

Michael Ungar, Ph.D.
**Sample Presentations for Mental Health and Human Resource
Professionals, Educators, Parents, and Caregivers**

About the Presenter:

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Dr. Michael Ungar's Bio

Michael Ungar, Ph.D., is a Family Therapist and Professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience. Since 2002, Dr. Ungar has directed the Resilience Research Centre, designing multisite longitudinal research and evaluation projects in collaboration with organizations such as The World Bank, The Red Cross, and national public health agencies. With over \$10M in funded research, Dr. Ungar's clinical work and research spans more than a dozen low, middle, and high-income countries, with much of that work focused on the resilience of marginalized children and families, and adult populations experiencing mental health challenges. Dr. Ungar has published over 200 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on the subject of resilience and is the author of 16 books for mental health professionals, researchers and parents. These include *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success*, a book for adults experiencing stress at work and at home, *Working with Children and Youth With Complex Needs*, a book for professionals, and *Multisystemic Resilience: Adaptation and Transformation in Contexts of Change*, an edited volume with contributors from a dozen diverse disciplines. His blog, *Nurturing Resilience*, can be read on *Psychology Today's* website.

To view a sample of Dr. Ungar's work, please go to his website www.michaelungar.com.

Workshops for Mental Health and Human Resource Professionals Working with Children, Families and Adults in the Workplace (Half-day/Full-day/Multi-day)

Child/Youth/Family Focus

Workshop 1: Working with Children, Youth and Families with Complex Needs: Skills to Build Resilience

Summary and Objectives:

When working with children and adolescents from emotionally turbulent or physically dangerous backgrounds, and their families, we often focus too narrowly on the individual's *complex needs and problems*---like delinquency, anxiety or conflict with caregivers---and miss the broader sources of healing and resilience in young people's lives. This workshop will present a strengths-focused, resistance-proof model for clinical and community work that makes therapeutic interventions more effective and change more sustainable. It demonstrates 20 skills that mental health professionals and educators can use to nurture the resilience of those with whom they work. With ample case studies and fascinating explanations of research, Michael shows why we need to work just as hard changing the environments that surround children as we do changing children themselves. Workshop participants will learn how to identify and enhance access to protective and promotive processes that exert a positive influence on young people's wellbeing. These include relationships with adults, a sense of personal self-control, agency and power, experiences of social justice and fair treatment, belonging and purpose, spirituality, and cultural rootedness. Michael will also discuss how to contract to achieve useful therapeutic goals that are culturally meaningful, and participants will leave knowing how to help their clients successfully transition their success in clinical, residential and community settings back into their "real-life" social environments at home.

This ecological approach to counseling builds on best practice knowledge borrowed from both clinical work and studies of resilience among populations who face significant adversity around the world. This model of intervention creatively combines clinical practice with aspects of case management and advocacy making it ideally suited to the needs of mental health professionals working in community mental health clinics, addictions treatment centres, correctional settings, schools, residential settings and home-based family support programs. The core principles of the approach, *navigation* and *negotiation*, can be integrated with other therapeutic models to effectively intervene with children, youth and their families. This workshop explores 20 practical techniques for clinical intervention and case planning while providing participants an opportunity to discuss the most challenging children, youth and families with whom they work.

Specifically, the learning objectives for this workshop are:

1. To understand how individuals and families with complex needs use "problem" behaviours to enhance their resilience and wellbeing when more socially acceptable solutions are not available;
2. To become familiar with the skills associated with a social ecological approach to individual and family intervention informed by research on resilience;
3. To discuss the Child and Youth Resilience Measure, an assessment tool that can help clinicians explore the hidden resilience of children and youth;
4. To learn about nine aspects of resilience necessary for positive development; To develop strategies for working without resistance with hard-to-reach, culturally diverse children, adolescents, and their families;

5. To discuss ways services can be structured for children, youth and families that make resilience more likely to occur.

Adult/Employee Focus

Workshop/Keynote 2: Nurturing Resilience: Finding the Personal Qualities and Social Supports We Need to Thrive (Even during a pandemic)

Summary and Objectives:

Throughout this fast-paced, story-filled workshop/keynote, Dr. Ungar will show that resilience is much more than just personal *ruggedness* in the face of adversity. It is instead a reflection of how well individuals, families, educators and employers work together to create opportunities for us to find our way to the *resources* we need for well-being while making those resources available in ways that we experience as meaningful. Based on Dr. Ungar's research around the world and his clinical practice, this presentation uses examples from his new book *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success* to explore how those who help others can avoid burnout and maintain their own career and life resilience when stressors pile up at home and on the job. Twelve factors that make us more resilient as adults will be discussed, along with practical tools participants can use to find the resources they need to cope successfully in culturally and contextually relevant ways, even during a pandemic. Dr. Ungar will also show how these same factors can help the people we work with achieve their life goals, and the value of continuing education as a resource for resilience. Finally, Dr. Ungar will talk about vicarious resilience, the positive impact we experience as helpers when we nurture resilience in others.

Specifically, this workshop/keynote will:

1. Show that resilience involves being both rugged and resourced.
2. Discuss 12 factors associated with resilience.
3. Identify strategies individuals can use to make themselves more resilient, even during times of extreme stress.

Systems/Service Design Focus

Workshop 3: Systemic Approaches to Nurturing Resilience Among Children, Youth and Families with Complex Needs

Summary and Objectives:

When working with children, youth and families who experience the multiple challenges of addictions, mental health problems, and social marginalization (e.g., poverty, family violence, racism, and other factors), mental health services can have a greater influence when they focus

less on problems and more on the factors that promote resilience. In this workshop, Dr. Michael Ungar will show that resilience is a process that is nurtured by service providers who match their interventions to their client's needs, negotiating to make services both available and accessible in ways that people experience as culturally and contextually relevant. This workshop will present a social ecological approach to service design and delivery that makes mental health and addictions services strengths-focused and resistance-proof, drawing on the capacity of a client's friends, family member, teachers and community as potential sources of support. Participants will learn how to identify and encourage seven factors associated with resilience: supportive relationships; a powerful identity; a sense of personal control, agency and power; social justice and fair treatment; belonging, purpose, and spirituality; and cultural rootedness. Michael will share both his research and stories from his clinical practice that illustrate what effective, ecologically complex services look like. Participants will have an opportunity to talk about examples of effective services from their own workplace, as well, and find solutions for clients who are difficult to engage. The core principles of the approach, *navigation* and *negotiation*, will be discussed in relation to several service design principles that combine clinical work with advocacy and case management to create effective services that clients value. Several themes will be discussed with regard to service design, including coordination of services across "silos", continuity of services over time, the need for cultural sensitivity, and how services can show they are effective.

Keynote Presentations and Brief Workshops (For Parents, Caregivers, Educators, Adults in the Workplace, Employers, Mental Health Professionals, and Researchers)

For Parents/Caregivers/Educators

1. Nine Ways Families, Schools, and Communities Nurture a Child's Resilience

Resilience is much more than an individual child's capacity to overcome adversity. It is also the result of how well children, their families, schools and communities work together to help vulnerable young people navigate their way to the resources they need for wellbeing, and whether those resources are made available in ways children experience as culturally and contextually meaningful. Dr. Michael Ungar will use many engaging examples from his clinical practice and research collaborations on six continents to explore the nature of children's resilience. His work challenges us to think about resilience as a child's capacity to be both rugged and resourced. In this fast-paced, story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will provide nine practical strategies parents, caregivers and educators need to help children heal, no matter a child's emotional, psychological or behavioral problems.

Specific learning objectives for this presentation are:

1. To understand how children and families with complex needs use “problem” behaviours to enhance their resilience and wellbeing when more socially acceptable solutions are not available;
2. To become familiar with how to assess resilience;
3. To learn about nine resilience-promoting resources necessary for positive child development;
4. To develop strategies for working without resistance with hard-to-reach, culturally diverse children, adolescents, and their families;
5. To discuss ways services can be structured for children and families that make resilience more likely to occur.

2. The Risk-Taker’s Advantage: How to Make Kids More Resilient by not Over-protecting Them

As both a family therapist and a world-renowned researcher on resilience, Michael Ungar has noticed that many families and schools have become so overprotective that children never have a chance to develop the normal coping strategies children need for independent lives. Though the stats tell us that children today are safer than ever before in history, parents are failing to give them what Michael has called ‘the risk-taker’s advantage.’ The results are a generation of bubblewrapped kids with anxiety disorders, an inflated sense of entitlement, or misguided efforts to find their own rites of passage into adulthood, often with catastrophic results. Based on his best-selling book, *Too Safe For Their Own Good*, Michael shows us how to help families and schools stop being overprotective and provide kids with what they need to grow up well. You can expect:

- A very amusing, and at times, shocking presentation that debunks common myths regarding the things that put children at risk.
- Practical ways educators, life coaches and therapists can help families and schools reconsider children’s developmental needs and offer them more risk and responsibility.
- To laugh and be inspired by stories of schools and communities that have helped parents give their children the risk-taker’s advantage.

For Mental Health Professionals, Educators

3. “Diagnosing” Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts: Seeing the Positives in Young People Even When There are Serious Problems

With growing interest in resilience among mental health care providers, there is a need for a simple way to think about the complex interactions that predict which children will do well despite the seriousness of the challenges they face. A focus on resilience helps us to understand children’s individual adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, as well as the social and physical ecologies that facilitate processes associated with resilience. Using case examples of

children who have been exposed to high levels of adversity such as family violence, mental illness of a child or caregiver, natural disasters, forced migration, poverty, racism and other types of social marginalization and political conflict, Michael will show how we can assess childhood resilience and use that assessment to guide practice. He will show that by “diagnosing” resilience, we are in a better position to design interventions that are sensitive to the individual, family, school and community factors that influence a child’s wellbeing. Seven factors common to children who cope well under adversity and avoid problems like depression, PTSD, and delinquency will be discussed. This presentation will also explore ways we can intervene to help children cope by changing the social and physical environments that surround them.

Adult and Professional’s Resilience

4. Resilience at Home and on the Job: Maintaining Our Capacity to Cope During Times of Change and Challenge*

**This presentation can be adapted to address the changes in people’s lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, or other major disaster/stressor.*

Studies of resilience are showing that our ability to cope with change is not just about having the right personal qualities (for example, being a rugged individual). It is much more about being a resourced individual with the right supports necessary to cope with crises. In this inspiring, story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will use his research from around the world and examples from his new book *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success* to explore twelve factors that are critical to the resilience of employees and employers. In the second part of Dr. Ungar’s presentation, he will show that which factors matter most always depends on the kind of stress we experience and the quality of the physical and social environments we experience around us. A number of innovative strategies to improve resilience will also be shared in ways that the audience can use immediately.

5. Helping those Who Help Nurture and Maintain Their Resilience

Sustaining our resilience as professional helpers can be a challenge during times of change. Based on Dr. Ungar’s research around the world and his clinical practice, this presentation uses examples from his new book *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success* to explore how those who help others can avoid burnout and maintain their own career and life resilience when stressors pile up at home and on the job. Twelve factors that make us more resilient as adults will be discussed, along with practical tools participants can use to find the resources they need to cope successfully in culturally and contextually relevant ways. Using the concepts of navigation and negotiation that are key to understanding resilience in complex, changing environments, audience members will have an opportunity to reflect on their own resilience in life, as well as times at work and at home where they had the resources they needed to succeed. Finally, Dr. Ungar will talk about vicarious resilience, the positive impact we experience as helpers when we nurture resilience in others.

Community/School/Organizational Resilience

6. Building Resilient Schools and Communities: Making Resources Available for Young People and Their Families

Throughout this fast-paced, story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will show that resilience is much more than a child's personal capacity to overcome adversity. It is instead a reflection of how well families, schools, service providers and communities work together to create opportunities for children and youth to navigate their way to the resources they need for well-being while making those resources available in ways that young people experience as meaningful. Using lively case examples and video of children across the United States and around the world who have been exposed to adversities such as family violence, mental illness of a caregiver, natural disasters, poverty, and racism, Dr. Ungar will demonstrate how we can design interventions that enhance children's access to nine resources essential for resilience and mental health. Dr. Ungar's work suggests the need for a culturally sensitive interpretation of what resilience means to children and their families from diverse backgrounds. His presentation will end with concrete examples of how communities have made resilience-promoting resources readily available to children and youth with complex needs.

Specifically, the learning objectives for this keynote are:

1. To deepen our understanding of how social and physical environments enhance resilience;
2. To become familiar with nine resilience-enabling factors that communities can improve in young people's lives;
3. To learn how to develop the supports that build resilience;
4. To explore ways to show cultural sensitivity when developing resilience-promoting programs.

7. Nurturing Resilience through a Strong [Community/Organization]*

**This presentation can be adapted to different settings, ranging from businesses and not-for-profits, to communities as a whole.*

Throughout this fast-paced, story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will show that resilience is much more than our personal capacity to overcome adversity. It is instead a reflection of how well individuals, families, employers and communities work together to create opportunities for people to navigate their way to the resources they need for well-being while making those resources available in ways that people experience as meaningful. His work around the world suggests the need for a culturally sensitive interpretation of what resilience means to people from

diverse backgrounds living in diverse communities. Dr. Ungar will end with ideas for how [communities/organizations] can make resilience-promoting resources more available and accessible to everyone.

For Researchers

8. Researching Resilience and Evaluating Resilience-Promoting Programs: Culturally and Contextually Sensitive, Mixed Methods Approaches to Transformative Inquiry

In this presentation, Dr. Michael Ungar will explore how we can study resilience and evaluate resilience-promoting programs using mixed methods designs. The focus will be on how to use these methods in participatory ways to develop knowledge that informs policy and practice. A brief introduction to the theory of resilience and wellbeing will be followed by an overview of mixed methods (e.g., qualitative grounded theory approaches to visual methods and arts based assessment; quantitative approaches to instrument development, longitudinal research with difficult to reach populations; etc.) and examples of their use in studies conducted by the Resilience Research Centre. Discussion will include topics such as contextualization, measure development, sample selection, data collection, analysis, seeking convergence between the qualitative and quantitative data, and knowledge mobilization. Participants are encouraged to bring questions relating to their own research topics.