



# SECRETS TO GREAT OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES

“LIFE OUTCOMES OF CHILDREN FROM TWO-  
PARENTS AND SINGLE-PARENT HOMES”

BY

*Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC*

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# **Secrets to Great Outcomes for Children from Single-Parent Homes**

**“Life Outcomes of Children from Two-Parents and  
Single-Parent Homes”**

## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to the wonderful staff members at Genesee Valley Regional Detention Center (Flint, MI). In my humble opinion, they are some of the finest, smartest and most dedicated youth workers in the State of Michigan.

Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC

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# **RSRC**

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Secrets To Great Outcomes For Children From Single-  
Parent Homes

“Life Outcomes of Children From Two-Parents and  
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2017 Recco S. Richardson

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## **Preface**

### **-The Importance of This Book-**

This book is important because children raised in single-parent homes often are overlooked. They tend to be directly and indirectly blamed for most of the problems in our communities and schools. So often, research and statistics about children raised in a single-parent home is skewed and offers few solutions. Having been raised in a single-parent home, I believe it is necessary to document statistics and real solutions.

In my own lifetime, I have come to realize that children raised in single-parent homes are just as smart, just as important and just as willing to excel as children raised in two-parent homes. I have also come to realize that there is a growing number of single-parent home children who are performing well and achieving at life outcome levels that close the gap or are near that of two-parents home children. This book offers solutions and strategies for closing the fore-mentioned life outcomes gap.



## About The Author



Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., was born and raised in Flint, MI. He and his four siblings graduated from the Flint Community Schools. He earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in Business from Ferris State University. He earned a Master's of Arts in Counseling Education from Central Michigan University. He also graduated from Walden University with a doctorate degree in Professional Psychology.

Early in his professional career, he began implementing human services programming, supervision and program management duties within the workplace. He has mentored some of Michigan's (Genesee County, Bay County, Saginaw County and Ingham County) outstanding counselors, case managers, supervisors, and directors.

In 2005 he pioneered Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc., a multi-faceted human services agency that provides effective mental health services, seminars and research. The organization is registered with the State of

Michigan as a mental health service provider. Currently, over 500 different persons per month are serviced through his two offices in Genesee County and one office in Oakland County. He travels extensively performing counseling licensure supervision services. He regularly sponsors seminars, retreats, and conferences.

Dr. Richardson was licensed as a minister in 1987 and ordained an elder in 1992. He has held virtually every position in the local church setting including youth pastor, janitor, associate pastor, singles minister, outreach coordinator, etc.

A Licensed Professional Counselor (State of Michigan) and a Diplomate, American Psychotherapy Association, he has a keen eye towards helping individuals remove emotional and social barriers. Dr. Richardson has over 20 years of counseling experience, 15 years of clinical supervision experience and 15 years of college adjunct faculty experience.

# Chapter I

## “Closing The Emotional-Intelligence Gap”

### Statistics

It is held that by age 15, almost 50 percent of all children in the United States will have lived in a single-parent home (Anderson 2002). The number of single-parent families has tripled in the past 50 years and has become larger among Latino and African American families when compared to the general population (US Census 2010). In 2000, 27 percent of all United States children lived in single-parent families, of which 53 percent of African American children lived in a single-parent family (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004).

The majority of single-parent families are headed by women, with 7 percent of single-parent families being headed by men (DeBell, 2008).

### Literature Review

The impact of absent fathers is real and far-reaching. The scope of reach includes academic

outcomes of children. As a result, for years there have been studies, research, and outreach efforts to quantify the experience and promote solutions. The research and authorship regarding differences between children raised in father-absent (FA) and father-present (FP) homes (Balcom 1998; Biller 1970; Chapman, 1977; Daniels, 1986; Downey, 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Durfur, 1998; Fry & Scher, 1984; Milne, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986) paints a rather gloomy picture. Research has shown that FA children graduate from high school and attend college at a lower rate (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004), perform worse on standardized tests (Bain, Boersma, & Chapman, 1983), and are more likely to use drugs (Mandara & Murry, 2006) than children from FP homes.

Research has also shown that growing up without a father seems to have a greater negative effect on boys as compared to girls (Mandara & Murry; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). Regardless of the absence of fathers in the home,

there is a growing number of mother-headed single-parent home children who are performing well and

Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC

achieving at life outcome levels that close the gap and are near that of two-parents' home children. This article will offer solutions and strategies for closing the fore-mentioned life outcomes gap.

## **Closing The Gap**

An often cited and examined area of children is their intelligence and propensity to learn. For all children, critical to their life outcomes is the relationship between their emotions, intelligence, and academic learning. When discussing and comparing children from two-parent homes and single-parent homes, the role that emotion play in intelligence and learning is often overlooked.

An under-discussed concept that impacts the life outcomes of children is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability and the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

It is possible that children from single-parent homes are just as intelligent as children reared in two-parent homes. However, for some children reared in single-parent homes, the lack of resources, inconsistent parenting, the presence of several siblings and other concepts can lead to on-going traumatic experiences. The number one enemy of self-esteem and emotional intelligence are traumatic experiences. Repeated

exposure to trauma has the ability to interfere with intelligence, emotions, and learning outcomes. Traumatic experiences can find their way into two-parents and single-parent homes.

***“The number one enemy of self-esteem and emotional intelligence is traumatic experiences.”***

In essence, the traumatic experiences that are presented in single-parent homes have the ability to undermine the emotional stability and intellectual development of children who are raised in single-parent and two-parent homes. The single most important difference between the impact of the trauma on children is the presence of a second parent in the two-parent home. In several ways, the second parent helps to the offset the devastation of the trauma.

Traumatic experiences and the associated fallout distracts and works against the intelligence and life outcomes of children from single-parent homes in ways that most professionals, educators, and religious leaders have no frame of reference to comprehend. The phenomenon is just that widespread. As a result, the life outcomes of children from single-parent homes trails that of two-parents home children in a troubling way that are almost third-world nation-like in their impact.

For children raised in single-parent homes, their emotional life can take hit after hit and leave the child with low confidence, inadequate self-esteem, a weakened desire to excel and a fixed mindset.

Like self-esteem's ability to promote favorable social experiences, such as those derived from achievement (i.e., GPA) and social competence, emotional intelligence can help move children forward as a result of promoting experiences and memories that enhance esteem levels. Enhanced self-esteem can lead to additional confidence that promotes self-mastery, academic stamina and motivation to excel.

Accordingly, emotional intelligence is likely to underlie social competence and mediate the contribution of achievement to self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue 2015). In a study of 405 undergraduates in Hong Kong, China, it was reported that emotional intelligence appeared to be a strong determinant of self-esteem and explain away the positive effect of social competence on self-esteem.

The results imply the value of raising emotional intelligence in order to consolidate the basis for the young adult's self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue 2015).

## **Discussions Points & Solutions**

At this point, there is so much to say. I'm almost not sure where to start discussions. I will start with a simple thought. The thought or idea that by age 15, almost 50 percent of children will have lived in a single-parent home is alarming. This means that such children are almost the majority of all children.

With this in mind, the various stigmas, shaming, blaming, bullying and disregard for single-parent home children must cease. Why? Because at some point in various communities, there are just as many of them as there are children who live in two-parent homes. It is not wise to disenfranchise and label such a large percentage of the population.

As stated earlier, emotional intelligence is one of the major differences found between children from two-parents and single-parent homes. Single-parent home children tend not to be able to emotionally negotiate not having one of their birth parents living in the home and/or active in their lives. As a result, they tend to not be able to successfully negotiate being poor and they struggle to do perform well in sub-par school systems.

Their failure to cope and adjust can be attributed to experiencing on-going emotional trauma that is never addressed. Emotional trauma, social stigma and the lack of guidance can stymie intellectual development. With this in mind, it is critical that interventions, prevention, and solutions be offered that enhances the emotional intelligence of children who are reared in single-parent homes. Enhanced emotional intelligence can decrease gaps found in the life outcomes for children raised in single-parent homes.

### **A Solution Is “Consistency”**

With the help of my 25 years of experience in mental health counseling, authorship, workshop presentations, and program development duties, I have a good idea of what can address childhood traumatic experiences and thus decrease the gap found. My insights are nothing new. They are as simple as the children experiencing consistent schooling, consistent home life, consistent parenting style, consistent cultural awareness and consistent participation in extracurricular activities.

Consistency is the calling card for helping all children, including single-parent home children, address and overcome the trauma in their lives. Trauma that runs the risk of being able to negatively affect children's emotional intelligence and thus expand the life outcomes gap.



## **Chapter II**

### **“Consistency: The Key To Closing The Emotional-Intelligence Gap”**

#### **A Solution Is “Consistency”**

According to the 2011 U.S. Census, over 25 percent children in American live in a single-parent household. This is a high percentage and indicates a need to address the on-going plights that work against single-parent home children and their pursuit of healthy life outcomes.

Consistency is the solution and calling card for helping all children, including single-parent home children, address and overcome the trauma in their lives. Consistency has the ability to address trauma (and the associated fallout) and improves life outcomes because it creates new habits, renews mindsets, challenges prescribed restrictions and promotes hope.

Across the board, to bridge the emotional intelligence gap, children reared in single-parent homes need

consistency in their lives. They need consistency in their meals, physical exercise, schedules, supervision, guidance, motivation, and encouragement. It is held that two-parents home children experience the stated consistencies more often than children from single-parent homes.

As a result, to help single-parent home children close the emotional intelligence gap and other life outcomes gaps, there must be consistency in their lives. To bridge existing gaps it is clear that single-parent home children need consistent quality education, consistent self-management, consistent goal setting and consistent housing. As it would be, I have come to believe that consistent community resources and consistent involvement in extracurricular activities are the most important consistencies that a child needs and can experience. Community resources and extracurricular involvement can move the life outcomes bar towards better life outcomes.

## **Community Resources**

In most communities, there are dozens of local, state and federal programs available to single-parents that aid them in their personal lives and in their efforts to parent successful children. Typically, basic program requirements must be met and steps towards self-improvement must be evident. Examples of community resources include food programs, academic tutoring, household management classes, housing assistance, health coverage, wellness initiatives, transportation, various assessments, screenings and support groups.

Recent research findings report that parent education, home (community) resources and other outside factors can dampen or assist student learning (Teaching Urban Students, 2012). Many resources are not taken advantage of by parents due to lack of information, laziness, on-going barriers, pride, arrogance, personal struggles, a lack of interest and an inadequate support system.

Likewise, there are some parents that utilize community resources in an abusive manner. They turn an intended temporary program into a ten-year lifeline and fail to totally benefit. The failure to secure services

and abuse of services by some, stifles programming and further sets all parents, including single-parents (and their children) back in their quest for better life outcomes.

A wonderful and necessary resource is a “support system.” There is something to be said about all parents, including single-parents, having a support system. We all need healthy and vibrant support systems. No one person is an island. In this world, we need others and others need us.

***“Support systems and community resources can  
move people forward”***

As a dedicated provider of community programming and mental health counseling, I have noticed that more often than not, single-parents have less support than married parents. There are myriads of reasons for the stated.

As I see it, more often than married parents, some single-parents tend to be detached from their natural support systems (i.e. family members, high school/college friends, co-workers) and they seem to consistently burn bridges with others.

When this occurs, some (not all) single-parents appear to forge toxic and unhealthy support systems/relationships with others that have similar life situations. The stated support systems/relationships can positively (but more than likely negatively) effect on the immediate and future life outcomes of their children. I'm still not sure why this topic is not discussed more often.

As for support systems/relationships being a resource, one of the most damaging things that hinder children is single-parent's "inconsistent and harmful" love relationship and/or dating practices. There, I said it!

While it is true that some single-parents secure "consistent and helpful" loving intimate relationships that benefit their children, the majority do not. The same can be said of single-parents who eventually get married.

The 2011 Census reported that each year more than 1.5 million marriages take place and 60 percent of them involve children (thus creating blended families/step-children). Silverman & Ollendick (1999) reported that over one million children experience the divorce of their parents in the United States every year. The mean age of

children who experience divorce is eleven years old, over 40 percent of divorced individuals will remarry before their youngest child reaches age 18, and one in ten children will experience two divorces of the custodial parent before age 16.

According to these statistics, it is assumed that adolescent children are more likely to be “caught in a crossfire” of the turmoil of not only the divorce and/or remarriage of a parent, but also of other stressors during this period in their lives.

In essence, the creation of a blended family/step-family via marriage or live together partnership may not benefit children (as much as we believe). This is thought to be true because being placed in a two-parent home via marriage or live together with the arrangement, does not exonerate the one-time single-parent home child from possibly experiencing harm in the home and deferred life outcomes.

Blended families, step-families and live together arrangement families can be beneficial and harmful to children. For example, the family relationships in stepfamilies, and particularly stepparent-child relationships, typically are more distant and have more

conflict and other negative interactions than those in nuclear families.

Emerging in the current literature and research are findings that suggest children raised in a blended family/step-family/live together partnership settings have some similar life outcomes to those experienced by children raised in a single-parent home. Why? Because at one time, the now blended family/step-family/live together partnership child once resided in a single-parent home. This fact cannot be changed.

Almost regardless of the length of time, various imprints were made and some life cycles were set into motion during the single-parent home stage. The facts and imprints are the crux of this research writing. Why? Because the trump card for the life outcomes of single-parent home children is the absence of one of the biological (birth) parents in their life.

It is becoming more and more difficult for children to successfully negotiate the absence of a birth parent in their life.

## **Participation In Extracurricular Activities**

Family and child “friendly” free and/or reduced rate extracurricular programming, clubs and activities are a staple in most communities. The stated typically are offered by school districts, colleges, churches, community organizations, caring adults, fraternities/sororities and special interests groups.

***“I ask you today, “If not you, then who,  
If not now, then when.”***

The purpose and goal of most of the programs are to help children develop character, preserve culture, inspire and motivate, promote excellence, cultivate specific passions and improve various aspects of childhood living such as conflict resolution skills.

Wilson (2009) reported that students who participate in extracurricular activities generally benefit from them as witnessed by having better grades, having higher standardized test scores and higher educational attainment, attending school more regularly, having higher a higher self-concept, learning teamwork, taking on leadership and decreasing the likelihood of

alcohol/illicit drug usage. The stated concepts bridge the gap and help single-parent home children succeed at the same rate of two-parents home children.

Extracurricular programming should be consistently participated in by children. Why? Because consistent participation can help improve their emotional intelligence and bridge gaps and help them experience what other children experience. To secure life outcomes similar to those of two-parents home children, single-parents, and their children must take full advantage of and participate in community-based extracurricular activities and programs. There is no way around it.

The current literature and research are clear and documents that children/adolescents with high levels of external assets in the home, school and community environments benefit from the stated and were significantly less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors (Resiliency Research Report, 2001; Search Institute, 2006).

As well, it was reported that. Social competencies such as planning, decision-making, cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution are positive internal assets for adolescents to learn and have when growing into young adulthood

(Search Institute, 2006). The stated competencies are often the foundation and driving force of curriculum used by extracurricular programs.

The last thing America and our communities needs is another child who is not involved in extracurricular activities. Children usually are not involved due to their parents not knowing the “value” of programming, parents refusing to pay for activities and parents being “too busy doing nothing.” Single-parents say with their lips that they want a better life for their children. However, their actions are to the contrary. In all fairness, it must be said that some children are not involved in community-based programs because of ongoing medical issues and disagreement by the non-custodial/absent parent. Also, some children get suspended from community programming due to their defiance, poor attitude or inconsistent participation.

It is not uncommon for those involved to forget the purpose of extracurricular activities that target children. Programming that was designed to promote emotional intelligence, bridge gaps and provide personal growth, can easily become babysitting services, possible money makers, a place to further marginalize families/children,

a haven for incompetent staff and a secondary priority. This is not good.

When programming loses its focus and purpose, the addressing of immediate and future life outcomes of children is threatened and can do more harm than good. Just the thought of the stated moves me to say, “May there be mercy on us all.”

It can be a “win-win” situation when children participate in structured and research-driven extracurricular programming. Such programming can positively affect academic progress, encourage emotional intelligence, enhance esteem levels, promote resiliency, undergird self-efficacy, promote skill development, provide safe avenues to explore critical issues and promote cultural enrichment.

The literature reports that children from urban areas (and other areas) benefit from family support and cultural enrichment experiences (Teaching Urban Students, 2012). It is no secret that the majority of successful adults (who were raised in single-parent homes) point to their childhood participation in

extracurricular activities, as an important time in their development. They believe that the participating afforded them the opportunity to experience what two-parents home children experience.

***“At some point, the leap of faith calls us all!”***

## **Chapter III**

### **“Building Resiliency in Children Reared In Single-parent Homes**

#### **Introduction**

Research reported that 93 percent of single-parent families are headed by women, with 7 percent of single-parent families being headed by a male (DeBell, 2008). Single-parent homes children are often cited and discussed in terms of their obstacles, disadvantages, tendencies, and needs. Rarely are the strengths and intricate details of successful single-parents and their children discussed.

In my 51 years of living, less than 10 times has someone personally asked me “What did your single mother do intentionally to set the tone for your future and current success.” In other words, rarely am I asked, “As a person raised in a single-parent home, why were

you able to bridge the gaps and now experience similar life outcomes found with two-parents homes children?" Why has my story and the story of millions of other successful individuals raised in single-parent homes, not been intentionally duplicated? Why has the nuts and bolts of our experiences not been turned into standardized K-12 and higher education curriculum that is taught everywhere? "Why hasn't the strengths and sacrifices of successful single mothers become the foundation of a theory or a critical theoretical framework for helping single-parent home children?"

## **Literature Review**

Regardless the absence of fathers in the home, there is a growing number of mother-headed single-parent home children who are performing well and achieving at life outcome levels that close the gap or are near that of two-parents home children. The number and list of success stories are endless (see chart #1 for a short list). A closer look at the lives of Eric Clapton, Dr. Ben Carson, Barack Obama and many others (Withoutafather.com, 2016) could provide insight into what single mothers and caring adults can do to help

children overcome various gaps and have similar life outcomes of children raised in two-parents homes.

## **Single Mothers: Your Child Can Beat The Odds**

Barajas (2012) argued that despite calls for a greater emphasis on discovering strengths, the majority of research concerning single-parenthood and absent father homes continues to focus on the disadvantages faced by the children. This is and will never be the case of this research project/writings in that strengths and solutions will be documented.

***“Focusing only on children reared in single-parent homes problems will never be the focus of my efforts.” Recco Richardson (2016).***

### **Chart #1 Single-parent Home To Success**

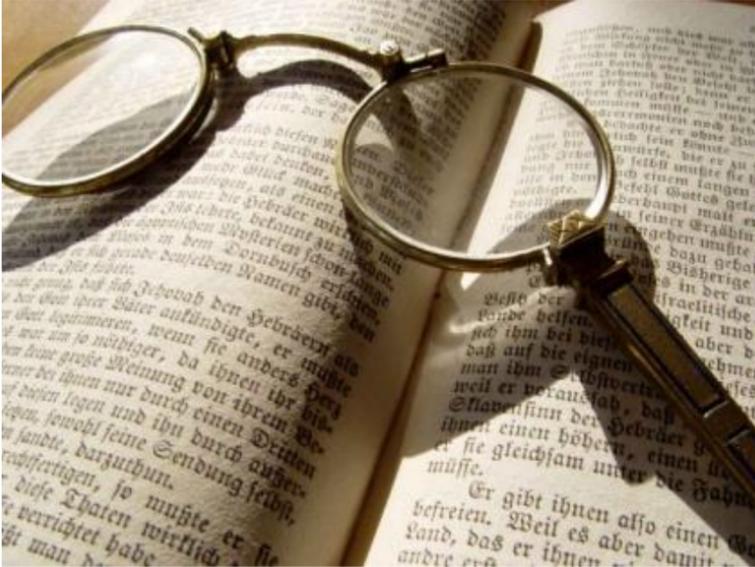
<u>Lance Armstrong</u> (Professional Cyclist)
<u>Kate Beckinsale</u> (Actress)
<u>Halle Berry</u> (Actress)
<u>Mary J. Blige</u> (Singer)
<u>Pierce Brosnan</u> (Actor)
<u>Mariah Carey</u> (Singer)
Ben Carson (Surgeon)
<u>Eric Clapton</u> (Singer)
<u>Bill Clinton</u> (42nd President of United States)
<u>Stephen Colbert</u> (TV Host)
<u>Jamie Foxx</u> (Actor/Singer)
<u>Enrique Iglesias</u> (Singer)
<u>Samuel L. Jackson</u> (Actor)
<u>Alicia Keys</u> (Singer)
<u>John Lennon</u> (Singer)
<u>Demi Moore</u> (Actress)
<u>Jack Nicholson</u> (Actor)
<u>Barack Obama</u> (44 <sup>th</sup> President of United States)
<u>Julia Roberts</u> (Actress)
<u>Jon Stewart</u> (TV Host)
<u>Barbra Streisand</u> (Singer)

Barajas (2012) went on to argue that it is important to understand the strengths and resiliency factors exhibited by children raised in an absent father home. Although children raised in a home where a father is present graduate from high school and attend college at much higher rates than children raised in a fatherless home, what is often overlooked is the fact that nearly 70 percent of children from absent father homes do graduate from high school and 50 percent of them attend college (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). This fact points to the need for professionals and others to begin offering solutions and focusing on the strengths and resiliency of single mothers and their children.

## **Resiliency, The Link, And Solution**

For the most part, basic inquiries into resilience have attempted to answer the question of why some individuals from high-risk backgrounds such as single-parent homes thrive while others fail (for a summary see Rutter, 1990). Researchers have had difficulty defining and measuring resiliency and agreeing on specific individual characteristics of resilient individuals. Common single-parent homes characteristics that are

believed to promote resiliency are the presence of strong parent-child communication, a network of community support, and high levels of adolescent autonomy.



Community and support were discussed in article two of this research project. This writing will focus on building resiliency in children. In addition, key insights regarding preparing children for autonomy and effective parent-child communication will be reported on and discussed.

To give single-parent home children a fighting chance for normality and future life success, resilience must be

instilled in them by their mother and other caring adults (i.e. teachers, coaches, mentors). Resilience under-pins single-parent home children successful matriculation through school and in their meaningful relationships. The goal should be to raise resilient children, who can manage stress and negotiate being vulnerable to life experiences that are harmful (Richardson, 2016).

## **What Is Resilience**

The common qualifying condition for resilience is the presence of demonstrable, substantial risk facing the individual. In addition, it is held that resilience is efforts made by individuals to be successful regardless of facing distressing life conditions and demanding societal conditions that feature significant threats or severe adversities (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012). In addition, resilience has been defined as positive adaptation despite adversity (Fleming & Ledagar, 2008). In essence, resilience can be defined as the process of effectively mobilizing internal and external resources in adapting to or managing significant sources of stress or trauma.

Thus, cultivation of resilience means fostering children's and adolescents' capacity, flexibility, and coping strategies as they face developmental changes and life stresses in order to “bounce back” from difficult life experiences and achieve positive outcomes (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012).

There is a difference between resilience, motivation, ambition, drive, determination, initiative and willpower. The main difference being resilience is a process that helps individuals address and overcome risk, distress, threat, and adversities. On a personal and professional level, I have come to learn and realize that resilience is a process that children from single-parent homes need to experience.

***“Resilience is a process that children from single-parent homes need to experience.”***

Motivation can be defined as the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way. It can also be defined as the general desire or willingness of someone to do something. Ambition is a strong desire to do or to achieve something and typically requiring determination and hard work.

Determination can be coined as possessing firmness of purpose and resoluteness. Drive is defined as what compels a person to do or act. Initiative has come to mean the ability to assess and initiate things independently and the power or opportunity to act or take charge before others do. It is an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation.

Lastly, willpower is the combination of determination and self-discipline that enables someone to do something despite the difficulties involved.

Psychologists and others have begun to recognize that much of what seems to promote resilience originates outside of the individual. This is not the case with ambition, drive, and initiative. As well, resilience requires the presence of an immediate danger or perceived on-going disadvantage (i.e. . poverty, family history of incarceration) that can shake the core of a person.

The level of poverty, health problems and sub-par educational outcomes experienced by most children reared in single-parent homes is best addressed by manifesting resilience as a way of life and not placing all of the eggs in the basket of motivation, willpower, and determination.

Why? Because it is believed that resilience (and not the other concepts) has the ability to address life outcomes barriers and is a process. For the most part, only resilience can provide sustaining power that propels any youngster past “undaunting and uncircumcised” life barriers that have never been defeated. Man, I said a mouth full there.

If surveyed, mental health providers, school teachers, medical professionals and others would say that most children reared in single-parent homes at one point or another had adequate motivation, ambition, and determination. They would go on to say that at critical times, the children were not able to sustain the necessary level of drive, initiative, and willpower because of the grip held on them by generational cycles, environmental deprivation, unrelenting lack in several areas of their lives and iniquities passed down through the bloodline.



One way to sustain the necessary level of inner fortitude and other concepts is to successfully negotiate resilience and its process. The negotiating requires that children from single-parent homes receive solutions that are offered by on-going support, effective programming and education that promote resilience.

## **Chapter IV**

### **“Building Resiliency in Children Reared In Single-Parent Homes Part II**

#### **Resilience Frameworks**

Over the past 40 years, resilience research has gone through several stages. From an initial focus on the invulnerable or invincible child, psychologists began to recognize that much of what seems to promote resilience originates outside of the individual. This led to a search for resilience factors at the individual, family, community and cultural levels (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012).

Contemporary researchers have found that resilience factors vary in different risk contexts and have contributed to the notion that resilience is a process. Research on resilience has been a major theme in developmental psychopathology focusing on the question why some individuals maintain positive adaptation despite experiences of “distressing life

conditions and demanding societal conditions” such as violence, poverty, stress, trauma, deprivation, and oppression (Chauklu & Ping, 2012).

Children from single-parent homes experience the stated and are more at-risk than other children to school dropout, illness, lower standardized test scores, substance abuse, shorter lifespan, and incarceration.

Three waves of research on resilience have been identified and have set the path for the fourth wave which focuses on multilevel analysis and the dynamics of adaptation and change. There is a wide range of theories about the relationships between resilience and positive youth development.

There are models and frameworks that help to better understand resilience. As such, it is held that there are three general classes of resilience models/frameworks (compensatory, protective, and challenge) that explain how resilience factors operate to alter the trajectory from risk exposure to a negative outcome (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Compensatory: The compensatory model best explains a situation where a resilience factor counteracts or

operates in an opposite direction to a risk factor. The resilience factor has a direct effect on the outcome, one that is independent of the effect of the risk factor. In CIET's ACYRN-East study, for example, alcohol abstinence or moderation is compensatory in the sense that it is directly and independently associated with lower risk for youth suicide (Anderson & Ledogar, 2008).

*Protective:* In the protective model, assets or resources moderate or reduce the effects of a risk on a negative outcome. Protective factors may operate in several ways to influence outcomes. They may help to neutralize the effects of risks; they may weaken, but not completely remove them, or they may enhance the positive effect of another protective factor in producing an outcome.

In the ACYRN-East study (Anderson & Ledogar, 2008), being drug-free, though not directly associated with lower suicide risk, is associated with lower alcohol use and thus is protective in the sense that it enhances the latter's anti-suicide potential.

*Challenge:* A third model of resilience is the challenge model. In this model, the association between a risk

factor and an outcome is “curvilinear”: exposures to both low and high levels of a risk factor are associated with negative outcomes, but moderate levels of the risk are related to less negative (or positive) outcomes.



Altering the trajectory and impact of risk and negative outcomes is just what the doctor ordered for children reared in single-parent homes. To strengthen children, we must consistently redirect and change the trajectory and bloodline issues that target them.

Adolescents exposed to moderate levels of risk, for example, may be confronted with enough of the risk factor to learn how to overcome it but are not exposed to so much of it that overcoming it is impossible.

## **Risk, Vulnerability & Protective Factors**

With the help of resilience, the majority of children can overcome their initial traumatic life experiences. Types of traumatic experiences include growing up in the home with a mentally ill family member, residing in a divorced or blended family home, being emotionally, physically or sexually abused or having criminally involved parents.

Not many children escape life without experiencing some type of trauma. It behooves us to ensure that through resilience, quality parenting and proper guidance, a faulty bond with their trauma does not take place.



As stated previously in this four-part research writing, the common qualifying condition for resilience, as viewed by most researchers, is the presence of demonstrable, substantial risk facing the individual. Many define risk in terms of statistical probabilities: a high-risk condition being one that carries high odds for maladjustment (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001).

Substantial risk is closely related to vulnerability. Vulnerability can be defined as how prepared a person is for a presented task. Vulnerability can interact with a risk factor so as to intensify one's reaction to risk (Rutter, 1990; Luthar, 1991, 2006).

There are many kinds of vulnerabilities including economic, social, environmental and psychological. Indigenous, rural and urban communities often have to deal with their own particular set of vulnerabilities.

The identification of risk, vulnerability, and protective factors is important because risk factors can have a greater effect when occurring together with other risk factors than they do when occurring in isolation (Rutter, 1990; 1999; 2000; Sameroff et al., 1987; Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006). Protective factors will be discussed later in this writing.

The identification of vulnerability factors helps to understand, find processes, view causes and identify solutions.

## **Protective Factors & Children**

The main difference between individuals who adapt very well despite facing risks and individuals who end up in mal-adaptation is the existence of protective factors. In summary, protective factors are internal and external ideas and concepts that can help individuals

negotiate live experiences that have the ability to stymie development, offset growth and deter success.

Regardless of what type of home they reside in, protective factors are critical and play a major role in the overall development of children. Why? Because protective factors can help children develop, adapt to stressful situations and side-step risk-taking behaviors.

In general, internal protective factors have the ability to promote optimism, perceptions of control, self-efficacy, and active coping skills that are associated with better health. External protective factors help individual's function socially and maximize their participation in their environment.



Protective factors can be grouped into four main components (bonding, competence, optimism, and environment).

*Bonding:* Bonding explains a child's emotional attachment and commitment to parents or caregivers. Healthy and unhealthy bonding can be found in all relationships including peer, coach, love interests and community groups. To promote bonding and attachment with and within children, simply spend quality time with them, explain universal truths to them, practice acceptance and mercy with them, communicate with them about relevant age-appropriate topics and give them opportunities to explore and express themselves to and with you. The stated is "Parenting 101" in a nutshell.

*Competence:* In general competence can be viewed as the by-product of knowledge and intelligence. It is a must for children to have. Specifically, emotional, cognitive, moral, behavioral and social competencies help all children (especially those raised in a single-parent home) secure the ability to make good decisions, regulate their emotions, have a proper view of themselves, and get along with others. When the throws of life come, children must have access to reservoirs of competencies so as to overcome and keep moving forward.

*Optimism:* A jewel in its own right, optimism is the ability to hope against hope. It is the presence of a resilient mindset that embraces the belief that one way or another, things will work out. Optimism has been known to have solid roots in spiritual truths, understanding the meaning of life and possessing a positive sense of self. It has the ability to promote a “future orientation” approach to life that helps children stay focused on the desired goal. Cultural enrichment and exposure to other’s ways of life can help all children experience optimism and future orientations.

*Environment:* Of all the protective factors, environment tends to have the largest impact on children. It takes dedication, unrelenting effort, a strong sense of self and acceptance to break negative bands created by unhealthy environments. The most common environments that affect children to the positive and negative are home, school, and community.

In closing, in case you missed it, the treatment plan or actions steps necessary for helping children raised in single-parent homes achieve and close life outcomes gaps is a process.

The process includes ensuring that each child secures and maximizes protective factors, bonds with healthy experiences and develops a resilient mindset.

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# SECRETS TO GREAT OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES

*"This book is important because children raised in single-parent homes often are overlooked. They are often directly and indirectly blamed for most of the problems in our communities. So often, research and statistics about children raised in single-parent homes are skewed or offers few solutions. Having been raised in a single-parent home, I believe it is necessary to document statistics and solutions.*

*In my lifetime, I have come to realize that children raised in single-parent homes are just as smart, just as important and just as willing to excel as children raised in two-parent homes. The gap in life outcomes between these two groups has narrowed in some instances.*

*There is a growing number of children from single-parent homes who are performing well and achieving at levels that match or are near that of children from two-parent homes. This book offers insights and strategies for helping to close the life outcomes gap to which some individuals from single-parent homes may be vulnerable."*

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