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## Building Resilience Through Play

### INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the podcast, “The Brain Architects: Building Resilience Through Play,” from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

### Goals

- ◆ Understand how children can develop resilience while problem-solving through play.
- ◆ Reflect on the play experiences you provide for the children in your care and the problem-solving skills you observe during their play.
- ◆ Develop an action plan to support the children in your care who have experienced trauma through play experiences that build resilience and problem-solving skills.

### Activity

- ◆ Listen to the podcast.
- ◆ After listening, use the questions below to guide your discussion and action plan.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s problem-solving with tasks.

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**Play is one of the most important vehicles for having some sense of mastery and control over the world that you live in...**

**Dr. Jack Shonkoff**

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the podcast? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ Resilience is an important skill needed to be able to problem-solve with tasks. As mentioned in the podcast, resilience is “...not being able to just deal with predictable things that you’re expecting and you’re prepared to cope with, but being able to deal with anything that life sends your way.”
  - How do play experiences provide opportunities to build resilience and problem-solving skills for young children?
  - How might children’s experiences with trauma impact their play experiences, and consequently, their development of resilience and problem-solving skills?
- ◆ The podcast asks, “...how are we making these interactions with children the most valuable to both allow them to take risks and build autonomy and independence while also feeling supported in their environment?”
  - How does a positive, responsive relationship support children’s development of resilience and problem-solving skills?
  - How are you offering a positive relationship for the children in your care who have experienced trauma?
  - Who might need additional support to form a positive relationship with you?
- ◆ Reflect on your learning environment and the play experiences you provide for the infants and toddlers in your care.
  - What kinds of play experiences do you provide for children? Do you offer a variety of play experiences (e.g., dramatic play, pretend play, object play, physical play)?
    - What problem-solving skills do you observe during these playful experiences throughout the day? How do children demonstrate resilience?
  - Are there play experiences that children who have experienced trauma avoid or show resistance towards?
  - How can you involve families in the selection of materials or experiences to prepare your environment for play?
- ◆ Develop an action plan to incorporate play experiences that support the development of resilience and problem-solving skills for the children in your care.
  - Consider how you will set up your learning environment and play experiences to encourage problem-solving and resilience.
    - How can you modify the environment and experiences to increase opportunities for practicing resilience and problem-solving?
  - Determine how you will encourage a positive, caring, and responsive relationship to promote resilience.
  - Are there children in your care who have experienced trauma that may benefit from additional support? How can you individualize your scaffolds to support these children?
  - Monitor children’s progress and modify your supports as needed.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting problem-solving with tasks:

- ◆ **Source:** ACSD
  - ◆ **Article:** Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/trauma-informed-teaching-strategies>
  - ◆ **Description:** This article offers trauma-informed teaching strategies that support children's development of resilience in the learning environment.
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- ◆ **Source:** Harvard University: Center on the Developing Child
  - ◆ **Video:** The Science of Resilience
  - ◆ **Link:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r8hj72bfGo&list=PLuKMerO1zya\\_3krFpcOKgaeB2\\_2zQgYua&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r8hj72bfGo&list=PLuKMerO1zya_3krFpcOKgaeB2_2zQgYua&index=4)
  - ◆ **Description:** This video discusses the ways that trauma can impact the development of resilience and problem-solving skills.