Resilience begins before birth

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Evidence is accumulating of the importance of the earliest years as the foundation of later good social, emotional and cognitive development. Attachment research and theory has moved from describing a good relationship as a comfort when a child is stressed to recognition that this secure base is the springboard which allows children to explore and learn safely. This facilitates the capacity to be independent while remaining connected. The core of this may lie in the child’s developing capacity to manage their emotional containment. However, evidence is also accumulating that these processes begin even in utero. Brain structure and functions are uniquely permeable in pregnancy and the first two years of life. Emotional containment, self-esteem and confidence, faculties centred on the development of the pre-frontal cortex are developed on the basis of fetal programming and early experience. Stress in pregnancy can lead to smaller babies, premature delivery and poorer structure and function of the brain. Mellow Parenting has developed programmes targeting parents under stress from the antenatal period onwards to help them manage their own stress and provide the most nurturing and stimulating environment for their babies. This presentation will discuss the recruitment to parents, the methods of intervention and outcomes of the programmes, illustrated with video from parents and practitioners.

Encouraging resiliency in the classroom

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There are many stressors that impact the lives of individuals. While many of these challenges can go well beyond what is experienced in a classroom setting, students who have a strong internalized locus of control and who are explicitly taught both cognitive and noncognitive skill sets, can practice those traits that contribute to resiliency, and have a better chance of mastering content material that is taught in a formal learning environment. In order to do this, it is imperative students be part of a community that fosters mutual respect for all participants, engage in lessons that are relevant to their lives, and are given opportunities to think deeply and creatively problem solve. Once these criteria are successfully met, students can be motivated to want to learn.

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