

## ENVISIONING THE FUTURE:

## ten keys to enhance resilience predictors among inmates

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## BACKGROUND AND AIM

Resilience is the individual capacity to adaptively handle adversities (Grotberg, 1995; Luthar et al., 2006). People can be trained to be more resilient (O'Dougherty, 2012), even in the most complex and challenging conditions, like the prison. Inmates often develop mental health problems (Fazel et al., 2016), and their life conditions have been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Hewson et al., 2020). For these reasons, training inmates in resilience can help them to adaptively handle incarceration and facilitate their future reintegration into the social community. In the normative population, resilience is associated with coping (e.g., flexibility) (Hayes et al., 2006), self-efficacy in emotion regulation (Arici-Özcan et al., 2019), and social support (Sippel et al., 2015). Inmates' resilience was often indagated as a predictor itself of mental health (Sygit-Kowalkowska et al., 2017). However, studies about war prisoners (Segovia et al., 2012; Maercker et al., 2013), qualitative research on juvenile penal justice (Todis et al., 2001), and a few studies on inmates' predictors of resilience (Bradley & Davino, 2007; Hanik et al., 2021) allow to profile that the main determinants of prisoners' resilience are optimism, social support, goal-orientation, spirituality. Besides psychotherapy (Rezaei & Mousavi, 2019; Valizadeh et al., 2020), evidence in favor of other approaches (e.g., such as neuropsychopedagogical intervention) to enhance inmates' resilience is not known yet. In the light of these premises, the present research is targeted at the exploration of the predictors of inmates' resilience pre and post Envisioning the Future.

## ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

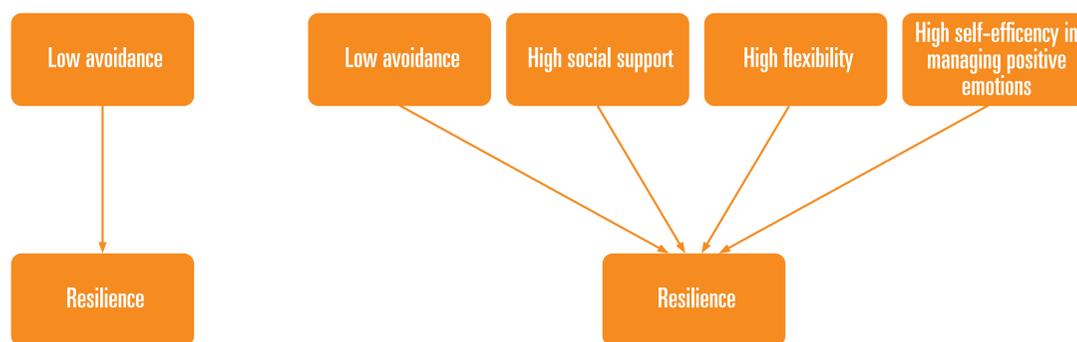
Envisioning the Future (EF) is one of the rare Italian study-experiences (Augelli et al., 2017; Busetti et al., 2018; Galli et al., 2018) to promote prisoners' well-being through education and, to date, it is the first Italian neuro-psycho-pedagogical intervention working on inmates' resilience. EF was ideated by Patrizio Paoletti Foundation basing on the interdisciplinary background of Pedagogy for the Third Millennium (PTM) (Paoletti, 2008) and in the framework of the Sphere Model of Consciousness (SMC) (Paoletti & Dotan Ben Soussan, 2019). EF aims at restoring persons' hope in the future, increasing physical, psycho-emotional, relational, spiritual, and work resources of individuals (Snyder, 2000; Paoletti, 2008). The main aim of the intervention is triggering the transition from the reactive mind to the conscious mind (Paoletti, 2008). Theoretical notions on (i) how the brain works and reacts to stress, (ii) how individuals can transform emotions can promote such transition, alongside practical tools for self-improvement and self-education. While the reactive mind automatically reacts towards environmental stimuli, to trigger stress and anxiety, the conscious mind, based on prefrontal cortex activation, favors awareness, emotion regulation and the capacity to reprogram the individual's future. This transition is crucial among prisoners because they can learn from the past, to project themselves in the present and into the future. EF is a thematic pathway including ten keys to resilience (Table 1) that are based on interdisciplinary studies on wellbeing and resilience (Korb, 2015; Paoletti, 2018; Tabibnia, 2020; Pintimalli et al., 2020), to examine how it is possible to recover from stress and uncertainty and, training in daily life through specific exercises. EF is also innovatively bringing meditation practices into an Italian prison, accordingly with research on the benefits of meditations for inmates' biopsychosocial wellbeing (Griera & Clot-Garrell, 2015).

Table 1: ten keys to resilience

Key	Content	Neuropsychopedagogical Principle
(1) Take cover in front of what you can control and make small decisions. (2) Identify an attainable, exciting, measurable goal. (3) Several times a day become aware of your posture.	Body-scan and relaxation, guided visualizations, listening to the silence and to one's own breath, bringing one's attention back to the here and now, decision-making.	Observation and Self-observation (Paoletti & Selvaggio, 2011).
(4) Be inspired by stories. (5) Ask yourself what is important. (6) Cultivate gratitude.	Training in self-motivation, listening to one's most intimate preferences, learning to cultivate positive emotions and to manage negative emotions (e.g., gratitude), following resilience role-models, being an active agent.	Mediation (Paoletti & Selvaggio, 2012).
(7) Live the other as a resource, cultivate and expand your social network. (8) Cultivate curiosity.	Listening, sharing experiences, enhancing the resources of the group to cope together with events, constant learning from everything and from every experience.	Translation (Paoletti & Selvaggio, 2013).
(9) Practice a few minutes of silence. (10) Embrace and transform: before bedtime, generate your tomorrow today.	Exercise to improve the quality of sleep, daily and constant practice of intentional silence, meditation, proactive storytelling of daily life, self-programming, and foreshadowing of the future.	Normalization (Paoletti & Selvaggio, 2013).

## Method

- Participants: n=24 male inmates (mean age = 42.89, SD = 9.53) completed the survey before the EF (Group PRE-EF); n=24 male inmates (mean age = 42.79, SD = 10.34) completed the same survey after the EF (Group POST-EF).
- Procedure: EF, created by Fondazione Patrizio Paoletti, was administered in Padua's (Italy) prison, with the collaboration and ethical approval of University of Padua. It was carried out in remote between May 2021 and July 2021.
- Measures: Resilience Scale-14, RS-14, by Wagnild & Young 1993; Connor Davidson Resilience Scale-10, CDRISC-10, by Connor & Davidson, 2003; the Self-efficacy Scale in managing Positive and Negative Emotions, APEN/A – APEP/A, by Caprara & Gerbino, 2001; Coping Orientation to the Problems Experienced, COPE-NVI, by Sica et al., 2008.
- Analytic Plan: Two linear regression models were computed to detect the predictors of resilience in the Groups PRE-EF and POST-EF.



**Group PRE-EF, Results:** Resilience was predicted exclusively by low avoidance ( $\beta = -.64, p < .05$ ), with  $R^2 = .69$ .

**Group POST-EF, Results:** Resilience was not only associated with low avoidance ( $\beta = -.34, p < .05$ ), but also predicted by self-efficacy in managing positive emotions ( $\beta = .51, p < .05$ ) cognitive flexibility ( $\beta = .56, p < .05$ ), and perceived social support ( $\beta = .56, p < .05$ ), with  $R^2 = .88$ .

## CONCLUSION

Before Envisioning the Future intervention (EF), the only variable determining inmates' resilience was low avoidance. After EF, low avoidance, high flexibility, high self-efficacy in managing positive emotions, and perception of social support, predict resilience, revealing an improvement in the constellation of resources associated with prisoners' resilience. EF also met the global needs for educational systems' digitalization related to pandemics. The study lays the groundwork for future research in the field of the predictors of resilience among inmates, and it encourages the practice of neuropsychopedagogy in the prison environment.

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