

Resiliency in Families: The Stress Antidote with Scott Haltzman

On Friday morning, March 12, 2010, Scott Haltzman, MD, of Barrington, Rhode Island, a psychiatrist, university professor, author and advocate for marriage and committed relationships, addressed the joint breakfast meeting of the Essex-Union County Association of Psychologists and the Morris County Psychological Association at the Hamilton Conference Center in Florham Park. He spoke on *Resiliency in Families: The Stress Antidote*.

Dr. Haltzman's warm, humorous presentation included a harmonica solo, an audience quiz, a Hawaiian travelogue, complete with colorful leis, and was based on his most recent book, *The Secrets of Happy Families: Eight Keys to Building a Lifetime of Connection and Contentment*. His talk focused on the ingredients for a happy marriage or committed relationship citing his own research as well as that of others which included African American and Caucasian populations.

Being able to agree on finances and sharing activities as a family are important for creating marital happiness, but the primary indicator for a happy marriage, as noted from a survey of more than 1000 people at his *DrScott* website, is resiliency. This is defined as "the ability to bounce back, with love and humor intact, whether from internal conflicts between family members or external stress from finances, jobs, schools, and illness." He highlighted (1) inborn, (2) protective and (3) recovery factors related to resiliency.

One protective factor was the opportunity to establish a close bond with a competent, emotionally stable person. In addition, specific protective factors for children, according to gender, were enumerated.

Dr. Haltzman highlighted individual differences that are correlated with greater resiliency in adults (e.g, fewer traumas and of less intensity), as well as those differences related to recovery in adults (including optimism and social support).

Various strategies for cultivating family contentment were underscored including the importance of problem solving, conflict resolution, family rituals and fun.

Practitioners were provided with useful interventions that can be easily used by families, such as the Resiliency Tool Kit and a Family Values Matrix complete with a Mission Statement.

Dr. Haltzman's other books include *The Secrets of Happily Married Men* and *The Secrets of Happily Married Women*, and he offered the audience a few tips from each of these volumes as well.

More information on Dr. Haltzman can be obtained from his website www.DrScott.com.