

Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)

Research & Evaluation Program: Description & Results Summary

OVERVIEW

Since 2002, **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** has been engaged in an ambitious, multi-phase research and evaluation program as part of the development of evidence-based programs and resources to support resilience and well-being in adults who live and work with young children under the age of eight. More than **6,000 service providers and parents** have participated in RIRO's skills training programs.

The cornerstone of RIRO's programs is **training adults in resiliency skills they can role model or introduce directly in daily interactions with young children.**

Both the 12-hour **RIRO Resiliency Skills Training** for service providers and **Bounce Back & Thrive!**, the 10-session activity-based version for parents, focus on **enhancing relationships** as well as supporting **self-regulation** (emotion and behavior), **executive functioning/problem-solving, agency/mastery motivation** and **meaning making** (optimism, participation, hope).



The skills training content is consistent with the framework of world-renown resilience researcher, Anne Masten (2009), and the work of other leading investigators in the fields of resilience, positive psychology and brain development. In the context of caring **relationships** and **role modeling**, RIRO's programs teach adults **"3Rs of Resilience"** – **relaxation** and **reflection** skills to help them **respond** instead of simply reacting to challenging situations.

RIRO Resiliency Skills Training for service providers is an authorized developmental adaptation of key content from the resiliency skills training programs at the University of Pennsylvania based on more than 30 years of research by Dr. Martin Seligman and colleagues. Their programs for adults and children/youth eight years and older, have been well-researched and show positive outcomes which have led to their implementation around the world.



The effectiveness of RIRO's two resiliency skills training programs is **evaluated using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods** including: formal structured surveys and scales, structured interviews, trainer/facilitator evaluations, focus groups, as well as participant stories in written and video format. **The evaluation goal has been to determine if the results from the original pilot study could be replicated with different populations.** The nested design has enabled the results of each phase to inform the next phases of program development, evaluation and research.

EVALUATION PROGRAM PHASES

Phase 1 (2002-2003) – Model adaptation and testing – multi-site pilot project to adapt University of Pennsylvania's (Seligman) resiliency skills training for use with service providers working with young children in child care.

Phase 2 (2003-2006) – Multi-site and sector replication using revised RIRO Resiliency Skills Training Program based on findings of Phase 1. Testing of multiple delivery models. Development of website, curriculum and video resources.

Phase 3 (2006-2009) – Large scale evaluation of RIRO Resiliency Skills Training Program and development/piloting/evaluation of **RIRO Trainers' "Intensive" Program** based on findings of Phases 1 & 2.

Phase 4 (2009) – "RIRO-Wellington Reflective Leadership Training Pilot Project" – Multi-site pilot project and formal evaluation of an enhanced version of RIRO Resiliency Skills Training plus working sessions offered to leaders of child care centres. This program helped leaders mentor their staff to create a "culture of resilience" as a framework to guide policies, practices, hiring, professional development and resources in child care centres at multiple levels – i.e., children, staff, supervisors, parents, boards and community. Based on findings of Phases 1, 2 & 3.

Phase 5 (2010-2012) – "Resilient Parents – Resilient Kids" – Multi-site pilot project to **adapt RIRO Resiliency Skills Training for use with parents of young children** experiencing significant challenges and formally evaluate its impact (**Bounce Back & Thrive!**). Creation and evaluation of public information workshop, group and individual parent-child activities, videos, print and online resources and parent website to support resilience in children and families. Based on findings of Phases 1 to 4.

Phase 6 (2012-present) – Formal ongoing evaluation project of the impact of *Bounce Back & Thrive!* (BBT) resiliency skills training programs for parents facilitated by authorized BBT Trainers in sites across Canada. Based on findings of Phases 1 to 5. Year 1 evaluation (2012-2013) is complete. Findings from Year 2 will be available in late Fall 2014.

Ongoing evaluation of RIRO Skills Training Program (2004-present) – Evaluation of service providers' satisfaction with the training, rating of training content usefulness and delivery as well as a structured follow-up email survey about their use of the skills and the impact of the training on themselves and the children they serve.

RESULTS of PROGRAM EVALUATION and RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Results from all six phases (2002-2014) as well as ongoing evaluation confirm the key findings of the original pilot project. Each phase consistently demonstrates that *adults use the skills regularly in daily life and actively model them with children around them.*

Summary of combined results for six phases and ongoing evaluation

The results of RIRO's Phase 1-6 pilot projects and ongoing evaluation of RIRO's resiliency skills training programs, offered by RIRO Trainers across Canada from 2002 to 2014, show **considerable consistency in key areas** despite participants from different populations (service providers – frontline and leaders in multiple sectors as well as parents) and geographically diverse locations (from large urban at-risk neighbourhoods to small northern communities). Across these projects, **1,789 people have completed RIRO's evaluation measures** (except where indicated).

When the **results are combined**, the **key findings** are as follows:

Use of resiliency skills and satisfaction with training

- 97% of service provider respondents report they **use the skills training regularly at work** ($n=1549$).
- 93% of service providers say they **use the skills outside work** ($n=1549$).
- 97% of parents completing the BBT skills training program **use the skills at home**; 61% are using the skills daily ($n=241$).
- Both service providers and parents **rate the training as "very useful"** (mean rating on 5-point scale = 4.5; $n=1789$)
- Service providers and parents report they are **"very satisfied" with the training** (mean=4.4 on 5-point scale; $n=1274$ from Phases 4 to 6 and ongoing RIRO evaluation).
- 96% say they would **recommend the training to others** ($n=354$; from Phases 1, 2, 3 & 6).

Impact of resiliency skills training on adults

- The **major impact** on participants:
 - **Become calmer**/reduce stress
 - **Gain perspective**
 - **Challenge beliefs/thoughts**
 - **Problem-solve better**
 - **Improve communication** with adults and children
- Service providers and parents report a significant **increase in knowledge about building resilience** (pre-post training for Phases 1, 4, 5 & 6) (mean change = 2 points on 5-point scale, $n=515$).
- They report they **have a better understanding of their own response to challenges** (mean = 4.2 on 5-point scale, $n=1683$).
- They also say they **have a better understanding of other adults** (mean = 4.0 on 5-point scale, $n=1683$).
- **Parents report** they (mean ratings for 3 items below range from 4.3 to 4.7 on 5-point scale; $n=238$):
 - **believe in themselves more**
 - **find positive things to appreciate** (especially in their children)
 - **feel more hopeful and optimistic.**(These same outcomes are also mentioned in responses by service providers on qualitative measures.)
- Parents also experience a statistically significant **positive change** in:
 - **attitudes related to resilience, children and parenting** (on Bounce Back subscale, $p<.001$, $n=225$, Phases 5-6)
 - **depression scores** (on DASS-21 Depression subscale, $p<.001$, $n=119$, Phase 6)
 - **stress scores** (on DASS-21 Stress subscale, $p<.001$, $n=119$, Phase 6)

"The biggest thing I still use from the BBT group is to step back for a minute when I am upset so I can respond instead of react. Instead of that outburst I used to have, I find I can calm down and think before I react. I figure my patience with my daughter has increased by 90%." (a parent)

- Parents with the **least resilient attitudes to start showed the greatest improvement** in their scores by the end of the skills training (*Bounce Back Subscale, $p < .001$, for both Phases 5 & 6; $n = 106$ & 109 respectively for Phases 5 & 6*).
- Parents with the **highest scores on the DASS-21 depression and stress subscales to start showed the most improvement in their scores by the end** of the skills training (*both statistically significant at $p < .01$, $n = 119$, Phase 6*)
- And **greater positive attitude change in parents is significantly related to greater knowledge about resilience and more role modeling of the skills with children** (*$p < .05$ for both, $n = 106$, Phase 5*).

Impact of skills at work

- Service providers and leaders report the skills help them at work:
 - **Reduce job stress**
 - **Support teamwork**
 - **Improve communication**
 - **Promote reflective practice.**
- Leaders also report they **feel less burned out and stressed**, have gained **greater leadership skills** and are able to **mentor staff more effectively**.
- Leaders said the skills increased their **ability to use resilience as a framework in developing programming, resources, policies and personnel practices** at their centres.

"RIRO skills training is important for self-growth, self-evaluation, and understanding of our own behaviors. It gives us tools to understand the behaviors of others and assist them in developing their resiliency."
 –HT (manager, child care program)

How skills help adults help children

- Adults report the skills **help them understand children better** (*mean rating: 4.3 on 5-point scale; $n = 1683$*).
- 91% say the skills help them **support positive changes in children** (*$n = 1755$*).
- 97% of adults say they **role model the skills with children** (*$n = 1787$*).
- The **top ways the skills help adults help children**:
 - **Greater understanding /empathy with children**
 - **Improved relationships**
 - **More positive attitudes about challenging behavior** and children's uniqueness
 - **Better able to see strengths and positives** in children
 - **Better able to assess children's thinking and behavior**
 - **See that "Calmer adults = Calmer children"**

Impact of resiliency skills on children

- The **top changes service providers and parents observe in children** exposed to the resiliency skills:
 - **Calm down** more easily/greater patience
 - **Problem solve** more effectively
 - **See mistakes as OK**
 - **More confidence/try new things**
 - **Ask for help** appropriately
 - **Persevere**
 - **Empathize/help others**
- 51% of service providers and 50% of parents already **observe children using the following skills with peers** (*$n = 1787$*):
 - **Empathize and help others to calm down**
 - **Help others to challenge their beliefs**
 - **Help others to generate alternatives and problem solve**
- 50% of the respondents in Phases 1, 5 & 6 report they **have seen children use the skills with other adults** (*$n = 265$*).



As a result of the skills training programs, both adults and children experience **more positive relationships, greater calmness and less stress, increased confidence and perseverance, greater ability to "re-think" challenging situations before responding and a more positive and hopeful outlook.**

Based on nearly 1,800 respondents participating in the impact evaluations of Phases 1 to 6 and the ongoing evaluation, the combined results provide strong support for the efficacy of RIRO's resiliency skills training programs in building the capacity for resilience and well-being in service providers, parents and young children in diverse settings and communities.

Evidence-informed resources to support a “culture of resilience”

In addition to the six phases, in 2009-10, RIRO conducted a project funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services to promote evidence-informed practice and the adoption of a resilience framework in services for children and youth. This synthesis review of resilience knowledge through formal literature review as well as key informant interviews with youth, parents, service providers, researchers and policy makers is summarized in the formal report, *Resilience: Successful Navigation through Significant Threat* (www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-reports.htm).



As part of the same project, an *Annotated Compendium of Resilience Measures* was compiled to aid researchers and organizations evaluate child/youth programs and services (www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-reports.htm).

RIRO’s skills training programs, resources and dissemination model also support the development of a “culture of resilience” by encouraging the creation of **community resilience hubs** where service providers, parents and communities can access information and training so they can thrive, not just survive, in today’s stressful world.

Based on results of RIRO’s evaluation activities, **two websites** have been developed – one for service providers and the other for parents. They offer **free online resiliency resources** – articles, reports, college curriculum modules, resiliency guidebook, quarterly e-newsletter, videos, tip sheets, posters, parent-child activities and more. They help skills training participants integrate their training as well as provide a **vital and unique clearinghouse** for people around the world wanting to learn more about building resilience and well-being in young children and families (go to www.reachinginreachingout.com or www.reachinginreachingout.com/parents).