



Overcoming—Rather Than Being Overcome

By Wilson W. Grant, M.D.

Day-to-day experience as well as scientific observation points out children, particularly those with developmental disabilities, exposed to the same degree of stress or frustration can be affected differently. Some are stymied and squelched by the obstacles in their path. Others thrive as if the obstacles were more stimulus than a roadblock. Many observers have asked why.

Several years ago Peter Wyman, Ph.D. and associates evaluated children exposed to major life-stress. They interviewed both stress-resilient and stress-affected children assessing perceptions of their care giving environments, peer relationships, and themselves. The study identified four variables that correctly classified 74% of the children into either stress-resilient or stress-affected group. Stress-resilient children, compared to the stress-affected children, reported more:

- +positive relationships with primary caregivers (i.e., parents)
- +stable family environments
- +consistent family discipline practices

This study points out again the extreme importance of a positive parent-child relationship in helping the child overcome obstacles. Children with ADHD, learning disabilities, or physical impairments do have plenty of reasons to be stressed. Many will grow into healthy, well-adjusted adults in spite of their difficulties. Stable families, applying consistent, loving discipline in an affirming spirit greatly enhance the child's chances of success.