



# Northern Illinois University

Emotional Resiliency Among Athletic Trainers:  
Experiences and Strategies to Maintain Psychological Well-Being

Illinois Athletic Trainers' Association  
2019 State Meeting and Clinical Symposium  
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# Conflict of Interest Disclosure

- Nothing relevant to disclose



# Objectives



- Describe emotional resilience (ER)
- Explain why ER is an important and necessary characteristic for athletic training professionals
- Examine preliminary research findings on ER in athletic training practice
- Identify the characteristics of emotionally resilient people
- Clarify how ER can be bolstered from a personal standpoint
- Discuss practical suggestions to increase one's awareness of their ER
- Engage in practical strategies to enhance one's ER
- Identify future directions for research and practice focused on ER in athletic training

# Emotional Resilience



- “...ability of an individual to adjust to adversity, maintain equilibrium, retain some sense of control over their environment, and continue to move in a positive manner.”<sup>1</sup>
- “protective mechanism that operates in the face of negative stressors.”<sup>2</sup>
- ability to navigate changes successfully and maintain good mental health by being psychologically flexible.<sup>3</sup>
- Emotional resilience is the ability to positively adjust to an adverse, stressful or difficult situation and maintain one’s good mental health.<sup>4</sup>

# Why ER for ATs?

## Stress Experiences



- The profession of athletic training has been characterized as extremely challenging with a great number of occupational stressors.<sup>5</sup>
- Work-life (or Work-family) imbalance or conflict<sup>6</sup>
  - Time demands (face time<sup>7</sup>) – long or irregular hours
  - Job demands - competing demands and expectations
    - patient care,
    - supervision of athletic training students
    - administrative paperwork
    - communication with coaches and members of the sports medicine staff
  - Lack of sufficient personal time
  - Work setting<sup>8,9</sup>

# Why ER for ATs?

## Stress Experiences



- Role strain<sup>7,10,11,12</sup> - *role overload*, role conflict, and role incongruity
- Lack of perceived value – compensation, staffing
- Lack of promotion or advancement<sup>13,14,15</sup>
- Personality – neuroticism<sup>18</sup>

# Emotional Resilience Among ATs



- All Settings<sup>20</sup>
  - Mean resilience score  $78.83 \pm 11.48$
  - 17.9% of ATs sampled were highly resilient
  - A significant positive correlation between age and years of experience as an athletic trainer and the emotional resilience score
- Secondary School Settings<sup>19</sup>
  - Mean resilience score  $79.84 \pm 11.38$
  - 14.1% of ATs were highly resilient

*\*A score of 82 or higher is indicative of positive resilience; 92 or higher is indicative of high resilience*

# Why ER for ATCs?



- Many ATs report occupational stress and burnout (particularly emotional exhaustion)<sup>4,16,17,18</sup>
  - Burnout – physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, isolation
- Research has shown that few AT's report high levels of emotional resilience<sup>19</sup>
- Developing emotional resilience may allow ATs to persist in their roles and benefit from long and successful careers



# Characteristics of Resilient People



- Emotional resilience is the ability to positively adjust to an adverse, stressful or difficult situation and maintain one's good mental health.<sup>4</sup>
- Think / Share
  - Reflect on your experience/personal interactions
  - Think of someone whom you consider resilient:
    - What characteristics did they possess that allow him/her to be resilient?
    - What things did he/she “do” to help deal with adversity?

# Characteristics of Resilient People



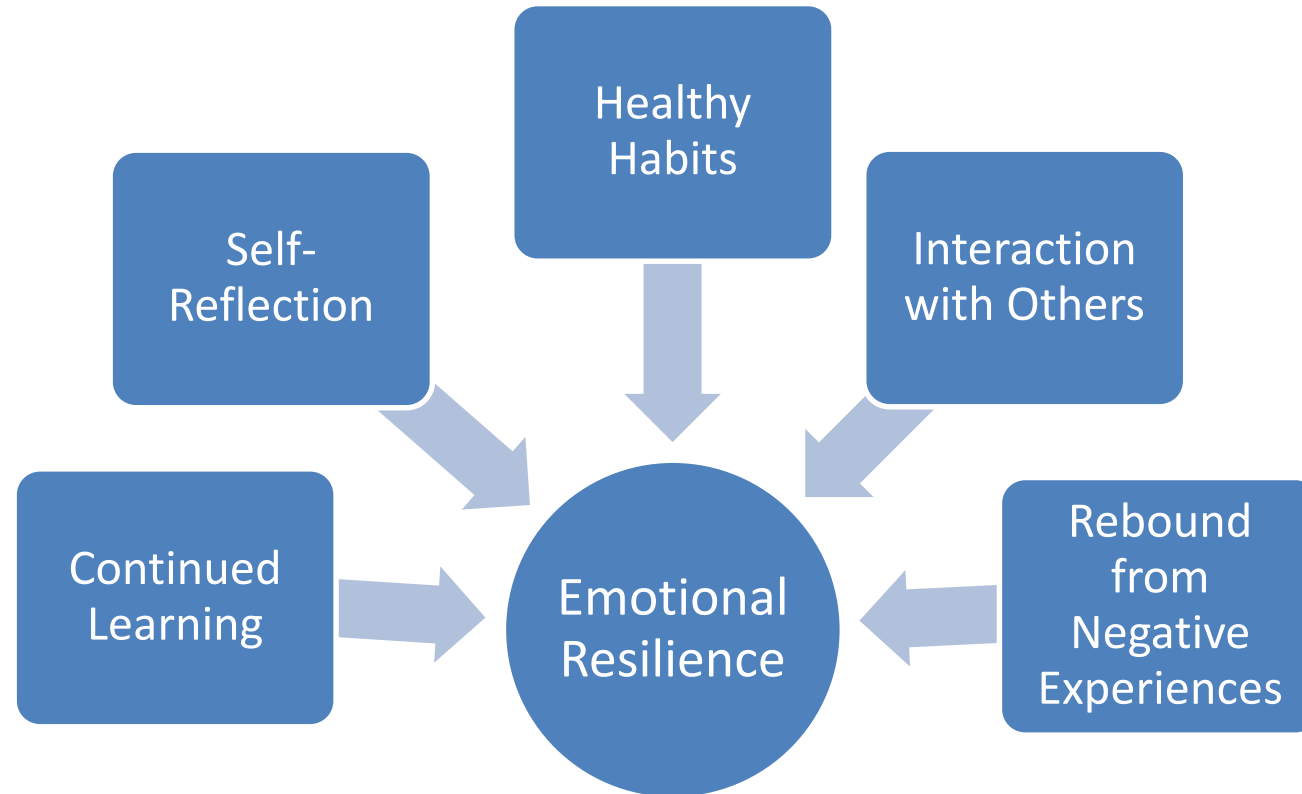
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Emotional Awareness
- Perseverance
- Internal Locus of Control
- Optimism
- Support
- Perspective
- Sense of Humor
- Healthy Habits

# Importance of Emotional Resilience



- Individuals who develop emotional resilience are able to prepare for and contend with emotionally challenging experiences and skillfully deal with tough times
- Resilience can offset the adversity we experience
- Resilience can be learned.<sup>21</sup>

# What Can I do to increase my ER?



# How Resilient am I?



## Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

Please respond to each item by marking <u>one box per row</u>		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BRS 1	I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
BRS 2	I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
BRS 3	It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
BRS 4	It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
BRS 5	I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
BRS 6	I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

**Scoring:** Add the responses varying from 1-5 for all six items giving a range from 6-30. Divide the total sum by the total number of questions answered.

**My score:** \_\_\_\_\_ item average / 6

# BRS Scores



- 1.00 - 2.99 – Low resilience
- 3.00 - 4.30 – Normal resilience
- 4.31 – 5.00 – High resilience

# Developing your Emotional Resilience



- Self-esteem
  - Remind yourself of and believe in your strengths and your accomplishments
- Sense of purpose
  - Spend time on things that matter to you
- Emotional Awareness
  - Be mindful of yours (and others') emotional responses
  - Use in your communications with others

# Developing your Emotional Resilience



- Perseverance
  - Set and work on goals
  - Use effective coping strategies
- Internal Locus of Control
  - Focus on the things that you have direct control over
- Optimism
  - Challenge yourself to see the positives or value in situations



# Developing your Emotional Resilience



- Support
  - Make sure that you're part of a support network that satisfies your needs
- Perspective
  - Re-frame the way that you look at/feel about a situation
- Sense of Humor
  - *Self-enhancing* and *affiliative* vs. self-defeating and passive-aggressive
- Healthy Habits
  - PA, rest, and responsible nutrition

# Developing a plan to increase my ER



- What can I do to improve my emotional resilience?
- Goal
  - Identify an area of focus to become more resilient
- Action Plan
  - What specifically will I do to address this?
  - Examples
    - Take time to reflect on circumstances and reframe the issues in a positive manner
    - Carve out “me” time each week to reflect on the week’s challenges and prepare for the week to come
- Manage expectations

# The Nature of Emotional Resilience in AT: Where to go from here?



- Future Directions
  - Examine perceived emotional resilience among ATs in various practice settings
  - Examine effects of emotional resilience training on emotional health outcomes
    - Burnout
    - Stress
    - Depression
- Examine effects of emotional resilience on work factors:
  - Intent to leave
  - Job satisfaction
  - Commitment
  - Work-life/family conflict
- The role of AT programs in developing resilience

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**Thank You!**

**Questions?**

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