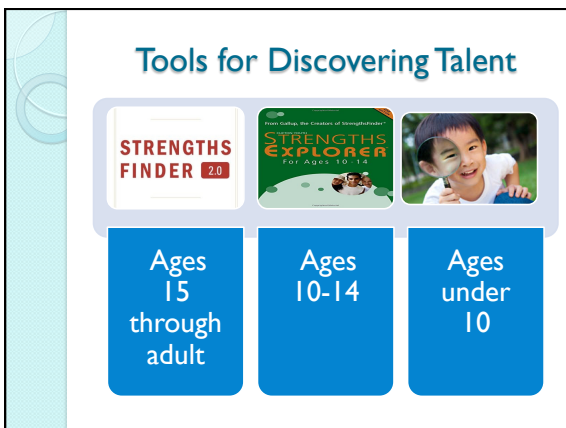
Source: Lopez, S. *Making Hope Happen*, 2013

Strengths-Centered Advocacy Core Beliefs

- Focusing on **strengths**
- Celebrating **individuality**
- Beginning with **self discovery**

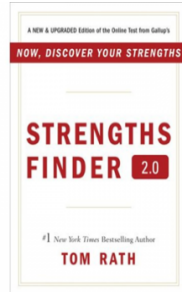




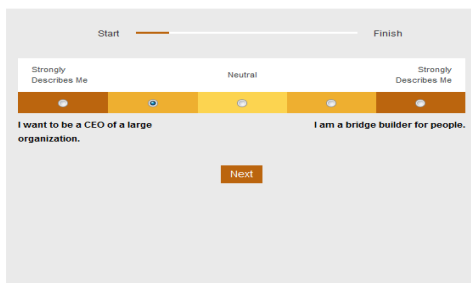


Clifton StrengthsFinder basics

- Developed by Gallup
- Research-based
- Age 15 – adult
- Online assessment
- Purchase books/ codes for \$15/person
- Available in 22 languages



Sample StrengthsFinder Question



Clifton StrengthsFinder basics

- Measures TALENT that can be developed into STRENGTH

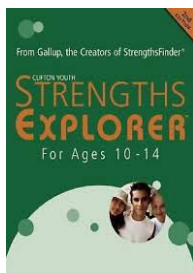


What are the “results”?

- Identifies “Top 5” (out of 34) themes of talent
- Individualized descriptions of top 5
- Ideas for developing each talent into a strength

Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer

- Available since 2007
- Ages 10-14
- Identifies 10 themes of talent
- Online assessment (15-20 minutes)
- Cost: \$9.99 through Gallup



Sample StrengthsExplorer Questions

- *When someone is left out I include them*
- *Other people count on me*
- *I am more often happy than serious*
- *I have to win*
- *I hate being late*

Respond with:

- ☐ Almost Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Almost Never

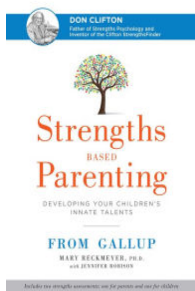
What are the “results?”

- Report with “top 3” (out of 10) strengths and descriptions of each
- Action items for youth
- Action items for adults
- Youth workbook
- Parent Guide

StrengthsSpotting

- Gallup’s model for finding talents in children younger than 10 years old
- Based on Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer themes as foundation
- Relies on repeated observations of young children in variety of settings and interactions

A Great Resource...



Includes codes for
one
StrengthsFinder
and one
StrengthsExplorer

Cost: \$24.99

Using Strengths-Centered Advocacy to Encourage Resilience and Healing





A few important points about children & youth...

- Children/youth are more than “witnesses”- they **experience** domestic violence on many different levels.
- Not ALL children/youth are *traumatized*- they are affected in various ways and to various degrees.



A few important points about mothers...

- Many women are able to parent as well as non-abused mothers despite the numerous obstacles.
- Women frequently find creative ways to parent their children *the way they want to* when the battering parent is not present.
- Parenting often improves once the mother and children are safe.

Potential Effects on Children/Youth

- Guilt & self-blame
- Isolation & feeling alone
- Decreased ability to express feelings in healthy ways
- Negative core beliefs about self & others
- Inability to trust (the world is dangerous)

Source: <http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org>

Potential Effects on Children/Youth

- Interference with healthy brain development
- Sleep problems/nightmares
- PTSD
- Increased aggression/overly compliant
- Engaging in risky behaviors (substance use, sexual behaviors, criminal activity, etc.)

Source: <http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org>

Externalized Symptoms

- Aggression
- Decreased empathy for others
- Restlessness
- Impulsivity
- Academic difficulties
- Behavioral difficulties
- Regression, development delays

Internalized Symptoms

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fearfulness
- Withdrawn/inhibited behavior
- Shame & self-blame
- PTSD
- Low self-esteem

Source: <http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org>

Potential Effects on Children/Youth

Effects can be:

- Immediate
- Ongoing
- Long-term



Image from New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.nmcadv.org

Some Potential Effects on Mothers

- Focus on safety/survival vs. nurturing
- Mental health/substance use issues
- Erosion of authority
- Not acknowledging extent of effects
- Breakdown in communication
- Altered/controlled parenting style



“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.”

- Helen Keller

What is Resiliency?

- the ability to “bounce back” and cope effectively in the face of adversity
- reflects the ability to transform one’s emotional pain into something positive
- a trait that can be nurtured, developed and learned

Source: Michenbaum, D. *Important Facts About Resilience*, 2011

Post-Traumatic Growth

Positive personal changes resulting from the struggle to deal with trauma and its consequences.



Post-Traumatic Growth

- Renewed appreciation of life
- Commitment to live life to the fullest & value each day
- Improved relationships with loved ones
- Search for new possibilities
- Enhanced personal strengths
- New spiritual changes

Characteristics of Resilient Children & Youth

- Easy-going temperament
- Problem-solving skills
- Social competence
- Autonomy
- Sense of purpose & future orientation
- Optimism
- Academic & social successes

Source: Michenbaum, D. *Understanding Resilience in Children & Adults*,

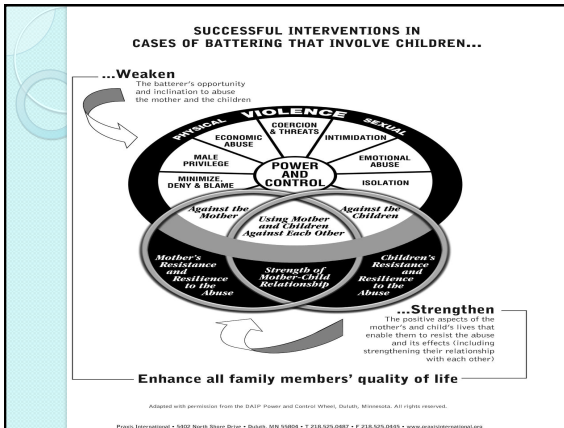
Critical Elements for Healing

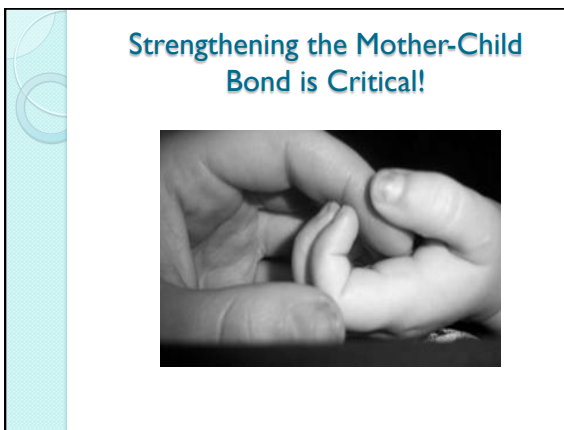
- Physical & emotional safety in current environment
- Structure, limits, predictability
- Strong bond to non-battering parent
- Not feeling responsible for adults
- Strong bond to siblings
- IF SAFE, protected contact w/ non-battering parent

Source: Bancroft & Silverman, *Assessing Risk to Children from Batterers*, 2002

Protective Actions Mothers Take

- Compliance
- Minimize/distract/normalize
- Keeping abuse secret
- Taking blame
- Sending children away
- Encourage drinking/use (batterer)
- Enduring severe violence
- Disciplining children more severely





Self-Reflection...

What personal talents or strengths do you use most in your parenting or in your interactions with children/ youth in your life?

Strengths-based parenting involves:

- Helping mothers understand how their strengths influence their parenting style
- Encouraging mothers to look for their children's talents & strengths
- Shifting from judgment to understanding
- Approaching women from their strengths when addressing parenting issues
- Language we use with each other

Addressing Parenting Concerns


- ☐ Acknowledge the difficulty/challenges of parenting in shelter
- ☐ Recognize what she is doing RIGHT/well as a mother
- ☐ Express your concern (be specific) and ask for her thoughts/feelings
- ☐ Ask her how staff can help

IF she has taken StrengthsFinder


Before approaching her with your concern, thoughtfully review her SF report and reflect on conversations you have had with her...


How can you use this information to help you understand her *as a mother* more effectively?

How might this information help you in thinking about your approach?




Using Strengths-Centered Advocacy with Children and Youth in Your Program






“The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice.”

- Peggy O'Mara



SCA: Benefits for children/ youth

- Builds **positive self concept**
- Strengthens a sense of **hope**
- Strengthens **resilience**
- Helps mothers to parent from their strengths
- Helps mothers to see & recognize their child's strengths



“While at Friendship Home, my daughter was able to learn what her strengths are. This really helped her, but it also helped me as her mother! I pay more attention to her strengths now and encourage them. I understand where she is sensitive and approach her differently. She doesn’t talk about herself very often and this has helped her to focus on herself in a positive way.” — Friendship Home resident

Our primary goal...

To help children and youth feel more

- Visible
- Valued
- Hopeful
- Empowered



Essential characteristics of strengths-based children’s advocacy

Individualized

Strengths-Focused

Welcoming

Built on Partnership

Physical & emotional safety

What were you like at 10?



Ten StrengthsExplorer Themes

- Achieving
- Caring
- Competing
- Confidence
- Dependability
- Discoverer
- Future Thinker
- Organizer
- Presence
- Relating

Achieving

You have more energy and more goals than other people. You love a sense of accomplishment.

Caring

In your heart, helping people is very important. You want to make the world better by helping people in small ways or big ways.

Competing

You see many things in life as a game, and you feel great joy when you win. You truly hate to lose because you are always striving for first place.

Confidence

You believe in yourself and what you can do. This helps you take on challenges because you feel sure you can succeed.

Dependability

Trust is important to you, and you care about being seen as responsible and trustworthy. People count on you to do what you say you will do. When you make a promise, you mean to keep it.

Discoverer

A thinker and a learner, you are excited about exploring ideas and making connections. You like to ask the questions "How?" and "Why?"

Future Thinker

Your mind loves to think and dream about the future. You are a person who thinks about what is possible, not what is impossible.

Organizer

Scheduling, planning, and organizing your world makes life better. People count on you to get the details right and pull a plan together.

Presence

You were born to be at the front of the room, telling stories and taking the lead. Other people watch you and listen to you.

Relating

You like to start friendships and keep them for a long time- maybe even your whole life. You widen the circle of friends for yourself and others.

“ One of my strengths is Confidence. That means that I believe my thoughts and myself. I choose to do the right thing and be a leader, not a follower. Some people take the wrong path but I find my own way.”

— child at Friendship Home

Questions that Point to Talent

- What activities or kinds of places do you love the most? ([Yearnings](#))
- What skills/knowledge do you seem to pick up quickly? ([Rapid learning](#))
- What challenges have you met that left you feeling energized and fulfilled ([Satisfaction](#))
- What activities do you enjoy so much that you lose track of time when you're doing them? ([Timelessness](#))

Source: Reckmeyer, M. *Strengths Based Parenting*

Alternative Ways to Identify Strengths in Children/Youth

- Developmental Assets Profile (DAP)
www.search-institute.org
- VIA Strengths Survey for Children
<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>
- Child & Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)
<http://www.resilienceresearch.org>

Other ideas/ways to measure strengths in children/youth?

Tips: Starting the journey



Things **YOU** can do



- **Discover** your own strengths
- **Research** the benefits of focusing on strengths
- **Learn** about other people's strengths

Tips: Starting the journey



Things your **agency** can do:

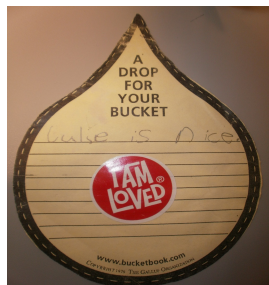
- Begin a dialogue about strengths and its link to resilience
- Involve staff in generating ideas
- Consider the use of a strengths-discovery tool
- Use existing groups to help survivors focus on strengths
- Remember 3 steps of SCA: Discover, Application, Growth & Learning

And remember...

**WHAT CHILDREN
NEED MOST.....**
LOVE **Respect** **to PLAY**
 to have fun to be seen
TO BE LISTENED TO
 Your presence **A hero**
 A fostered sense of wonder
LOTS OF HUGS **TO PLAY**
 The chance to make mistakes
 Encouragement to try again
 Room to grow **DREAMS**
 To be told **YES!**
 To be trusted **Affection**
GUIDANCE TO PLAY

Growing A Jeweled Rose.com

Remembering Why We're Here



For additional information

- www.friendshiphome.org
- www.gallupstrengthscenter.org
- www.strengthsbasedparenting.org
- <http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org>

Contact Information

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 Email: julieh@friendshiphome.org

Thank You!!!

Sources

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<http://promisingfutureswithoutviolence.org>

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Reckmeyer, M. (2016). *Strengths Based Parenting*. New York, NY: Gallup Press



The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (www.nrcdv.org) provides a wide range of free, comprehensive, and individualized technical assistance, training, and specialized resource materials. You can access our publications online from the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWnet).

Contact us:

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Online TA Request Form:

www.nrcdv.org/Tarequest.php