

# Your Journey Together

## A Resilience-Building Parenting Curriculum



### What is *Your Journey Together*?

*Your Journey Together* (YJT) is a strength-based curriculum designed to promote the social and emotional health and resilience of vulnerable children and their families. The YJT curriculum focuses on empowering parents to promote safe, trusting and healing environments - all key elements of a trauma-sensitive program.

### What is the Goal of YJT?

YJT provides parents (adults responsible for parenting young children) with the knowledge and skills that promote resilience, and helps family members better cope with life's challenges.

### How Does YJT Work?

The YJT curriculum is facilitated by a coach, who is typically a social worker, case worker, home visitor, or other family-serving professional. The coach uses the YJT lessons to show parents how everyday routines, activities, and interactions help promote resilience in young children and the adults caring for them.

### What is Included in the YJT Kit?

The YJT Kit includes all of the resources that a coach needs to implement the curriculum:

- YJT Coach Guide with 29 step-by-step lessons and parent handouts (266 pages)
- A copy of the adult resilience journal, *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You*
- Parent Guides and Strategy Resources
- Coach Portal: web access to Parent Handouts (in both English & Spanish!), Presentations to support Group Workshops, as well as Videos

All for the price of \$149.95!

### Professional Development

The Devereux Center for Resilient Children offers a variety of professional development opportunities that focus on the successful implementation of YJT at your program. Free informational webinars, distance learning trainings, and live training events are all available to help build the resilience and social and emotional health of staff and parents who are caring for young children. Reach out to Debi Mahler, Director of Professional Development, at [dmahler@devereux.org](mailto:dmahler@devereux.org).

- Aligns with the most recent Head Start Performance Standards
- Aligns with the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework
- Aligns with SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach



Purchase your kit today at  
[www.YourJourneyTogether.org](http://www.YourJourneyTogether.org)



# Your Journey Together

## Building the Resilience of Children and Families

Curriculum Guide for Coaches



Deborah Alleyne • Rachel Wagner Sperry • Linda K. Likins • Mary Mackrain

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with the Devereux Center for Resilient Children

Your Journey Together

# Building the Resilience of Children and Families

## Curriculum Guide for Coaches

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# Navigating Your Journey Together

The *Your Journey Together* (YJT) curriculum is delivered by a professional called a YJT coach. Whether coaching one parent at a time, several parents in a small group setting, or a large group of parents in a workshop setting, this guide is designed to help the coach lead parents through the *Your Journey Together* curriculum.

- The Introduction provides an overview of the curriculum, facilitation options, and information about coaching.
- Modules One through Four include all of the information and handouts the coach will need in order to deliver the four modules of the curriculum with individual or small groups of parents. Please note that a suggested script for the coach is provided for each lesson in bulleted talking points.
- Appendices A and B are the strategy guides that the YJT coach will use to support parents in the creation of resilience-building plans for their caregiving (i.e., parenting) practices as well as for their individual child.

A website has been created to support YJT coaches in using the *Your Journey Together* curriculum. Please visit [www.YourJourneyTogether.org](http://www.YourJourneyTogether.org) where you will find resources including:

- PowerPoint presentations (with permission to download) to support group workshops
- Recordings that illustrate how to administer and score the Devereux Early Childhood Assessments (DECA)
- Recordings that illustrate how to take parents through the planning process for caregiving practices, for children and for the parents themselves
- Videos that support specific Stepping Stone lessons
- More information about *Your Journey Together* as a trauma-sensitive curriculum
- Additional materials and weblinks that focus on resilience
- Testimonials from YJT users to support the creation of a learning community
- DCRC resources for older children



# Introduction

## Your Journey Together

### THE YOUR JOURNEY TOGETHER CURRICULUM

*Your Journey Together (YJT)* is a strength-based curriculum designed to promote the social and emotional well-being and resilience of vulnerable children and their families. YJT is a “journey” of discovery, learning, and reflection. It is facilitated by a YJT coach, who is typically a social worker or other family-serving professional working with adults responsible for parenting young children. It uses everyday routines, activities, and interactions to help parents promote resilience in their children and themselves and better cope with life’s challenges. The YJT curriculum focuses on empowering parents and promoting a safe, trusting, and healing environment, all key elements of a trauma-sensitive program. While YJT is designed for families with young children including infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, many of the concepts apply to families with children of all ages.

### Why Was Your Journey Together Created?

Life is a journey, and the journey is unique for each family. For some families the journey is smooth—good health, sufficient resources, and the love and care of relatives and friends. For other families it is more difficult—physical or mental health problems, the inability to meet basic family needs, and weak support systems. Sadly, for far too many children and families, the obstacles they confront are significant and jeopardize the child’s development and the family’s healthy functioning. Consider that in 2012 one in five children were living in poverty; more than one in nine children lacked adequate food; and a child was abused or neglected every 47 seconds, with infants and toddlers as the most likely victims (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014). In addition to harmful effects that these risks pose to children during their youth, the groundbreaking public health study on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has connected childhood adversities to many long-term, negative outcomes into adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998).

Clearly, the journey through life for too many families is fraught with risk and adversity. No matter the circumstances, however, parents and children are on this journey together and equipping families to cope successfully with life’s challenges is essential for their future happiness and success.



The goal of YJT is just that—to provide parents\* with the knowledge and skills that promote resilience, and help family members better cope with life’s challenges and reach their full potential.

Specifically, YJT focuses on helping parents to:

1. nurture children’s social and emotional competencies including attachment/relationships, self-regulation, and initiative;
2. strengthen their own social and emotional competencies; and
3. learn parenting practices that promote children’s overall safety and well-being.

YJT has been written with a specific focus on those children and families who face significant risk and adversity. The development process used to create YJT was both research- and consumer-informed and included:

- researching and incorporating trauma-informed practices;
- reviewing literature specific to children and families involved in child welfare services;
- pilot testing the curriculum with families involved in the child welfare system; and
- incorporating feedback from a team of cross-disciplinary experts serving at-risk children and families.

The Child Welfare League of America’s *National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare* (2013) articulates a vision that all children will grow up safely, in loving families and supportive communities, with everything they need to flourish. Devereux shares this vision and creates resilience-building resources to support professionals in their efforts to make this vision a reality. Effective parent education programs, like YJT, have been linked to more positive outcomes for children and families (Samuelson, 2010). A growing body of resilience research supports the hopeful and encouraging message that many factors linked to positive outcomes for children are ones that can be nurtured and strengthened and are part of a family’s ordinary experience (Masten, 2001). *Your Journey Together* shows parents how to use these ordinary, everyday routines, activities and interactions as resilience-building opportunities.

## A FOCUS ON RESILIENCE

Resilience is the process by which individuals are able to obtain positive adaptation in the context of risk or adversity (Masten, 2014). People who have shown resilience have experienced risk in their lives, such as abuse or neglect, poverty, or natural disasters. These and other risk factors are known to increase the likelihood that an individual will experience negative outcomes related to their health, development, or well-being (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005). Despite experiencing this risk or adversity, individuals described as resilient have done well either in the midst of, or following, these negative experiences. They show better than expected outcomes in their development and functioning.

The study of resilience was strongly influenced by World War II. A number of pioneering resilience researchers were themselves directly impacted by World War II, including Michael Rutter, Norman Garmezy, and Emmy Werner (Masten, 2014). For example, Michael Rutter was one of many British

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\*Note: Please note that when the term *parents* is used throughout the guide, it refers to adults who have responsibility for parenting young children.

children sent by their parents to the United States to escape a possible invasion and bombings. During his time in the United States, he lived with a foster family for a number of years before returning to England. These early experiences shared by Michael Rutter and others led them to study various risk factors and their influences on children's later outcomes. In this work, they realized that many children were thriving despite experiencing extreme hardships. They overcame the adversity they faced and went on to become competent and successful adults. These children were showing resilience.

A key finding from this work is that resilience is common and arises from basic human resources and protective factors (Masten, 2001). Ann Masten, a well-known resilience researcher, refers to resilience as “ordinary magic.” Resilience is not a rare occurrence that results from extraordinary talents, instead it is common and results from factors such as having a close relationship with a caring and competent adult, safe and effective schools and communities, and belief in yourself and motivation to succeed. These basic protective factors help at-risk children achieve greater success than might have been possible if they did not have these characteristics.

However, many children who experience adversity do not have these basic resources, opportunities, and experiences. In fact, many families who will experience YJT live in high-risk, high-stress environments. They may experience physical or mental health problems, substance abuse, poverty, abuse and neglect, and for the children, disrupted educational experiences due to frequent changes of schools. For these children and families protective factors must be provided or developed. Fortunately, many protective factors can be promoted through explicit, intentional skill-building that can occur during everyday interactions and activities with families (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). By directly promoting these factors, parents and children can gain skills to help them overcome the adversity they face.

## Protective Factors

Individuals who demonstrate resilience tend to have something in their lives that helps them overcome challenges and move on in positive ways. The strengths and resources that help children and adults overcome the risk factors in their lives are protective factors. Research has found that protective factors can be found in three areas (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005):

- ***your environment*** — the world around you (like a caring community, access to health care, high quality schools, and other needed resources),
- ***your family*** — those who matter the most to you (like a loving, consistent caregiver, or extended family), and
- ***yourselves*** — your abilities, health, and inner strengths (like being a good problem-solver or a creative person).

All of the above types of protective factors are important. Yet, the ones that are found within you are the ones you can work to strengthen, despite risk in the environment or family. The Devereux Center for Resilient Children has identified and focuses on three key protective factors found in research on resilient children:

- Attachment and Relationships
- Initiative
- Self-Regulation

## How Is Social and Emotional Development Related to Resilience?

Social development refers to the ability to engage in positive, effective interactions with other people. Social skills include things like the ability to share, cooperate, negotiate, and take turns. Emotional development focuses on emotions and the ability to recognize, name, and express feelings in appropriate ways. Emotional skills include the ability to identify and name feelings such as frustration, anger, and happiness in ourselves and others. Social and emotional competency or skills are a very important category of within-person protective factors. Many of the YJT lessons focus on the development of social and emotional skills. Children and adults who have strong social and emotional skills are more likely to be resilient.

## The Background Story behind Your Journey Together

In 1999, Devereux created the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program as a resource for early childhood educators to promote resilience in young children. A nationally standardized, reliable, and valid assessment of young children's within-child protective factors, the DECA, serves as the centerpiece of the DECA Program's resilience-focused assessment and planning process. Since its inception, the DECA Program has positively impacted millions of young children, primarily through supporting early childhood educators in planning resilience-building strategies for children based on their DECA results.

Based on the success of the DECA Program, in 2007, Devereux and Heartland for Children, the lead child welfare agency in Polk, Hardee and Highlands counties, Florida, partnered to modify the DECA Program approach specifically for professionals serving families in the child welfare system. It is well known that children in the child welfare system face significant risk and adversity, with between one-half and three-fourths of children entering foster care exhibiting behavioral or social and emotional problems warranting mental health care (Landsverk, Burns, Stambaugh, & Rolls Reutz, 2009). Based on these sobering statistics, YJT was created with a specific focus on families involved in the child welfare system.

After collaborating with various stakeholders in the child welfare system as well as examining the research in child development, resilience, child welfare, and trauma, the modifications to the DECA Program were made and resulted in the creation of *Your Journey Together* (YJT). Beginning in 2008, YJT resources were used in pilot sites across the country to train over 250 foster parents and more than 100 staff working with families in the child welfare system. Every foster parent trained agreed or strongly agreed that the training met their interests and needs, that the materials were useful, and that they would be able to use the knowledge and skills offered in YJT.

Preliminary outcome data from field-testing elements of the YJT curriculum suggest that children who receive YJT interventions show increases in protective factors and decreases in behavioral concerns from pretest to posttest as measured by foster parent ratings on the Devereux Early Childhood Assessments.

When YJT is being used with children and families involved in the child welfare system, the expectation is that the skills and knowledge gained by parents will increase the likelihood of reaching the goals of 1) increasing permanency; 2) decreasing disruption rates; 3) supporting reunification; and 4) giving children and adults tools for coping with risk. For more information about the importance of sensitivity to trauma for families involved in child welfare, please visit [www.YourJourneyTogether.org](http://www.YourJourneyTogether.org).

## SAMPLE STEPPING STONE

THE YOUR JOURNEY TOGETHER CURRICULUM IS  
COMPRISED OF 29 SCRIPTED LESSONS TO SHARE  
WITH FAMILIES. THESE LESSONS ARE CALLED  
STEPPING STONES.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A SAMPLE STEPPING STONE  
FROM THE RESILIENCE MODULE

# Stepping Stone

# 1.5

## Wearing Resilience Lenses

**Purpose:** Parents will learn that every experience in their child's daily life is an opportunity to strengthen their child's protective factors and resilience. During this activity, parents will reflect on ways to promote attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation using something that can be found in most homes—a table and chairs.

**Time:** 15 minutes

<b>Materials:</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Leave-Behind</b>	<b>Optional</b>
	Handout 1.5	N/A	Dollar store glasses Paper Glue Scissors Magazines



## KEY CONCEPTS FOR THE COACH

When we see everyday experiences with children as opportunities to promote their protective factors, we call that “wearing resilience lenses.” When we look at all experiences with children through the lenses of attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation we have many opportunities every day for promoting their social and emotional health.

### Step-by-Step Lesson for Parents

#### Opening Talking Points

- **Last time** we talked about the three protective factors—attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation—and saw examples of the different ways children practice them in everyday experiences.
- **For your leave-behind activity**, you were going to watch a TV show or movie, or read a book with your child and notice the ways the characters demonstrated attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation. How did that go? You were also going to review the family guide about resilience and protective factors. Did you have a favorite part?  
[Allow time for discussion.]
- **Today** we are going to talk about how to see every experience you have with your child as an opportunity to strengthen “within” protective factors and resilience.

#### Lesson

##### 1. Tell parents about wearing resilience lenses.

- We don't need to buy particular things or toys in order to help our children practice their protective factors. We can notice many opportunities in everyday experiences with our children that will support their attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation.
- When we see everything we do with our children as an opportunity to strengthen their protective factors, we call that “wearing our resilience lenses” because we are looking at our child through the lenses of attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation.
- For example, can you think of something you do every day that helps your child build an attachment with you or another important person in your child's life?  
[Allow time for discussion.]  
Some examples might be, “I have her call her grandma to talk on the phone,” or “I rub his back and give him a kiss every night at bedtime.” *(continued)*

## Step-by-Step Lesson for Parents (Continued)

### 2. Practice with Nikki at the table.

#### (Handout 1.5)

- This is Nikki. She is 4 years old. This is the table and chairs in her kitchen.
- Let's think of ways we could help Nikki practice her attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation at the table and chairs in her kitchen.
- Can you think of how we could support Nikki's attachment/relationships at the table and chairs?

[Allow time for discussion and/or work time using handout.]

Some examples might be to have her talk about her day or play a game with her at the table.

- Can you think of how we could support Nikki's initiative at the table and chairs?

[Allow time for discussion and/or work time using handout.]

Some examples might be letting her choose what to bring to the table to play with while you cook dinner, or making cookies together.

- Can you think of how we could support Nikki's self-regulation at the table and chairs?

[Allow time for discussion and/or work time using handout.]

Some examples might be helping her to use manners and stay in her chair while eating, or sharing the crayons with her brother while drawing at the table.

### 3. Wrap up lesson and discuss next steps.

- **Today** we saw how important it is to put on our resilience lenses. We also saw how looking through resilience lenses at everyday experiences and activities can help us strengthen our child's protective factors.
- There are so many opportunities in our daily lives to do this with our children, such as getting dressed, doing simple chores, riding in the car, taking a bath, or walking to the park.
- **Next time**, we are going to talk about how important it is to recognize the strengths we have, as well as the strengths of our children.

### Leave-Behind Activity

**Look around your home** – Explore your home together with a friend (or YJT coach). Look for things that could be used to support your child's attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation. Emphasize how even the basic items in a home can provide opportunities to build protective factors, such as the sink, the couch, the front porch, or some toys. Ask parents to make a commitment to try at least one new idea each day.



## Optional Enhancement Activities

***Make resilience lenses together*** – Ask parents to decorate a pair of dollar store sunglasses with their child. They can decorate a pair for themselves and for their child. Tell parents to put those lenses on several times a day for a week and think about how what they are doing in that moment could help to promote their child's attachment/relationships, initiative, or self-regulation. Good times to practice wearing lenses would be while having a meal together, reading a book together, playing a game together, or getting ready for bed.

***Protective factors everywhere: Looking through magazines*** – Cut pictures out of magazines that show children practicing their attachment/relationships, initiative, or self-regulation and have parents make a protective factor collage with their child.

***Note to coach:*** The child will not need to know about attachment/relationships, initiative, and self-regulation. They will simply have the fun experience of creating the collage with the parents (cutting, gluing, and enjoying each other's company!).

## Put on Your Resilience Lenses

Record your ideas below.  
What simple things can be done at this table in order to . . .



Support Nikki's Attachment/  
Relationships?

Support Nikki's Initiative?



Support Nikki's Self-Regulation?