Resilience Tree:
Growing Pathways to Senior Leadership

Presented on:
Thursday, May 13, 2021
Dedication from Dissertation & for Resilience Tree Model

“I dedicate this to all the Black women who aspire to senior student affairs positions at predominantly White institutions as well as their mentors, supervisors, colleagues, friends, and families.

I hope everyone who [hears these] stories will find and share their voice. *Silence speaks volumes and it is time to shout!*” (Sobers, 2014, p. 4)
Definition Used

“Resilience is defined as achievement when such achievement is rare for those facing similar circumstances or within a similar socio-cultural context”

(Gayles, 2005, p. 250)
Definition Used

“Black women may identify as African, Caribbean, Spanish, African American, or some combination of those identities”

Why a Tree?

- Withstand
- Persevere
- Adapt
- Grow Pathways
- Survive
Positive Psychology Foundation

"What will happen when we think about what is right with people rather than fixating on what is wrong with them?" - Donald O. Clifton

Research Impact:
Seeking strategies for success from Black women already in Dean of Students & Vice President positions rather than the deficit model of focusing on what is keeping staff from those positions.
Compensatory Variable Model

Risk Factors
(What you have to withstand that inhibits progression towards a goal)

Compensatory Variables / Resilience Tree Elements
(What you can control)

Outcome

Ratio Note:
The more risk factors the more compensatory variables are needed to build resilience to persevere
Risk Factors

1. Tokenism

2. Perceptions of Appearance

3. Perceptions of Communication Styles

4. Inequitable Compensation
Resilience Tree Model

Roots  Branches  Leaves  Environment

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Roots / Bark

…I was brought up, like many of us, in the Black church, and I love having that spiritual base. I think many of us who are African American have that. I mean if we don’t formally worship in a particular place, many of us do, but even those of us who don’t, we still have that spiritual core and to me that just helps ground me, help center me, help keep me from going off…

~Patricia
Roots / Bark

TENANTS:
• Activities that replenish
• Activities that allow you an escape
• Activities that ground you

CHAT PROMPT:
• What are ways you refuel, take care of yourself, set boundaries or unplug?
• What are ways you have promoted someone else to recharge?
I never would have applied for that job, ever, but you know somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Hey, I’ve been watching you work for a year and I think you’d be a good candidate for this position so apply for it...” and that’s pretty much been the story of my life, you know... I think that’s been part of my success is because I’ve been blessed with great opportunities because people have really believed in me.

~Judy
Branches

TENANTS:
• People who see your potential
• People who believe in you
• People who encourage you

CHAT PROMPT:
• Who are the people that make up your tribe?
• How have you communicated to someone that you are invested in their potential?
Leaves/Flowers/Fruit

… when and where I enter, I enter first as an African American, and so for me I feel that my role in life has been and will continue to be as long as I work and after, helping other young people to understand that [it’s] okay to be defined by that, it’s what you do with that in terms of how you help others and reach back and you know make some things better for other people.

~Elise
Leaves/Flowers/Fruit

TENANTS:
• Celebrate your wins!
• Sharing Lessons Learned
• Knowing when to say no

CHAT PROMPT:
• Describe a time when you realized you were confident and competent enough to give back.
Environment/Soil

...so my internship was at [a community college]. [M]y boss, the president, I worked directly with him. I attended all the senior meetings, I mean... it was fabulous, and he had a lot of trust in me and gave me every available opportunity to be involved at the leadership level, the board of trustees, everything. This was a stellar experience honestly, and I wouldn’t trade it ... that was really key to helping me to navigate leadership positions...

~Elise
Environment / Soil

TENANTS:
- Observe the cues
- Know when you uproot and replant.
- Acknowledge your impact

CHAT PROMPT:
- What do you need to be supported by your supervisors, co-workers, and institution?
For Those that Support...

Roots / Bark
- Check-in past the performed response.
- Listen
- Normalize breaks

Branches
- Extend the offer to help & mean it
- Be There / Show up
- Tell them the potential you see
For Those that Support...

Leaves / Flowers / Fruit
- Ask for their advice
- Help them process what will fill them up vs. drain them

Environment / Soil
- Addressing oppressive hegemonic practices that go unchecked
- Sharing the impact that they have had on you with others!
Books by Dr. Sobers

**Resilience Tree:**
A Model for Women Leaders of Color (and Those That Support Them)
*Coming Summer 2021*

Chapter - “Advancing as a Person of Color” (Unpacking Tokenism)

Chapter - “Leadership Lessons from Partnered Dance” (Exploring Communication)

[https://shaunatsobers.com/books](https://shaunatsobers.com/books)
References and Resources

• Resilience Tree Discussion / Reflection Prompts - https://shaunatsobers.com/resiliencetreerefelection

• Resilience Tree Worksheet (BLANK)- https://shaunatsobers.com/resiliencetreeworksheet

• Resilience Tree Worksheet (with tenant examples) - https://shaunatsobers.com/resiliencetreemodel

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