

## Chapter 2: Responding to the Crisis:

### RALLY's Developmental and Relational Approach

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*This chapter will describe the conceptual background guiding the RALLY approach and its basic principles. It will outline ways to customize the approach and will describe elements of its success.*

## *What is RALLY?*

RALLY (Responsive Advocacy for Life and Learning in Youth) is a school-and afterschool based approach addressing academic success, youth development, and mental health for young people in schools. It is built on developmental and relational principles, emphasizing a risk and resilience framework, and for the past several years it has built a preventive framework and early intervention practice for middle school students. RALLY is designed to support adolescents in developing the capacity to establish healthy relationships that they need to strengthen further resiliencies, i.e., the ability to overcome circumstance and thrive amidst an array of challenges. Thus, the prevention focuses not exclusively on the amelioration of symptoms and typical adolescent risks, but situates mental health treatment in the context of the *adolescent's development*, with an emphasis on helping the young person through building resiliency.<sup>1</sup>

A key premise of RALLY is that all students are in need of support because neither are students at risk nor are they invulnerable. At the same time, high frequencies of students suffer from social and behavioral problems or are at risk for school failure (see Chapter 1) and studies have shown that academic achievement and mental health are inherently linked.<sup>2</sup> While expectations regarding academic achievement are often high, many schools do not provide sufficient structure to assemble the support environment needed to encourage learning potential. High expectation without high support is destined to fail, high support without high expectations does not lead to strong academic outcomes. Moreover, the most important contexts for young people, such as the family, school and community settings have seen an increasing loss of social structures and a related decrease in social support, thus corroborating feelings of disaffection and low self-esteem in youth.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the key to providing sufficient system of supports in schools is to help students to develop relationships with competent and caring teachers and other mentoring adults and peers and to provide high quality settings for youth and social

opportunities and structures in and outside the school for the often fractured social worlds that students navigate.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we emphasize that only an integrated system of psychological, academic and social support can sufficiently address the diverse and complex needs of youth.

The RALLY approach defines five significant goals and principles:

*RALLY's FIVE GOALS...*

- To facilitate young people's development, resiliency, and academic success
- To establish a variety of relationships and structural opportunities, including mentoring, that have been shown to support resilience and developmental growth
- To connect the diverse worlds of school, afterschool, family life, and community
- To integrate mental health, youth development, and education to reduce fragmentation among service systems and to reduce the stigma of participation in prevention activities by ideally involving all students in a cluster of a school and
- To provide a system of early detection, thus contributing to support students various and diverse needs as early and intensive as necessary

RALLY has developed a set of core strategies to effectively implement these goals in daily preventive practice. These principles have evolved from our comprehensive theoretical approach, combining social-cognitive developmental theory with ecological ideas and clinical considerations on risks and resiliencies. These principles are also based on our practice in schools and what we have learned from practitioners, teachers, students, educators, and mental health providers. First and foremost, our longitudinal research indicates that implementing a developmental and relational perspective has enabled students to grow and develop their learning potential and strengths. For example, a longitudinal study of 120 high-risk adolescents in residential settings followed over 10 years

showed that two-thirds of the sample did well or very well over time and overcame risks.<sup>5</sup> This finding indicates the powerful resource of adolescents to overcome problems and develop further strengths.

With thousands of youth in multiple school settings, we have learned about innovative forms of service delivery that integrate mental health and education while reducing the stigma and chronicity of problems. Practice experience has helped us to develop the five goals and principles that are at the core for RALLY program success: Development and Resiliency, Relationships, Context, Integrating Mental Health, Youth Development, and Education, and Early Detection. These principles guide the practice and are key to efficient program implementation. Below, we will elaborate on each principle.

### *Youth Development Theory*

RALLY addresses the strengths and problems faced by many youth with the assumption that the human ability for change and recovery is a developmental capacity and can be supported by developmentally differentiated approach.<sup>6</sup> While risk can produce problems, it can also encourage the evolution of developmental resiliency. Resilience has been defined as the ability of an individual to develop and succeed despite adversity.<sup>7</sup> From our perspective, this ability is not stable, but rather continuously changes and develops in interaction with the social context of an individual. Thus, adolescents are active meaning-makers that construct and invent their world.<sup>8</sup> They can therefore overcome previous trauma through their ability to give new meaning to old events, self-reflection, and exploration of alternate thoughts and behaviors. A great amount of prevention programs have shown that strengthening resiliency skills has impressive effects (see previous Chapter). Our own and other research indicates that many adolescents with seemingly insurmountable problems overcome those in the course of growing up.<sup>9</sup> The key then for prevention program is to aid in creating environments and encouraging skills that augment this natural process of development and resiliency.

Based on this research preventive practice, and the goal to bring to youth development a

developmental theory, we have described different developmental worlds of youth. These worlds include differential levels of social-cognitive, social and emotional functioning.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, development during middle childhood to middle adolescence can be described as differential “worlds” that reflect a particular kind of social-cognitive development and related self-understanding.<sup>11</sup> The developmental worlds include the world of the actively engaged, the assertive, the belonging, and the reflective (see Table 1). A person has aspects of each of these worlds, and needs to balance all of them, i.e., action, voice, belonging, and reflection. Nevertheless, at a given time of development, a student may need more or less of them – as each brings with it strengths and flip-side challenges.

It follows naturally from this perspective that social-cognitive development is inevitably linked to specific resiliencies. For example, the world of belonging incorporates the asset of empathy towards others. There are also different windows of vulnerability in each developmental world.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the developmental expressions of social-cognitive and self-understanding related resiliencies are also systematically linked to typical vulnerabilities such as internalizing and externalizing problems (see Table 1).<sup>13</sup> Studies support the view that risks and development of social cognition and self-development are interrelated. For example, our research has shown that identity and social-cognitive development are negatively correlated to externalizing symptoms in adolescents and adults, whereas identity development is related to symptoms of depression.<sup>14</sup>

Table 1 summarizes the four developmental worlds.

*Table 1*

The four developmental worlds of youth

Development and Resiliencies	Risks
<p><i>The world of the actively engaged youth:</i></p> <p>Active, spontaneous, curious; thinks in egocentric and impulsive terms; behavior defined in terms of consequences</p>	<p><i>Problems with behavior control:</i></p> <p>Impulsivity and attention problems, hyperactivity</p>
<p><i>The world of the assertive youth:</i></p> <p>Leadership-qualities, power-oriented; boundaried; proper behavior defined by what is best for the self</p>	<p><i>Externalizing problems:</i> Antisocial and aggressive behavior; violence as revenge; prone to drug and alcohol experimentation</p>
<p><i>The world of the belonging youth:</i></p> <p>Sensitive, empathic, prosocial; ability to take others' perspectives; seeking the approval of others; conformist attitude</p>	<p><i>Internalizing problems:</i> Feelings of depression and hopelessness</p>
<p><i>The world of the reflective youth:</i></p> <p>Responsible, thoughtful; ability to take and coordinate perspectives of self and other; needing others to define who the self is</p>	<p><i>Internalizing problems:</i> Feelings of loneliness and social anxiety</p>

In the world of the actively engaged youth, actions are evaluated in terms of physical consequences, and these young people do not differentiate others' desires and needs as different from their own. This is linked to spontaneous responses and creates a risk for impulsive behavioral problems. The strengths of this world include a strong will and independent curiosity. This concrete perspective on the self leads to a dichotomous view of being good or bad.

In the world of the assertive youth, these young people are able to understand self-interests as separate from the intent of others. Conflicting interests between self and others are usually resolved through instrumental exchange. These adolescents can regulate their feelings and concentrate on tasks, and they use these skills to control and assert themselves. Taken to an extreme, this can be related to exploitation and manipulation of others. Developed in a positive light, these young people can find strengths in the ability to assert themselves and develop a power-orientation, such as that needed for leadership.

In the developmental world of belonging, the young person experiences different points of view through the “Golden Rule,” in which they can see reality through the eye of another person. This perspective creates context for altruistic actions and for surpassing the bounds of self-interests. Without the balance of an assertive voice, this can lead to an over-identification with the views of others and conformist social behavior.<sup>15</sup> As it is crucial for the self to be liked and appreciated in order to feel a sense of self-esteem, these young people are prone to experience depression and/or anxieties when they are not well received by peers.

In the developmental world of reflection, the young person is introspective and thinks in abstract terms. He or she is able to reflect his or her own perspective in relation and coordination to the perspectives of others. However, this can be related to feelings of isolation and social anxieties, as the self is not experienced as connected to others

The developmental worlds typically follow each other in chronological order, although the model assumes that person’s move along these worlds along a continuum. Each theme needs to be balanced with another. For example, too much impulsiveness without enough thinking of the other’s perspective as in belonging can cause problems, as does too much belonging without asserting personal voice, etc.

Researchers have argued that enhancing resiliencies in a developmentally differentiated way is a

powerful strategy for ameliorating psychological problems.<sup>16</sup> Vice versa, mismatches between an adolescent's resiliencies and developmental capacities and, for example, a practitioner's perception of those capacities can be damaging to the intervention process.<sup>17</sup> With each developmental world, different preventive practices work best, and it is critical to tailor prevention and intervention strategies to a student's developmental world. A student's resiliency provides key information on individual strengths and social support systems that need to be included in prevention services, as they are inherently linked to both social-cognitive development and problems.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, the developmental perspective suggests that understanding students' development and resiliency is essential for the prevention process because it helps us to situate mental health problems in a broader context of resiliency, risk, and development, thereby providing a comprehensive view on how to support students' developmental growth. This approach differs from traditional approaches, as it utilizes the developmental world of the child to foster the child's inherent ability to move forward and help his or her self. The ability to observe developmental capacities in multiple settings is therefore essential for planning interventions. In RALLY, we have started to systematically develop differential interventions for students who are at different points in their developmental process.

The distinctions mentioned above might seem overly complex and hard to apply but that is not the case. We are all constantly translating our adult thinking to fit the understanding, motivation, and meaning young people apply to their reality. Similar to the typical difficulties adults face in close relationships when they have to overcome the fundamental differences they bring to the world, adult-youth relationships are fraught with misunderstandings.<sup>19</sup> To understand the developmental worlds of adolescents (and children), and to communicate with them in a way that matches their understandings, is essential in supporting their growth. So far our tools have been far too crude. We talk of youth

needing autonomy, assertiveness, and belonging as if it's the same for everyone. But it is very possible to take three 15 year olds and encounter entirely different meaning-making systems. Thus our approach introduces the map for the journey of adult-youth mentoring and relationship building. It is a map that allows for a far better analysis of destination and location. It is a way not only to differentiate and use the pathways for growth to advance health, but it is also a method to tailor classroom behavior management, learning, and teaching (topic for another publication). This perspective is a fundamental aspect of what RALLY is about: a belief and a practice founded on a significant body of evidence that health and educational success are intimately tied to the developmental capacity of children, youth, and adults to transform challenges into strengths, vague hunches into commitments, and passively endured into active passions.

### *Relational Perspective*

Learning often depends on an inclusive, caring, and engaged environment that students should feel excited about coming to most days of their childhoods. We should ask ourselves whether we have created such environments for the typical kid in urban America and while we are at it, for every kid anywhere. We think for the middle school years we can say, without hesitation, that we're very far off the mark.

The RALLY approach is guided by a relational perspective that emphasizes caring and mentoring relationships between adults and students. Development always takes place in the context of significant relationships.<sup>20</sup> Research has shown that the existence of a committed and encouraging adult is an essential ingredient for an adolescent's development and success.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, constructive relationships with peers are key to facilitate development and learning potential in youth.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the creation of a relational school is at the core of the RALLY approach.

There is by now a general acceptance that people of all ages require nurturance and sustenance in relationships to thrive psychologically. Social isolation is a dangerous antidote to life and thriving. Isolated people die earlier, have significantly higher physical and mental illnesses, and often suffer greatly. To reduce isolation in youth is a huge social experiment at a time when families are harder pressed to attend to all the relational needs of young people. The increase of single parenting, the longer work schedules, and the fragmentation of community supports reduces the quality of mentoring time for kids or what many families call “quality time.” Yet even when that time exists in the family, youth need adult role models outside the family as they venture out into the world. Thus the mentoring movement supported by governments and localities by religious institutions and youth serving organizations is making available “this stuff” that all youth need- a caring voice, a supportive and empathic listener and an advice giving role model. RALLY builds on and contributes to this movement. RALLY also believes that mentors can be located in organizations and institutions (rather than volunteer community mentors that meet with a specific child once a week), that they can partake in the knowledge of the institution young people inhabit (for example schools, afterschool programs, and summer programs), and that they can focus simultaneously on individuals and groups and can be both supporters and limit setters.

The role of a mentor functioning in an organization required a great deal of thinking and refining. The person with multiple roles and goals becomes one who gets to know young people not only through the descriptions of their lives but by observing and *participating* in their lives. Research has shown that good mentoring requires good supervision, consultation, and training. RALLY has evolved a detailed training method (see chapter 4) which builds on the first developmental principle- that the way communication flows best and the means by which empathy is increased is by having a developmental map in the backpack.

### *Contextual Perspective*

Development, resiliencies, and risks do not exist in isolation, but are situated in and impacted by a young person's social context.<sup>23</sup> Thus, childhood development occurs within the contexts of school, afterschool, family, peers, and community. Constraints and opportunities of these social contexts can either contribute to mental health and learning potential, or social problems and academic struggles.<sup>24</sup> For example, school violence is often the result of a loss of connection and respect between teachers and students caused by the coercive structures that foster environments of mistrust and resistance. Studies with multiple risk factors indicate that children and adolescents are more likely to show adjustment problems as the number of risk factors increases.<sup>25</sup>

In the past decade, this perspective has lead prevention practice to overcome the individually biased perspective and to acknowledge the complexity of interactions between individual potential and environmental constraints.<sup>26</sup> Therefore students' mental health needs to be embedded in the contextual risks and supports in school-based preventive practice.<sup>27</sup>

Studies indicate that a "relational school" that emphasizes a caring community and facilitates a structure of mutual respect and responsibility substantively reduces mental health risks and promotes resiliency.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the classroom climate contributes substantially to competence and academic development.<sup>29</sup> This means that new ways of interconnecting the social worlds of students are important and should be implemented. RALLY affirms this notion and emphasizes that much can be achieved by integrating what are now disparate parts of a child's life (school, after-school, family, community-based resources) around a common approach to addressing developmental growth and learning potential. RALLY practitioners provide the structure to bridge the child's experiences at school, at home, and in the community. Our practice shows that increasing school attachments and educational achievements is an effective strategy in reducing the onset or continuation of problems.

The contextual perspective also calls for an integrated system of academic, psychological and social supports. Based on this idea, RALLY has created an integrative approach in which adolescents are best served by pulling services into the school rather than pulling the young people out of the classroom. The integrative approach also focuses on the school and after-school level, rather than selected classrooms. However, RALLY also acknowledges that there are situations that require additional supports and “pull-out” (see Chapter 5). Thus, RALLY works with a whole cluster of middle school classrooms (e.g., 6 classrooms -160 kids).

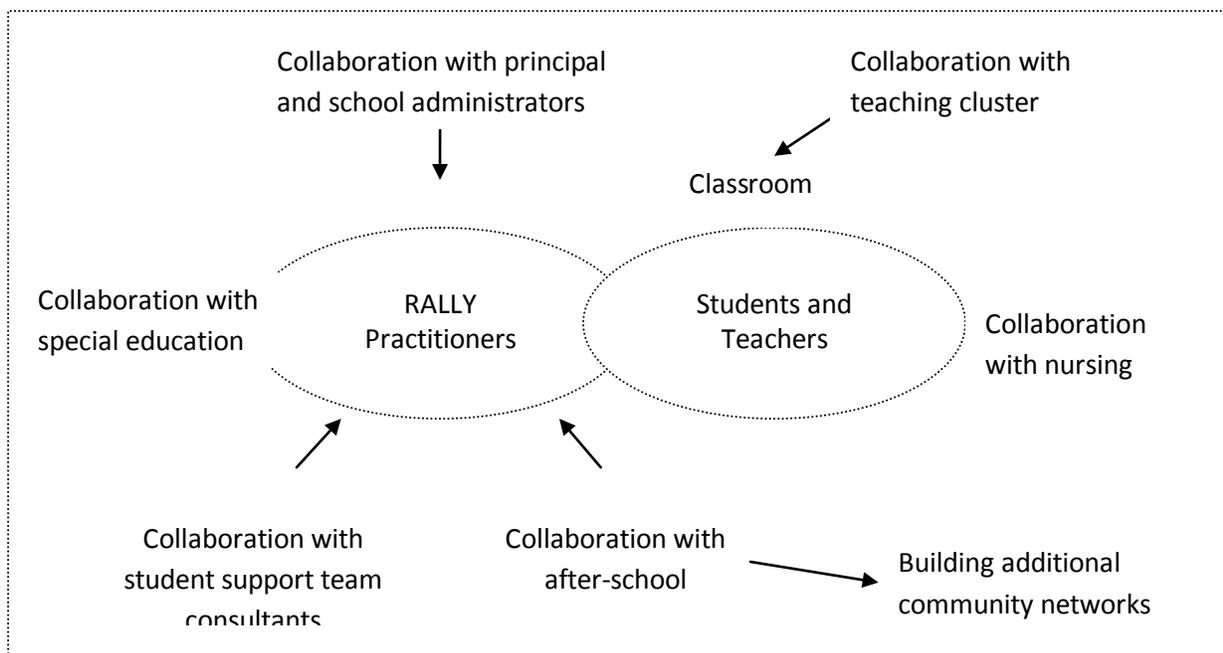


Figure 1. “Pulling-in” services: in-school prevention practice

By pulling services into the school and by working with teachers to connect classroom lessons with personal growth, RALLY demonstrates for students that learning impacts all areas of the lives.

Figure 1 shows that adolescents are supported by a pulling-in of services and an integration of existing efforts made by school personnel and service teams. Such pull-in services have been shown to

improve the quality of education for the student population as a whole through lower student-to-staff ratios and better monitoring of individual progress.<sup>30</sup> The whole RALLY team also works closely with the schools to develop the program and to select and carefully tailor academic and recreational programs, both in and out of school. When schools can work to affect the overall atmosphere in the building and classrooms by using engaging classroom instruction and school-wide initiatives to promote prosocial behavior, they help to buffer the risk factors that youth often face in school.<sup>31</sup>

In summary, RALLY extends the notion of relational schools to after-school programs, based on an understanding of the developmental worlds of adolescents and the significance of a relational perspective. Practitioners strive to deliver support by interconnecting the student's fragmented worlds.

#### *Integrating Mental Health, Youth Development, and Education*

Studies indicate that academic success acts as a protective factor for at-risk.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, academic success is inversely correlated with externalizing behavior problems. Finally, academic success and mental health are systematically related to student's development (see previous Chapter). This indicates that academic performance, youth development, and mental health are linked. Prevention and intervention then must focus on reducing the barriers that obstruct students' learning in order to enable students' growth. RALLY therefore strives to overcome the traditional distinction between mental health and educational practice in work with at-risk youth.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that RALLY fully embraces educational goals in schools supports its success. Teachers and principles view RALLY as supporting the learning goals of the school rather than as a distraction from their primary mission. At the same time, the fact that RALLY integrates mental health and education helps not only to decrease academic problems and problem behaviors, but also to promote developmental growth, which in turn relates to fostering students' educational careers. This holistic approach to prevention aims at serving all students and supporting their needs. RALLY considers

students' needs arrayed along a continuum, or a non-stigmatizing framework represented by a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention (see the mental health pyramid). The goal is not only to intervene, but also to help prevent problems before they affect students' academic performance and health. Based on this integrative framework, RALLY differentiates between high-intensity students (Tier One), targeted students (Tier Two), and inclusive students (Tier Three). The tier-system acknowledges that students' needs are arrayed along a continuum and may move up and down levels of needs based on personal and environmental factors. For example, many adolescents do not need professional intervention. Often, groups or good mentoring is all that is needed to help build resiliency. On the other hand, students with more severe problems may need more services to support them in developing further resiliency. Other students may struggle suddenly with difficult life event, such as the death of a parent. We found it helpful to group students into three "Tiers" based on the degree of supports and intervention efforts each student needs at any time.

#### *Tier One*

This tier includes high-intensity students (about five in each classroom). They are students who would traditionally be pulled out for services or be placed in special education classrooms. RALLY brings a network of services to the school so that many of the students have the chance to remain in their regular environments and achieve success. The students are provided with weekly one on one tutoring or mentoring and academic support. They also receive all lower tier activities. Although these students need to be pulled out sometimes, they are not stigmatized, as the practitioners are available for the whole class and provide one-on-one meetings for all students.

#### *Tier Two*

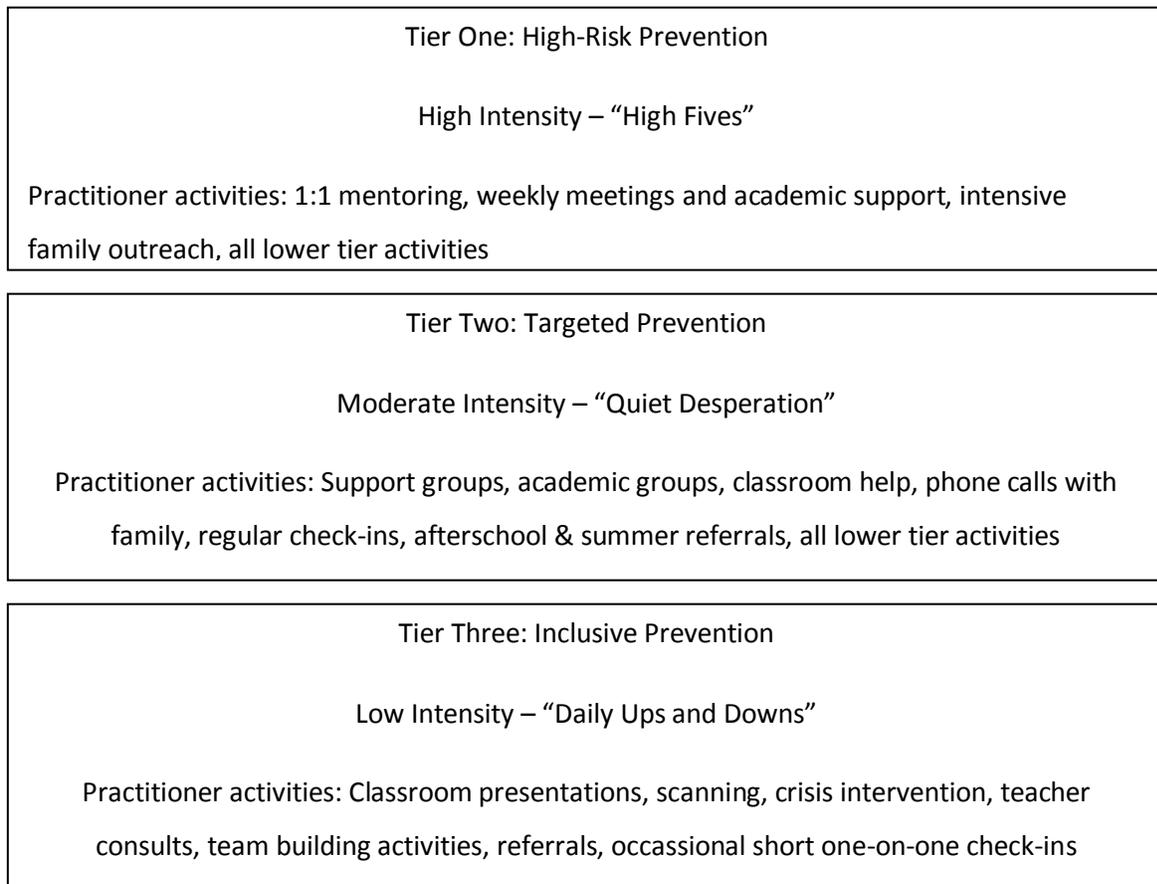
This tier includes students showing early signs of at-risk behavior. The practitioners help to prevent chronic disorders that are cost-intensive and can be derailing for students. The practitioners offer

targeted interventions for these students such as academic or support groups, afterschool programs, and referrals for mental health services.

*Tier Three*

The inclusive tier consists of the entire classroom or all of the students to whom a practitioner is assigned who are not in Tier One or Tier Two. The time that is spent with these students includes brief check-ins, allowing students time to talk about their achievements or concerns, and a space to develop a sense of trust in the practitioners.

Figure 1 summarizes the Three-Tiered Model of RALLY.



*Figure 1. Three-Tiered Model of RALLY.*

In summary, RALLY implements a non-stigmatizing approach that emphasizes (a) an integrative approach to mental health, youth development, and education and (b) that all students' needs are met and continue to be met over the course of the year.

A flexible three-tier system helps to differentiate students along their needs, thus combining educational and clinical services to facilitate resiliency and learning potential adequately.

What began for us as a way to support students to “learn, dream, and thrive” in settings where they spend a significant amount of their waking hours (school and afterschool), has led more recently to a fundamental shift on schools and afterschool programs. When one understands the needs of young people, including what enhances their excitement and engagement and what turns them off and makes them appear oppositional, then one can better design the institutions to better serve them. This is not to mean that the educational goals and communal standards should only be defined by the wishes and desires of young people, but it does mean that unless we don't get their buy-in and design environments in which they can be successful, we are wasting enormous human and financial resources. Interestingly, the four developmental worlds that guide the resiliency and developmental work on an individual level have led us to an understanding of schools and programs that need to reflect these worlds. Thus every classroom, every school, and every after school program needs to be a place where kids can be assertive, have a voice, and move forward an agenda of learning. By providing this base, oppositional behavior will usually transform into more prosocial assertion and leadership by providing a space for the body, and feeling the vitality of one's motoric side of their personality. All young people benefit from

activities that engage their whole bodies, but for students prone to impulsive problems, it is the only way in which they have a chance to make it. When it comes to the needs of the belonging, classrooms, schools, and afterschool programs have to put a primacy on attachment.

### *Early Detection of Risks and Resiliencies*

Our work in RALLY has shown that early detection of risks and resiliencies is of key significance in successful program implementation. Early in the academic year, students are identified with the help of assessments, as well as teachers and practitioner observations, parent phone calls, students' requests, and indication from the students' previous school records. Current assessment processes in school-based prevention programs frequently can take up a long time. Why is it important to identify students' risks and resiliencies early in the school year? First and foremost, it is crucial to refer students as soon as possible to adequate treatments when serious concerns arise. Early assessments are important as students' needs are great and diverse (cf. Chapter 7), thus requiring a variety of resources including practitioners, teachers, and others. Teachers cannot be expected to live up to these high expectations given their already broad range of responsibilities, and early assessments and referrals can help not only to support students' needs, but also to effectively support teachers in their daily work. Early assessments also help to prevent chronicity, as early identification of problems and related intervention can often stop a difficult situation from deteriorating. Furthermore, early identification of risks and resiliencies helps practitioners to get to know the students early in the year and helps to deepen the relationship over the school year.

This is why RALLY emphasizes that early detection of risks, resiliencies and related development are important in order to provide adequate support systems for an individual adolescent. Likewise, early identification of a student's most important social support system is key to understanding his or her

strengths and risks in a specific social context, and subsequently helps to offer the most promising services at different levels of the student's ecology.

In summary, there are ways to assess students early in the school year that lead to identification of tools and techniques to be used in school, afterschool and home environments to help students overcome their developmental challenges. We will describe these tools in greater detail in Part III of this volume.

Letting things become chronic makes the repair work later much more costly. Before we jump into interventions to address educational failures and psychological risks, we do have to acknowledge that young people (and adults) can have acute reactions to problems that can be quite severe but that will disappear after the crisis is gone. Young people are very reactive to their direct environments and the removal of stressors can often change everything. A bully in one classroom can create severe problems for many children in the classroom. In another classroom, the child thrives again. Distinguishing between serious problems that have the potential to become chronic and acute reactions to environmental stressors has remained a very difficult task based as much on intuition as it is on science. But many of the middle school students in mainstream classrooms and many students we work with and observe bring a history of school problems, social turmoil, and psychological suffering. We know for example that leaving depression untreated in childhood or adolescence increases the probability of chronic adult depression.<sup>34</sup> Given that we know how to treat most forms of depression through counseling, medication, and environmental changes, whenever possible, it is a crime that so many young people suffer from depression and suicidal thinking without any adults bringing them help. The key to change is not only to provide more services but to also get to know the young people and train caregivers in how to detect early warning signs. The key is also in more systematic school assessments that get to the problems before they become chronic, debilitating and expensive.

### *Elements of RALLY Program Success*

In the last sections, we have shown that RALLY offers an innovative, school-based developmental prevention and early intervention model. The overarching goals are implemented by five key principles that we found to be effective in our preventive practice for years. For example, the roots in developmental research facilitate a holistic understanding of the students' academic and psychological functioning. Early identification of risks and resiliencies help to avoid chronicity and getting to know students early on provides a basis for constructive relationships between practitioners and students.

To be responsive to the culture, goals and needs of individual schools, RALLY is designed in a modular format; program implementation can be flexibly adapted to the individual context of a school. A manual helps to introduce and implement the program and guide the practitioners in their work. RALLY also gives provider support through one-site visits, email support, phone conferences, web site, and an annual network meeting. Finally, evaluation tools secure the effectiveness of the program by assessing key outcome measures. Through past experience, we have been able to identify a number of requirements and strategies for RALLY program success.

### *Strategies of Success*

RALLY programs can be initiated by the host school or by any of a number of potential community partners. However, a successful implementation of RALLY will need to include certain key components. What are the essential elements? Below, we will give a brief overview of the five key elements for starting-up a successful school environment to promote student's academic success and development.

*A Host School in which RALLY has the Support of the Administration, Student-Support Providers, and Participating Teachers*

Successful implementation of RALLY requires that schools commit to providing an allotted space for office work, meetings and groups. Because the strength of the partnership between practitioners and school personnel is what determines the effectiveness of the program, it is important to implement the program only with teachers who have volunteered to participate. Furthermore, it needs to be recognized that relationships between adults and kids matter, with the teaching faculty that is open to looking at its own practices.

#### *Implementation of developmental and relational considerations into practice*

RALLY emphasizes the importance of promoting development and resiliency among students so that they can take better care of themselves. By creating caring relationships in school and afterschool and by pulling in resources rather than referring students to external services, RALLY provides a basis for the promotion of development, resiliency, and learning potential in a student environment. Thus, RALLY emphasizes that students should not only be supported in overcoming risks but also in further developing resiliencies and learning potential. Schools with a relational milieu provide students with a sense of individual recognition and provide access to resources to supplement traditional support services.

#### *Full Time On-Site School Coordinator*

A RALLY program needs a full time on-site coordinator who oversees the entire program, coordinating the actions as related to the program between the students, teachers, administrators and community members. Overall the RALLY coordinator must have a general knowledge of the needs of all the people involved in the RALLY program in order to ensure a relatively harmonious integrative approach to prevention. Most importantly, the RALLY coordinator should maintain a close working relationship with the school's principal, as well as promote positive relations with all teachers, practitioners and students. This person should ideally be an experienced mediator, have a background in

psychological/social services that is sufficient enough to train and supervise the practitioners, be able to identify warning signals in students, and assist in making mental health and social service referrals. In addition, we recommend that the coordinator be a highly organized, articulate, and resourceful person in order to successfully initiate and nurture relationships with the RALLY community partners and the school's staff.

It is often a smoother transition for the RALLY coordinator and the school if the person is already familiar with the school (i.e. a former guidance counselor, social worker or other staff member within the school). Oftentimes it can be possible for the coordinator to have other responsibilities within the school as well; for example, if a guidance counselor were hired as the RALLY coordinator, they could still fulfill some of their role in that realm, as well. However, coordinators should be able to devote at least 50% of their time to the RALLY coordinator position, need to be flexible to be available for any potential crisis, and need to be available during the summer time for planning purposes.

#### *Practitioners in Training and Supervisor for Practitioners*

Each practitioner should be on-site at least two days per week to ensure sufficient contact with students. A RALLY program needs to have the expertise that is required to train practitioners in a developmental and relational approach. Unless a program will provide all training needed by practitioners, it is important to have individuals who have a social service or counseling background and preferably experience working with adolescents in school settings. If possible, it would greatly aid practitioner training if a mental health partner is able to contribute to the initial instruction of practitioners and/or provide ongoing supervision of the practitioners work through individual or group sessions. Our model strives to bring young people into the school, however many schools and student support teams have different ways of doing that. Just imagine a hospital without trainees – it would be very tough. The role of trainees can be very important as long as their position and direction is clear and

they are not just making more work for the people in the school.

### *Collaboration of Mental Health, Higher Education, After School and Other Community Organizations*

Creating opportunities for collaboration is crucial for the program's success. Strong collaboration and communication between different service providers helps to secure structured and sufficient support systems for students. It is also important to recruit organizations that offer enrichment and support services to students during their hours away from school and the RALLY program. Having such organizations in the network will ensure that students continue to benefit from and have access to growth opportunities after school, on weekends, and during the summer. The internal coordination in the school, the relationships that are being built, the developmental help structure to success emotionally physically and academically often go beyond what an individual mentor can do with an individual child. For that reason, RALLY embeds these relationships and developmental journeys into an institutional wrap-around community setting that will accept the young people into their afterschool programs and summer jobs, will help support families, and will provide medical, legal, and housing advice. This is similar to the schools where the goal is to reorganize the existing resources and to match the different needs of kids in order to put them onto pathways toward success (see next Chapters). We want the student with extra energy to be in an afterschool program where he or she can be engaged in sports and other activities. We want the student looking for power by breaking rules in classrooms to have opportunities for civic engagement and prosocial leadership. The problem at present is that many community providers knock at the door of the school and offer their specific services. It is an important step that schools and afterschool programs open their doors and collaborate with programs. What is needed now and what RALLY has developed is the coordination of these services into pathways for students.

### *Concluding Remarks*

In the last years, RALLY has moved beyond the idea of creating a RALLY program to RALLY practices where its possible to use the existing people in the school- family outreach person, adjustment counselor, social worker, and others, to re-structure the school climate and to integrate developmental and relational principles into daily school life. Thus, some of the practices that will be described in the following Chapters can be done with all the adults in the school not just the practitioners that come from the outside. As long as the school is willing to let a coordinator look at the resources that exist, and with direction and support from the principal, to create an environment where kids are known and are able to relate to each other, RALLY practices can be implemented. RALLY also currently shifts towards working at the district level and offer train-the-trainer modules. These practices offer school principals and leadership teams a structure and unifying language to bring consistency both across the child level and through the district level.

## Summary

- RALLY is a school-based, developmental prevention and early intervention model addressing academic success, development, and mental health in school.
- RALLY's main goals are to promote students' resiliency, development and academic functioning as well as to reduce risk factors such as behavioral and emotional problems. These goals are supported in the school and after school setting to avoid pulling out students and stigmatization.
- RALLY is based on developmental and relational principles. By implementing a new professional role of RALLY practitioners who are developmental specialists and interconnect the different social worlds of students, RALLY creates the necessary resources to provide sufficient social opportunities and quality practices to meet students' needs and facilitate growth.
- A Three-Tiered system helps to implement mental health and educational practice, thus providing differential support for students with different needs. Early identification of risks and resiliencies help to avoid chronicity and find adequate treatments as soon as possible.
- RALLY has identified five key elements of program success: The existence of a host school in which the members of the school community fully support the program; the implementation of developmental and relational ideas into practice; a full-time on-site coordinator, practitioners and supervisors and collaboration between the different service providers, program members, and people involved in program implementation.

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