

they married, what illnesses and injuries they suffered as children, and things that happened to their parents when they were in school.

Lazarus came to some interesting conclusions. “For kids who knew more about their families, the events of 9/11 brought their families closer together. It was helpful to them later on when they faced difficulties,” she said. “There is something different”

about the children who could answer most of the twenty questions developed by Duke and Fivush several years ago. “They are more connected to their families. You can tell. There is a sense of cohesion in their families,” Lazarus said.

Furthermore, according to Lazarus, families that are adaptive and supportive of one another can help their kids overcome obstacles such as divorce or the death of a loved one. And families that tell each other stories, either over dinner or during a walk in the park, are more likely to have resilient children who can weather the ups and downs of everyday life.

Duke said these findings are important because “if we can find out what contributes to resilience, we can go back to kids being harmed

Families that tell each other stories are more likely to have resilient children.



by disadvantaged backgrounds and help them become more resilient.” Resilience has become a major variable in child development because it is not possible to prevent terrible things from happening, Duke said. “We are all helpless in that

regard, so we have to be able to raise kids who can bounce back from whatever happens,” he said.

“From our study of family narratives, and Robyn’s research on how families tell stories, we know that families tell good stories and bad stories. They talk about happy times and sad times. And the families that tell bad stories seem to be at an advantage,” Duke said. “The reason seems to be that the kids have heard about terrible things that have happened to their families, but they hear about them in the safety of their house. And they learn that after terrible things happened, the family got through whatever it was.”

Thus, families that talked about what happened on 9/11 were usually able to put the events into perspective, emphasize to their children that they were safe, and reassure them that together they would get through it, Duke said. “That’s why these stories seem to be real important. The children get the message that they too can overcome obstacles. They become more resilient.”



Amber Lazarus



CHILDREN WHO COULD ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS APPEAR TO BE CLOSER TO THEIR FAMILIES.

DO YOU KNOW

- Where your parents grew up and how they met?
- Where some of your grandparents grew up and how they met?
- Where your parents were married?
- The national background of your family (such as English, German, Russian, etc.)?
- The source for your name, and what was going on in your family when you were born?
- Things that were going on when your brothers or sisters were born?
- Which person in your family you most look like and act like?
- Some illnesses and injuries your parents experienced before you were born?
- Some lessons your parents learned from good or bad experiences?
- Some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were at school?
- Some jobs that your parents had when they were young?
- Some awards that your parents earned when they were young?
- The names of the schools your parents went to?
- About a relative whose face “froze” in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough?

