

Military Youth and Young Adult Resiliency

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The UAA College of Nursing capstone project has become well known for the contributions that students make to the community. It is a project that I had been looking forward to even before I began nursing school, and I couldn't wait to be a part of it. What I didn't expect was the intense coordination and strain that a project of this magnitude would have on my nine-person team. Grasping the concepts of resiliency and who our population was took time and effort, and a lot of communication.

We were handed a blank slate with a lot of information and were then asked to produce positive teaching tools to help young enlisted military members become more resilient in their everyday lives. The fundamental idea of resiliency was initially much larger in scope than we could grasp. It appeared as though each of us understood resiliency differently, and finding a common ground as to what and how we could employ teaching tools proved to be a complex challenge. I was grateful to have a talent for grasping and communicating concepts. As the leader of our group, I spent most of our meetings reflecting and rephrasing concepts between members of our group, the professor, and our key informants. I relied heavily on my teammates to make sure our ideas and information was organized, while they relied on me to keep everyone on point, making sure the work we were doing would lead us all in the right direction.

The key informants from the Alaska National Guard do exceptional work, and we were humbled by the time they took to teach us about the struggles they face with their young enlisted soldiers. We spoke with social workers, chaplains, educators, and members of the sexual assault response team. Lowering rates of sexual assault, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse encompasses their jobs, and yet they were asking *us* for help, for a different perspective. The viewpoint of the public health nurse was missing from their approach, so they welcomed our input and were eager to learn.

After our literature review, meeting with key informants, and surveying soldiers, we began to form a picture that was more tangible. Due to scheduling conflicts, we knew we would be teaching these concepts to high school NJROTC students instead of soldiers, but these students still fell into the category of young adult. Knowing our audience gave us a sense of direction and an understanding of how to grab their attention and to teach concepts that they could use in their daily lives. We reached this understanding very late into our project, and were then able to quickly grasp the need to teach these students how to cope.

We were both equally frustrated and motivated by this realization – motivated by the epiphany and direction, but dismayed because teaching coping skills alone seemed to leave out so many concepts that resiliency comprises. We also realized that these young adults were more than likely overwhelmed with the amount of information and stress that they deal with on a daily basis.

Nine people can make quite a large presentation, but nine overachievers who work well together can make a fantastic presentation. We expanded our teaching strategy to include coping skills, bystander awareness, and discussion about what stressors and coping strategies these young adults have on a daily basis. Our multimedia and interactive approaches were well received by the students and teachers. The interactions we had were incredibly positive and our challenges during the learning process helped us become more familiar with our own resiliency

as well as the resiliency of our own families. Most of us found ourselves teaching our children how to be more resilient, and altering some of our coping skills to be more positive and effective in our own lives. As a group, we founded new friendships that the previous year of study together had not forged.

I am incredibly proud of my team and how well we supported each other. These women saw their strengths and acknowledged their weaknesses, and we stepped in to fill those gaps where we could, so that no one was overburdened. When I felt as though I was not handling the agendas and documentation well as leader, another teammate stepped in, because her talent was in the details. This relieved me of stressful work I am normally challenged by and allowed me to utilize my talent motivating and communicating. This project will always be a proud moment for me as a student, as a nurse, and as a friend and teammate.

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