

Well Aware

Volume I | Issue 4

2009
Summer

Devoted To:

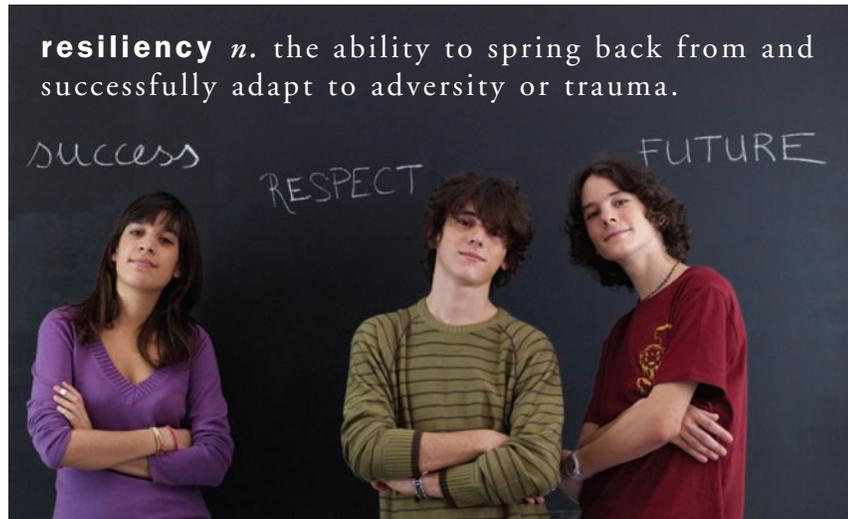
- Improving academics
- Deterring violence
- Fostering resiliency
- Enhancing coping skills
- Reducing risk
- Preventing suicide

Boosting resiliency

[strength-based prevention focuses on positives]

Positive youth development continues to gain momentum, as education and prevention professionals recognize the many benefits of fostering resiliency in students. Among these are improved school attendance, reduced risk behaviors including self-harm and potential for suicide, and enhanced academic outcomes.

Resilient students can meet challenges and adapt to new or trying circumstances in positive, productive ways. Without resiliency, students—especially those with anxiety, depression or other mood disorders—may succumb to stress, and be overwhelmed by challenges that their peers may take in stride. These vulnerable students may resort to unhealthy behaviors such as cutting, illicit drug/alcohol use, promiscuity, and violence against self and others.



resiliency *n.* the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity or trauma.

How can school administrators foster resiliency? Tips from experts include the following:
 1) Offer a caring, supportive learning environment. 2) Foster optimistic attitudes.
 3) Promote positive emotions. 4) Nurture academic self-determination and feelings of competence. 5) Encourage volunteerism. 6) Teach peace-building skills. 7) Advocate healthy habits. 8) Foster academic self-determination and feelings of competence.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THURSDAY, JUNE 25th AT 2 PM MDT FOR OUR NEXT WELL AWARE WYOMING ONLINE WEBINAR—
PROTECTIVE FACTORS: BOOSTING RESILIENCY IN YOUTHS. SEE PAGES 3 AND 4 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

[take note] RESILIENCY: What does it look like?

CONTROLLING ONE'S OWN BEHAVIOR:

Self-adjusting one's personal performance by planning ahead and evaluating success after completing a task



"My part-time job gives me money for college."

GOOD ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS:

Persevering to success, applying problem solving in tough situations, fostering feelings of stamina and hardiness



"If I try, I will succeed."

POSITIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS:

With parents, teachers, relatives, neighbors and peers who mentor a youth, are supportive and show they care



"He listens without judging, helps me, and is fair."

FEELINGS OF COMPETENCE:

In academics, athletics, the arts or other areas, based on their past successes and notable achievements



"My study time really paid off during finals."

A policy bulletin for WYOMING EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members
- Superintendents & Principals
- Curriculum Committees
- Student Services Directors
- Central Office Administration
- Wyoming Policymakers

inside

URGING YOU TO BE Well Aware



"... THAT'S WHY SUICIDE PREVENTION IS SUCH A HIGH PRIORITY FOR OUR STATE ..."

A message to Wyoming *Well Aware*

2 readers from Brent Sherard, Director and State Health Officer for Wyoming

[it doesn't add up]

3,715

Wyoming high-school students who have attempted suicide in the past 12 months; this is one out of ten high-school students.

SOURCE: 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey for State of Wyoming

21.54

The 2006 rate of suicide among Wyoming residents of all ages (per 100,000 population); this is the highest suicide rate nationally.

SOURCE: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2006

80%

Wyoming education leaders who feel that screening for student emotional well-being should be conducted in schools, just as schools screen for hearing and vision are assessed.

SOURCE: Sept. 2008 online survey for WY Dept. of Health, conducted by Shattuck & Associates

URGING YOU TO BE **Well Aware**

*A message from Brent D. Sherard, M.D., MPH, FACP
Director and State Health Officer for the State of Wyoming*

Wyoming's future lies in the lives of our young people. That's why suicide prevention is such a high priority for our state. Wyoming citizens simply will not stand by and watch our youths succumb to self-inflicted harm—and even death at their own hand—without doing all we can to intervene. A host of Wyoming programs are now in place, some state funded, others federally supported, that directly address youth suicide in our state. And we continue to expand these resources so that our youths—our future—can remain safe from suicide.



In my role as chief health officer for Wyoming, I'm committed to our department's mission to promote, protect and enhance the health of all the state's citizens. Prevention is a cornerstone of our activities, including recognizing the resilience of Wyoming residents and their innate capacity to lead healthy, successful lives. This includes our youths.

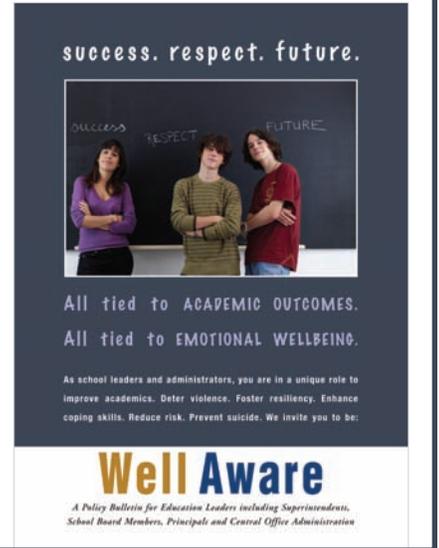
Only by working together—families, schools, communities—can we weave a tighter safety net of protection from suicide for Wyoming youngsters. Our state's suicide prevention coalitions, all community-based, can help strengthen this safety net. The challenges are real, but the rewards are many. Our youths deserve no less from us than a full recognition of the risks for suicide, and sound evidence-based programs that address those risks.

Brent D. Sherard, M.D.

Director and State Health Officer
Department of Health, State of Wyoming

Free RESILIENCY posters

Now available! The first in a series of Well Aware posters for display in staff areas of schools, courtesy of the Wyoming Department of Health, in partnership with the Department of Education. This colorful poster promotes the vital role that educators play in enhancing youth's coping skills, reducing risk and preventing suicide. To order this free poster, email talkback@wellaware.org.



PROGRAMS THAT FOSTER PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Skills in problem solving, impulse control, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes are protective factors for suicide. That's why Lee Neeley (back row at right) and colleagues at Laramie County School District #1 implement programs to enhance these factors in students. "We've used Reconnecting Youth and LifeSkills™ Training curricula," notes Neeley, violence prevention facilitator for Safe and Drug-Free Schools in LCSD1. Both are designated "Model Programs" from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (modelprograms.samhsa.gov). The District also received state funding to support the Yellow Ribbon and SOS Signs of Suicide® programs in its schools. Supporting student and community services that can lead to successful lives is key, adds Neeley, to enhanced outcomes—academic and beyond.

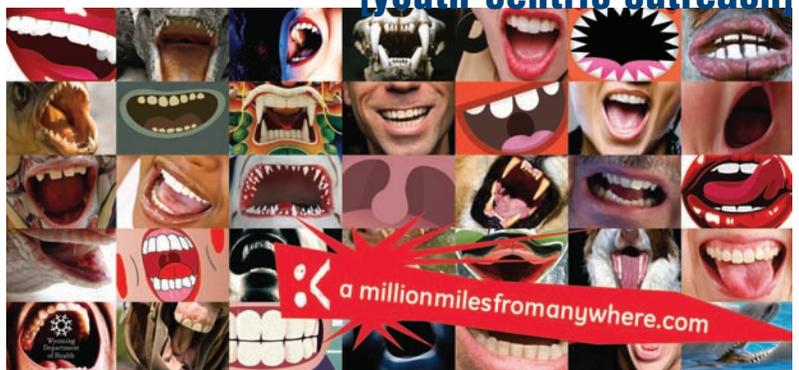
LCSD1 Violence Prevention Facilitator Lee Neeley (upper right) is joined here by Elementary Facilitator Lori Moseley (upper left), Administrative Assistant Mary Anderson (lower left) and SADS Coordinator John Contos.



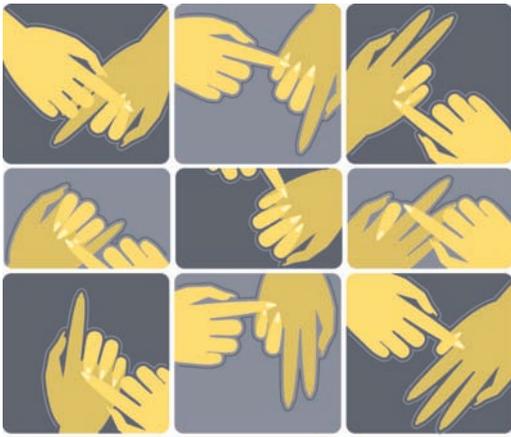
Stigma buster



Stigma about suicide is a barrier to preventing it. That's why the Wyoming Dept. of Health has launched a youth-centric media campaign that encourages youths to talk about it. Branded "A Million Miles from Anywhere," the outreach includes billboard (right), TV spots, PSAs and a website.



[youth-centric outreach]



5 MYTHS ABOUT SCHOOLS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

from
R. KEITH HOTLE, J.D., MPA
SUICIDE PREVENTION TEAM LEADER WITH
THE WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1 WE'LL GET SUED. Landmark court cases have shown that schools have a duty to warn and refer youth at risk. Staff and student training in prevention can help with recognizing and helping those at risk.

CHECK IT OUT! “Legal Lessons” with Richard Lieberman at www.wdh.state.wy.us/Media.aspx?mediaId=5475

2 SAYING SUICIDE TO STUDENTS WILL GIVE THEM IDEAS. Research has shown that asking someone if they've considered harming themselves can actually alleviate distress.

CHECK IT OUT! Youth suicide research from JAMA at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15811983

3 THERE'S NO TIME TO TEACH THIS. Incorporating suicide prevention into existing health curricula means little additional teaching time.

CHECK IT OUT! Lifelines is an evidence-based curriculum targeting students 12-17. Access an overview at: www.ryanpatrickholligan.org/images/Lifelinesoverviewrev.pdf

4 I'M SO UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS. Suicide is a tough subject, but one that needs to “come out of the closet,” especially with too many youths dying tragically and unnecessarily by their own hand.

CHECK IT OUT! The toll of suicide in Wyoming at <http://wdh.state.wy.us/mhsa/prevention/giss.html>

5 THIS DOESN'T BELONG IN SCHOOLS. Schools have a mandate to educate and protect students. Suicide prevention needs to be part of that.

CHECK IT OUT! Schools and Suicide, Advancing Suicide Prevention magazine, Vol. II Issue 1 online at www.advancingsp.org

Early learning [instilling resiliency early on]

Justin Pierantoni knows that some resilient children aren't born that way—they can be made. So this principal of Etna Elementary School in Lincoln County School District #2 reaches above and beyond to instill resiliency in his students. The mission statement on his school's website says it all: “Where We Think, Learn, Achieve, & Care.” And it's the “care” part that may make the most difference in the 265 young lives he helps shape.

“The presence of at least one caring person in a child's life can provide support for healthy development and learning,” says Bonnie L. Benard, MSW, a pioneering researcher



Wyoming Elementary Principal Justin Pierantoni knows firsthand the benefits of a culture of caring in his school. He encourages staff to help instill resiliency in students who might struggle to succeed in less supportive environments.

and practitioner in resiliency theory and application. “This is someone who conveys an attitude of compassion, who understands that no matter how awful a child's behavior, the child is doing the best he or she can, given his or her experience.” Benard's resiliency work has been credited as one of three forces supporting a shift from deficit-based prevention to asset-based youth development during the 1990s.

By putting aspects of Benard's theory of resiliency into practice, Pierantoni and his staff focus on developing competent, confident and caring students.

“Our biggest ally is communication—to help kids through anything that can happen, so they have someone to talk to,” Pierantoni

says. He adds that Etna Elementary, despite its small size, reaps the rewards of a full-time school psychologist/counselor on staff, a benefit that each school in the district enjoys.

“It is not what we do that counts, but how we do it,” notes Benard, stressing the means of support is not what counts, but how it is applied to the child. Pierantoni couldn't agree more. That's why he encourages his staff to offer students ample opportunities for emotional growth, and fostering internal assets that Benard stresses as key to resilience, including: 1) social competence, 2) problem solving, 3) autonomy, and 4) sense of purpose.

“Using a language of strengths versus a language of limitations helps adults begin to look for and find strengths in their young people—and then to name and reflect back to youth the strengths they have witnessed,” adds Benard.

NEW! DON'T MISS THIS WELL AWARE WEBINAR ON **Boosting Resiliency in Youths**

JUNE 25th AT 2 PM MDT. SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS. ACT TODAY—SPACE IS LIMITED!



BONNIE L. BENARD, MSW
Researcher and Author
on Youth Resiliency



TERESA LAFROMBOISE, Ph.D.
American Indian Life Skills
Development Curriculum



Together with **WYOMING
PUBLIC EDUCATION
STAFF**

Well Aware

A Suicide Prevention Policy Bulletin for WYOMING EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members ■ Superintendents
- Principals ■ Student Services Directors ■ Central Office Administration ■ Deans of Students

Volume 1, Issue 4
Summer 2009

Well Aware™ is delivered to school administrators and leaders throughout Wyoming. Well Aware is produced in cooperation with the Wyoming Dept. of Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division, in partnership with the Wyoming Dept. of Education. Funding for this newsletter is made possible, in part, by the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, grant SM57386 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

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WYOMING DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH
Mental Health and Substance
Abuse Services Division

In partnership with the:



WYOMING
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Published by the: **PDV** Foundation

514 North 6th Street
Sheboygan, WI 53081
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Well Aware

A Suicide Prevention Program
for School Administrators

published by the:

PDV Foundation

514 North 6th Street
Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081-4502

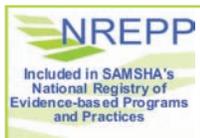
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Be well aware [resources and help]

PROGRAMS WITH POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Looking for a program to boost resiliency in your students? Look no further than the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), a database of 137 evidence-



based programs. NREPP is hosted by SAMHSA, an agency of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Brand new is the April 2009 addition of LST—Lifeskills Training, a school-based program that addresses multiple risk and protective factors, and teaches personal and social skills that build resilience. Visit NREPP at www.nrepp/samhsa.gov.

RESILIENCY: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

A few years ago, resiliency theory was relatively new to the fields of prevention and education. Today, it is at the heart of programs in scores of schools and communities that recognize in all young people the capacity to lead healthy, successful lives. The key, according to author Bonnie Benard, is the role that families, schools and communities play in supporting—and not undermining—this biological drive for normal human development. Benard reports on this and synthesizes a decade of resiliency research in her book, “Resiliency: What We Have Learned,” published by WestEd (www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/712). Don't miss a special Well Aware Webinar on Thursday, June 25th featuring Benard, along with Native American youth suicide prevention program developer Teresa LaFromboise plus Wyoming public education staff (see right).



FOSTERING STUDENT RESILIENCY IN SCHOOLS

Research shows that support from caring adults is key to students' success in the face of adversity. Want to know more about how to build emotional resiliency in your students? Email us at talkback@wellaware.org to receive an article from “Principal Leadership,” the flagship magazine of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which focuses on how schools can foster resiliency in students.



BOOSTING RESILIENCY IN YOUTHS MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

PROTECTIVE FACTORS: Boosting Resiliency in Youths
A webinar for professionals serving youth populations

FEATURING:

- >> BONNIE L. BENARD, MSW, Expert on Youth Resiliency
- >> TERESA LAFROMBOISE, Ph.D., Evidence-Based American Indian Lifeskills Development Curriculum
- >> Together with Wyoming Public Education Staff

WHEN: Thursday, June 25th at 2 p.m. MDT

LEARN: How to protect youths from suicide by promoting positive behaviors that can reduce the likelihood that a vulnerable child will become suicidal.

FEE: Free of charge; sponsored by the Wyoming Dept. of Health and Wyoming Dept. of Education

REGISTER NOW: Email webinarWY@wellaware.org today!