



Team **STRONG**

Building a national network of resilient children, adults, families, and communities



Courtesy of Dave Mable



United States Olympic
& Paralympic Museum™



Life Lessons from Olympians and Paralympians



University of Colorado
Colorado Springs



Lyda Hill
**Institute for
Human Resilience**



**COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY**



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
ENGAGEMENT AND EXTENSION**



Courtesy of The LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation

Resilience to adversity has never seemed more critical

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic that has pushed the global community to the brink of social and economic collapse to climate crisis disasters including historic floods, wildfires, and scorching heat, societies around the world are searching for ways to promote individual and collective resilience. We are experiencing a mental health crisis of epic proportion. Young people are impacted as never before as their exposure to the stress of these complex problems is more visible through the myriad of technologies than at any previous point in human history. Given the scope and critical generational consequences of these unprecedented challenges, solutions must be bold. This proposal brings together two transformative resilience programs, that combined, will impact our youth, families, and community.

The “Becoming Your Personal Best (BYPB)” program from the United States Olympic & Paralympic Museum (USOPM) is a first-of-its-kind educational program available free for teachers, coaches, and adults who work with youth in any capacity. BYPB provides essential tools to build and strengthen resilience in the lives of young people. Through the lens of the inspirational life experiences of Olympians and Paralympians, youth in grades 4-12 expand their knowledge of self-identity, mindset, problem solving, perseverance, relationships, and confidence. The Greater Resilience Information Toolkit (GRIT) from the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience is the only program in the U.S. designed to promote resilience by training all community members around the country on how to be a resilience coach for their circle of influence. This online training program is based on decades of scientific evidence that shows the power of our social relationships in managing stress and adversity combined with the critical individual and collective belief in the ability to effectively cope.

BYPB comes from a partnership between the USOPM and the Colorado Health Foundation. These organizations both saw a gap in the Social Emotional Learning resources available to teachers, teachers, youth educators, and parents, enabling youth to develop personal resiliency skills. The program design started in the Fall of 2019 and was quickly impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. The BYPB team pivoted to design all materials in a way that any community members that help, teach or mentor youth could access. All modules of BYPB were developed under a “Design for Equity” framework. Knowing, from recent research, that the life stories of Olympians and Paralympians inspire youth in character and skill development, BYPB’s offerings are both flexible and structured for diverse learners and users. The BYPB offerings were piloted in the Spring of 2021 with 61 varied user groups and schools; the formal launch of BYPB was in August of 2021, with a Phase one evaluation process conducted in October-December 2021.



GRIT, housed in the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, is designed to harness the power of the community itself to promote resilience. It was developed in response to the Covid-19 crisis, but has broad applicability to the full range of personal and collective adversities. Since April 2020 the GRIT program has expanded to include: GRIT-Community, GRIT4ED, GRIT4Health, GRIT-Lead, and GRIT-Serve encompassing general community members, schools, healthcare workers, non profit/small business leaders, and military/first responders. The GRIT participation has shown exponential growth with individuals signing up from 42 states around the country and 12 countries around the world. Initial research data on the impact of GRIT in the Pikes Peak Region demonstrated that those who completed the training reported significantly less depression, post-traumatic distress, loneliness, and greater levels of well-being and personal coping capability than individuals who have not had the training. These findings support the value of learning targeted coping skills to help those you love be more resilient leading to an enhancement of one’s own personal strength.

Team STRONG: A systemic approach

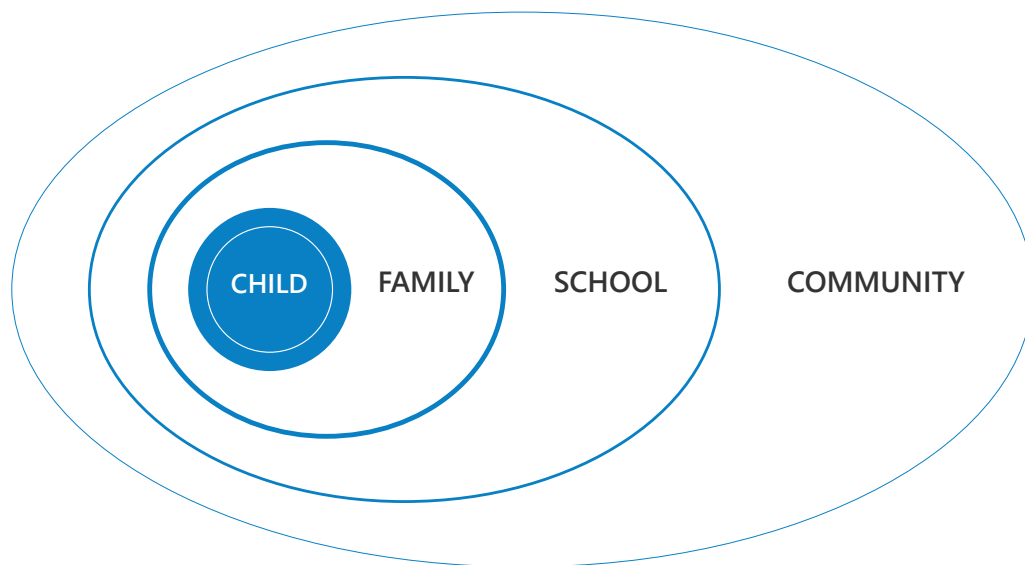
This proposal seeks to develop a national roll out of these programs through a synergistic integration. Each program has its own targeted strategy to empower teachers, family caregivers, and community members in helping to promote resilience, be it a student in a classroom or a family member who is struggling or for the broader community well-being. By strategically creating points of intersection between these two innovative programs, we will multiply the possible impact of each

alone. The two program teams are working together to test the efficacy of the combined programs. Indeed, through our plan for national saturation we expect to reach millions of children, families, and community members promoting strength and resilience that can be sustained for future adversities. Critical to the success of this bold initiative, the two program teams will work together to evaluate the efficacy of the integrations through a national longitudinal research project. Crisis programming developed in response to previous national tragedies often result in innovation without evidence, leading to ineffective and wasteful use of valuable resources. This project will be grounded in science and research.

BYPB + GRIT = Impact at multiple levels

Community resilience is driven through the well-being of our children and families. Both BYPB and the GRIT program focus on the development of healthy, strong, and supportive relationships in the lives of our children and their families. Having trusting adults in a child's life is a key element to mitigating the impact of early trauma and a critical component in developing a resilient mindset. The resilient athlete, with physical, mental, emotional and social health, that is central to the BYPB program also supports resiliency from the GRIT perspective. Not only do we want to reinforce inner strength and resilience in our young people and those who love them, we also want to empower them to reach out and support others. The connection of the GRIT and BYPB programs with the stories of Olympic and Paralympic athletes creates a powerful synergy that can support our children, our families, and communities across the country.

The unique collaboration between BYPB and GRIT provides a systemic approach to developing a resiliency program extending from the child to the community.



The child is at the center of the system and is connected to the community through family, school, and community relationships. Starting from the center and working outwards, the "Becoming Your Personal Best" curriculum is focused on developing internal strength and resilience in young people.

Through the developmentally aligned BYPB program, youth are guided through real-life resiliency stories from athletes, accompanied by learning activities related to resiliency. The GRIT program complements this approach from an outward in perspective. GRIT lives in the relational space between the child and the community. Envisioning every child with a support system comprised of three, trusting adults at their school, within their family network, and in the community, the GRIT program provides a cohesive way to communicate and support youth targeting resilience. GRIT also targets the overall community-level resilience harnessing the power of the entire community.

Participants in the GRIT program learn how to recognize the signs of emotional stress and key strategies to employ, as part of a supportive team, to build a resiliency-focused mindset in those with whom they already have existing, caring relationships. This innovative project, integrating BYPB and GRIT, will enable schools, families, organizations, and communities to connect to the stories of resilient athletes to help build a system of resilience that includes life skill development, social resilience competence, peer-to-peer mentoring programs, and a deep understanding on how to tap into one's own areas of strength.

Thus, the goal of this project is to capitalize on the synergistic effect of a combined BYPB and GRIT program via a project called "Team STRONG". This first of its kind comprehensive resilience systems program is designed to ignite the flame of resilience from child to the family and ultimately the community. Our goal is to ultimately inform training in higher education to change the way mental health capacities are developed and built at all levels. Our society is missing a national model that moves beyond isolated attempts to foster resilience and provides evidence based programming that reaches the entire community. The work to combine these programs started in October 2021, with an





Courtesy of Dave Mable



Courtesy of Ed Burke



early pilot where users are reviewing or facilitating both programs jointly. The pilot participants agreed (100%) that the GRIT and BYPB programs were complimentary but NOT redundant. The first five years of the proposed project will accomplish two primary objectives. First, we will roll out the Team STRONG system across the nation through a national distribution partner. Saturation for this model across the U.S. will be based on geographic uptake of the programs. Second, we will identify 10 diverse communities across five regions of the country to include urban and rural communities with a range of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds.

This 10-community longitudinal research evaluation is essential to optimize the iterative innovation of the program as we learn from our communities. A rapid cycle innovation approach will be used through qualitative and quantitative evaluation data allowing for program refinement and improvement. Ultimately, we propose a 10-year longitudinal cohort evaluation on this national sample to determine impact. In the initial we will develop an integrated design representing both programs. The implementation process recognizes the value of participant input into the refinement and evolution of the program. Integration into each community will be an essential feature of this evaluation component. Community support for the program also provides opportunities to braid funding among various sectors to sustain the program long-term.

A watershed moment...

It is not hyperbole to suggest we are facing a watershed moment. The current generation of young people need us to act. Our long-term goal for the Team STRONG program is to reach children and those who love them in every corner of this nation. This national synergistic resilience program provides that foundation that is necessary to build resilience throughout all of our people. We need to invest now in order to build a national network of resilient children, adults, families, and communities.

BYPB Overview



Becoming Your Personal Best (BYPB) is a comprehensive social-emotional learning program designed to help young people, families, and communities develop positive resiliency skills to meet life challenges – through the life stories of Olympians and Paralympians.

Curriculum Structure

The BYPB learning curriculum is composed of lesson plans, activities, and five to seven-minute videos for students in grades 4-12. It shares skill building tools and life lessons from Olympic and Paralympic athletes to help young people learn about meeting personal challenges, growing through failure, and developing a positive mindset.

Focus areas: Self-identity, Mindset, Problem Solving, Perseverance, Relationships and Confidence

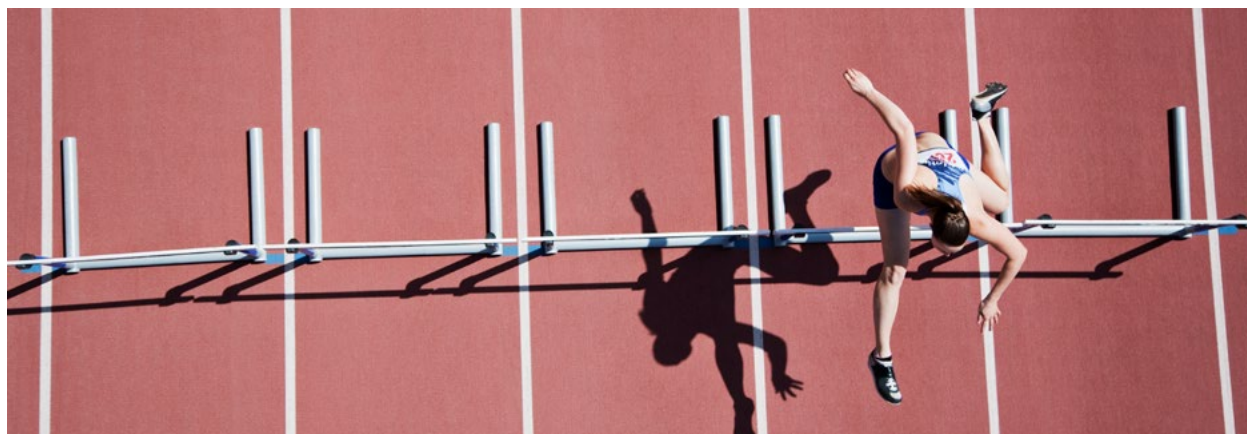
Curriculum Components:

- Athlete Stories (videos)
- 32 Resiliency Skills Modules
- 80 Interactive Lessons
- Teacher's Guide
- Counselor & Career Readiness Toolkit
- Leadership Development Toolkit
- Adaptations for Accessibility
- Professional Development Modules

Video Series

The BYPB Video Series includes a nine-part on-demand video series produced to help young people, families, and communities develop positive resiliency skills to meet life's challenges. Filmed at the United States Olympic & Paralympic Museum, the series features nationally-known resiliency experts, Olympians and Paralympians who share practical information and skill building strategies.

Focus areas: Why Resiliency, Resiliency for Educators, Social, Emotional, Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Resiliency



GRIT Overview



The GRIT (Greater Resilience Information Toolkit) Resilience Course training was created by the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience in the beginning of April 2020. Shortly after the first phase of quarantine and stay-at-home orders prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, an idea arose to provide a training to inform community members about stress and resilience, as well as how to reach out and support others in their own community. Dr. Charles Benight, Dr. Joseph Ruzek, and Nicole Weis created the first GRIT Resilience Course training based on this premise. The GRIT Resilience Course training is a total of five hours with five modules comprised of:

- Foundational information on core principles of psychological first aid, stress, disaster stress, resilience, and self-efficacy, as well as self-care and referring to professional mental health support when needed
- 5 steps in reaching out and making a meaningful and helpful connection
- Roleplays showcasing each step
- Self-reflections for personal enhancement
- 6 key areas of strength to identify and encourage in self and others
- Resources
- Weekly survey and monthly community newsletter
- Accompanying workbook with education, reflections, and resources

Since the initial launch, with recognition of the continued strain of Covid-19 on several populations, GRIT has been expanded to four additional specialized tracks. **GRIT-4ED** combines the core GRIT Resilience Course training with focused attention on how the education community can support coworkers and students. The training also used an approach called “3 Around Me,” reflecting the awareness that during a traumatic time, forming a team of three around a student or colleague can provide awareness, surveillance, and support of post stress responses. **GRIT-LEAD** provides specific training for supporting leadership and employees, as well as small business owners. The training includes considerations for supporting essential workers and transitioning back physical locations. **GRIT-4Health** focuses on the strain on healthcare workers and provides specific resources for the healthcare community. Lastly, **GRIT-SERVE** was created with consideration of the culture and needs of military and emergency responders. Each GRIT track was designed with experts in the field of focus and materials and information were adapted to be culturally relevant to the particular challenges and experiences in those settings. GRIT users have the option to sign up for one or all specialized tracks. The GRIT curriculum has expanded beyond Covid-19 specific stressors to include experiences of personal stress and trauma, as well as other natural disasters impacting homes and communities.