



SUPERHERO IRL

INTRODUCTION TO RESILIENCE

By Dr. Janina Scarlet

Many people report that one of the biggest problems they face is dealing with *bullying*. Bullying is when a person uses their power, over a period of time, to emotionally or physically hurt someone on *purpose*. The person who is being hurt is “the target.” So, we can say that bullying behavior is *targeted* and *repeated*.

The repetitive nature of bullying is often considered the most damaging part, because it leads to the “chipping away” of the target person’s sense of confidence and emotional strength. One way to protect us against the negative effects of bullying (and other challenging life experiences) is to use specific skills to build and to promote resiliency.

To be resilient means to be able to recover quickly from difficult conditions. It does not mean that we should ignore our feelings. It means that we can acknowledge that we are hurt and learn how to better manage this hurt,

Think of your favorite characters and superheroes. Can you name some that you consider resilient?

Please name them or draw them and think about what makes them resilient.

Resiliency is the ability to recover or “bounce back” quickly from a stressful, scary, or painful event or situation.

•For example, we see that superheroes, such as Kara (in the television series *Supergirl*) and Miles Morales (in the movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*), as well as Harry Potter, Rey, and Thor, may sometimes physically or emotionally “stumble,” but they are able to get back up and learn important lessons from their mistakes.

The chart below shows what resilience is and what it is not:

Recognize You Can
Grow & Learn from
Your Struggles

Receive the
'Call to Action'
(motivation to act to
solve a problem)

CAN BE
LEARNED

See the 'Silver Lining'
(the positive in a
bad situation)

Able to "Bounce
Back"/ Recover
from Adversity

RESILIENCE

Does NOT involve
being Perfect or
Invulnerable

Does NOT
mean Avoiding
or NOT
Experiencing
Adversity

NOT SOMETHING
WE ARE BORN
WITH

Let's break it down:

Resiliency is not simply something we are “born with.” Resiliency can be learned.

•This is an important component for you to learn because it means *anybody* can be resilient. (For instance, Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit* is introduced in the story as somewhat cautious and unsure if he wants to go on an adventure with the Dwarves, but he gains courage and wisdom throughout his journey).

Resiliency does not mean that we have to be “invulnerable” or perfect.

•All superheroes have a version of their own “kryptonite” (something that stops them for a bit, or something that hurts them, scares them, or causes them to make a mistake). We all make mistakes and we all might have vulnerabilities, and that is also how you can learn and grow to be the very kind of hero you were meant to become.

Resiliency does not mean the absence or avoidance of adversity/difficulty altogether.

•Characters in the Rebellion from the Star Wars saga make great examples of this point; Jyn Erso from Rogue One helps us understand that being a hero sometimes means increased exposure to adversity in order to do what's right. Jyn Orso lost both of her parents and her home in the war and she made a choice to fight in the rebellion to stand up for what she believed in. Even knowing she would have to face warfare and life-threatening circumstances, she remained dedicated to her cause.

Individuals with resiliency are able to see opportunities for growth when they are facing tough times; they can see the “silver lining” in the clouds or even a “call to action.”

- “Silver lining” is the positive aspect that comes out of a difficult or painful situation. Receiving a “call to action” means that a person (a potential hero), as a result of their own personal struggle, recognizes a need or a problem and becomes motivated to take action to try to solve the problem or improve the situation.

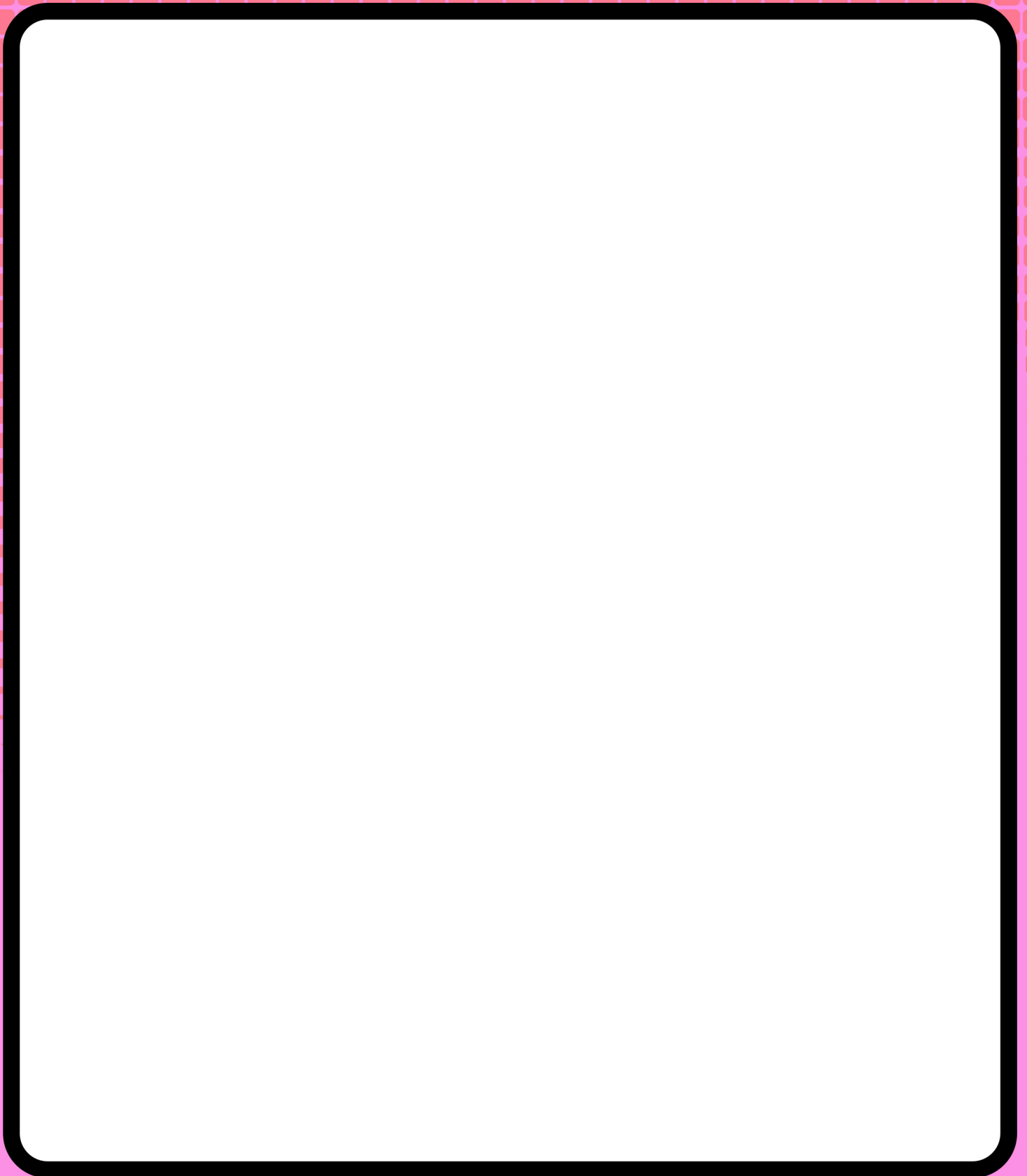
- For example:

- Miles Morales sees the tragic death of Peter Parker as a pivotal “call to action” and dedicates his life to taking up the mantle and responsibilities of Spider-Man. As painful as it was for him, the “silver lining” in this situation was that Miles was able to obtain his own superpowers and become a superhero.

- Bruce Wayne sees the tragic death of his parents as a pivotal “call to action” and dedicates his life to ensuring the safety and security of others like him.

- T’Challa sees the tragic death of his father as a pivotal “call to action” and dedicates his life to becoming the Black Panther, ensuring the safety and security of the people of Wakanda and help the Avengers in the war against supervillain, Thanos.

**What are some examples of your calls to action?
What are some examples of the silver lining in
your own life?**



MEET THE DOCTOR

Dr. Janina Scarlet is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, author, and a full-time geek. A Ukrainian-born refugee, she survived Chernobyl radiation and persecution.

She immigrated to the United States at the age of 12 with her family and later, inspired by the *X-Men*, developed Superhero Therapy to help patients with anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Superhero Therapy refers to incorporating popular culture examples into evidence-based therapy to help the client to become the hero of their own journey. Dr. Scarlet is the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award by the United Nations Association for her work on Superhero Therapy.

Dr. Scarlet's work has been featured on Yahoo, BBC, NPR, Sunday Times, CNN, CW, ABC, Huffington Post, The New York Times, Forbes, the Nerdist, BuzzFeed, Bleeding Cool, CNET, Mugglenet, LADbible, and many other outlets. She currently works at the Center for Stress and Anxiety Management in San Diego and has authored *Superhero Therapy*, *Harry Potter Therapy*, *Therapy Quest*, *Dark Agents*, *Super-Women*, as well as numerous contributions to *Star Wars Psychology*, *Star Trek Psychology*, *Wonder Woman Psychology*, *Supernatural Psychology* and many other books.

Founded in 2013, SuperheroIRL is a project of Pop Culture Hero Coalition, the first 501c-3 non-profit to use relatable stories from TV, comics, and film, to develop tools for living, including conflict resolution, resilience, empathy, and other crucial mental health skills.

Created by pop-culture-fluent clinical psychologists and educators, our work is in schools, comic cons, children's hospitals – and homes in the age of COVID-19.

www.PopCultureHero.org

For info and requests, please email **info@PopCultureHero.org**

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