

# The Resilience Project:

An Educational Intervention to Promote Psychological Resilience

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Alex Lickerman, MD

Michael Quinn, PhD

Kelly Hogan Stewart, MPH

Virginia Carr, MS, RN

Ingrid Busching, BA

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# GLS Grantee Meeting

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- Introduction
- Program Design
- Lessons
- Findings
- Experiential activity



**Group participation encouraged!**



# Resilience in the News

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*"Boston is a tough and **resilient** town. So are its people."* Barack Obama - Boston Bombing

*"...part of what makes America strong is our **resilience**, tenacity, innovation and our willingness to be optimistic about our future."* Valerie Jarrett

*"A Year After Sandy, New Initiative To Help '**Resilient**' Cities Prepare For Disaster"*  
Headline from Forbes - Sandy Hurricane

*"I've always been impressed with the tremendous **resilience** of the American economy"* Dick Cheney

*"**Resilience**, recovery, grief on Sandy Anniversary"* Headline from Yahoo News - Sandy Hurricane

*"After The Sandy Hook Shooting, Experts Say Kids Are **Resilient** In Coping with Trauma"*  
Headline from Huffington Post - Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting



# Resilience is...

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- Not just surviving, but thriving in adversity
- The ability to persevere through obstacles
- A result of a developing strong inner-life-state





# Program Design



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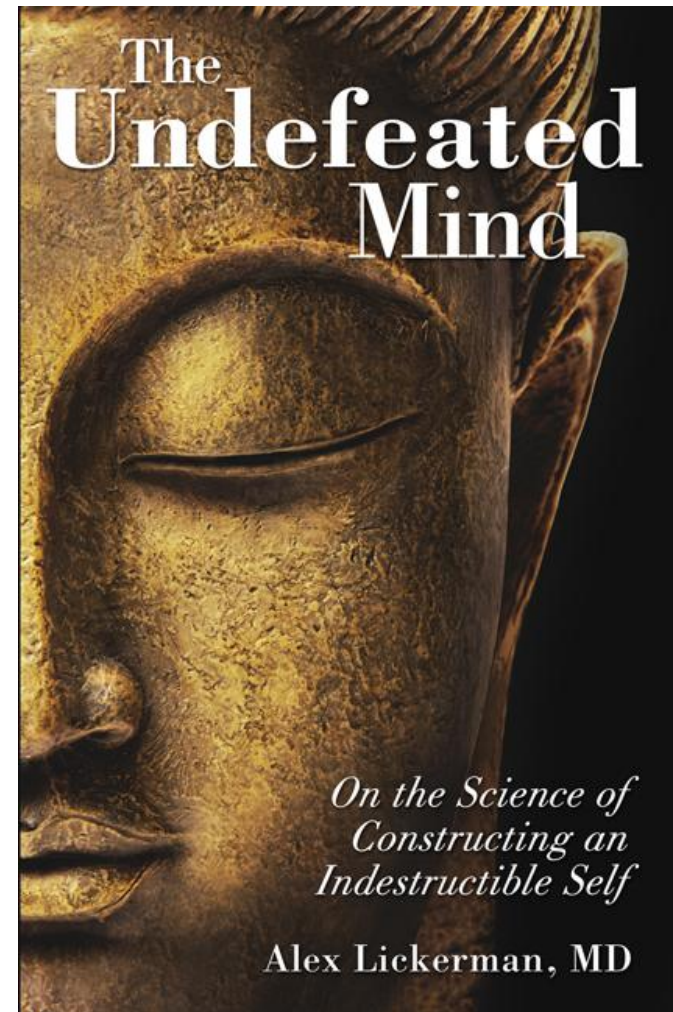


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# Research Question

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- College can be a stressful experience for many young people. Hardiness on our campus has been raised as an issue.
- Can students benefit from an educational intervention that provides training in resilience-related cognitive and behavioral skills?



# Pilot (2012-2013)

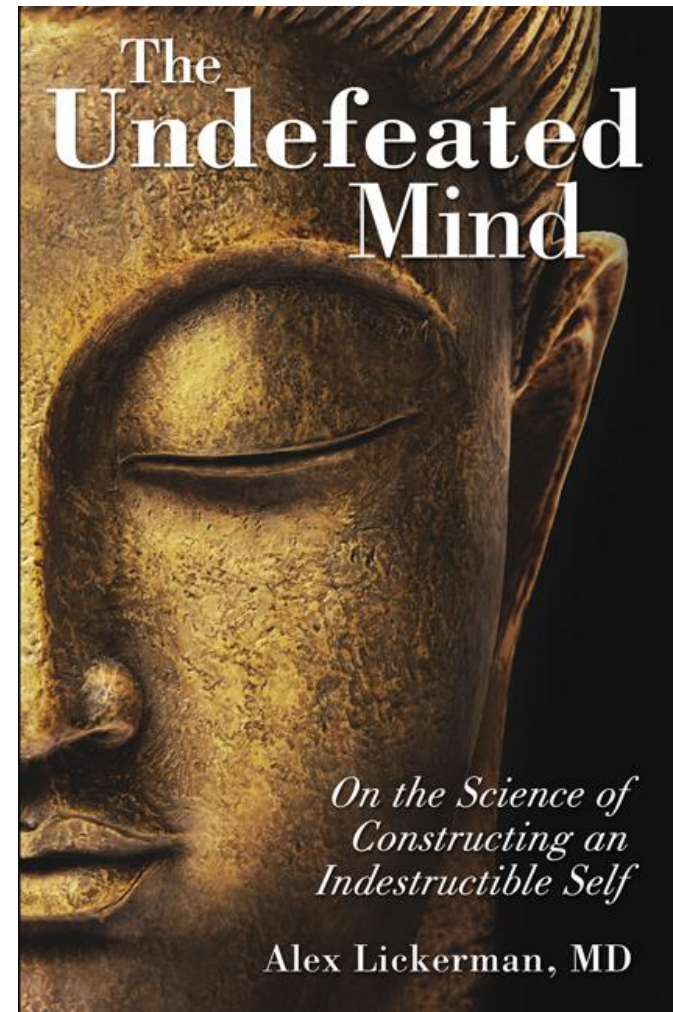
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## Assess Feasibility

- Recruitment & Attendance
- Retention & Engagement

## Estimate Short-Term Impact

- Psychological resilience
- Perseverance
- Anxiety and depression



# Study (2013-2014)

- Fall 2013 – Distributed posters, flyers, brochures at “Back to Campus” events
- One week, actively recruited students
- Scheduled 9 early evening workshop sessions across 3 quarters
- Included control group





# Measures

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## Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale<sup>1</sup>

- Measure of resilience, ability to cope with stress
- 25-items, each rated on 5-point Likert-type scale

...over the past month, how true is this of you...

Not at all true – True nearly all of the time

“I am able to adapt to change.”

“I am in control of my life.”

<sup>1</sup> Connor & Davidson, *Depr and Anxiety*, 2003



# Measures

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## Grit Scale<sup>2</sup>

- Measure of perseverance & passion for long-term goals
- 12 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale

Very much like me – Not at all like me

“Setbacks don’t discourage me.”

“I finish whatever I begin.”

<sup>2</sup> Duckworth et al., *JPSP*, 2007



# Other Measures

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## Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)<sup>3</sup>

- Measure of mild to moderate depression
- 9 items, each rated on 5-point Likert-type scale

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by...

“Little interest or pleasure in doing things”

“Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless”

<sup>3</sup> Kroenke et al., *JGIM*, 2001



# Other Measures

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## Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7)<sup>4</sup>

- Measure of generalized anxiety, tension, worry
- 7 items, each rated on 5-point Likert-type scale

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by...

“Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge”

“Worrying too much about different things”

<sup>4</sup> Kroenke et al., *Annals Int Med*, 2007





# Lessons



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# Session 1 – 3: Finding Your Mission

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Students develop a personal mission statement for their life, and learn to leverage their statement in times of adversity and discouragement.

These sessions also introduce students to the Resilience Project and their workshop group.

**Exercise:** Exhaustively list joyful activities and events and use the list to deduce passions and construct a preliminary statement. By session 3 students share their statement with the group for feedback and encouragement.



# Session 4: Managing Expectations

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Students learn to form realistic expectations about a goal or challenge by gathering data from others.

They use this data to develop a set of expectations and process for achieving their goals.

**Exercise:** Interview a classmate about a difficult experience or challenge. Collect objective data on their experience and use it to set expectations for your own experience.



# Session 5: Willpower

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Students learn and practice habit formation, avoidance, and distraction techniques.

They use these skills to resist temptation, change negative behaviors, and develop new positive habits.

**Exercise:** Discuss a habit you want to change with your group. Using your understanding of behavior change, work together to create a set of strategies to modify your daily routine.





# Session 6: Self-Explanatory Style

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Students learn about self-explanatory style and discover their own style of explaining positive and negative events.

They discover how the stories we tell ourselves affect our resilience and opportunities for success.

**Exercise:** Consider an adverse event you have experienced and write a list of alternative explanations. Share your list with your classmates and discuss the importance of looking past your first explanation.



## Session 7: Acceptance

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Students learn to accept the negative emotions associated with certain goals they want to achieve.

They commit to the goal and cling to that commitment rather than the natural desire to avoid unpleasant feelings.

**Exercise:** Write down a goal you have been avoiding because of pain. List the required steps, and the negative feelings associated with each step. Share your goal and feelings with your group and make a commitment.



# Session 8: Letting Go

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Students learn about the process of changing or letting go of a goal or dream and the benefits that arise from loss.

They learn about wisdom's role in deciding when it is time to let go.

**Exercise:** Write down something you lost or a goal you did not achieve. Try to explain what happened and observe or predict what benefits you received. Share your experience with your group.



# Session 9: Gratitude

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Students learn to be grateful for gifts and opportunities they have been given.

They learn to vividly imagine loss and change in order to increase their gratitude.

**Exercise:** Consider something you are grateful for. Make a list of ways your life would be different without this person or thing, and use your list to find reasons to be grateful. Share your list with your group.





# Findings



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# Feasibility

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## Experimental Group

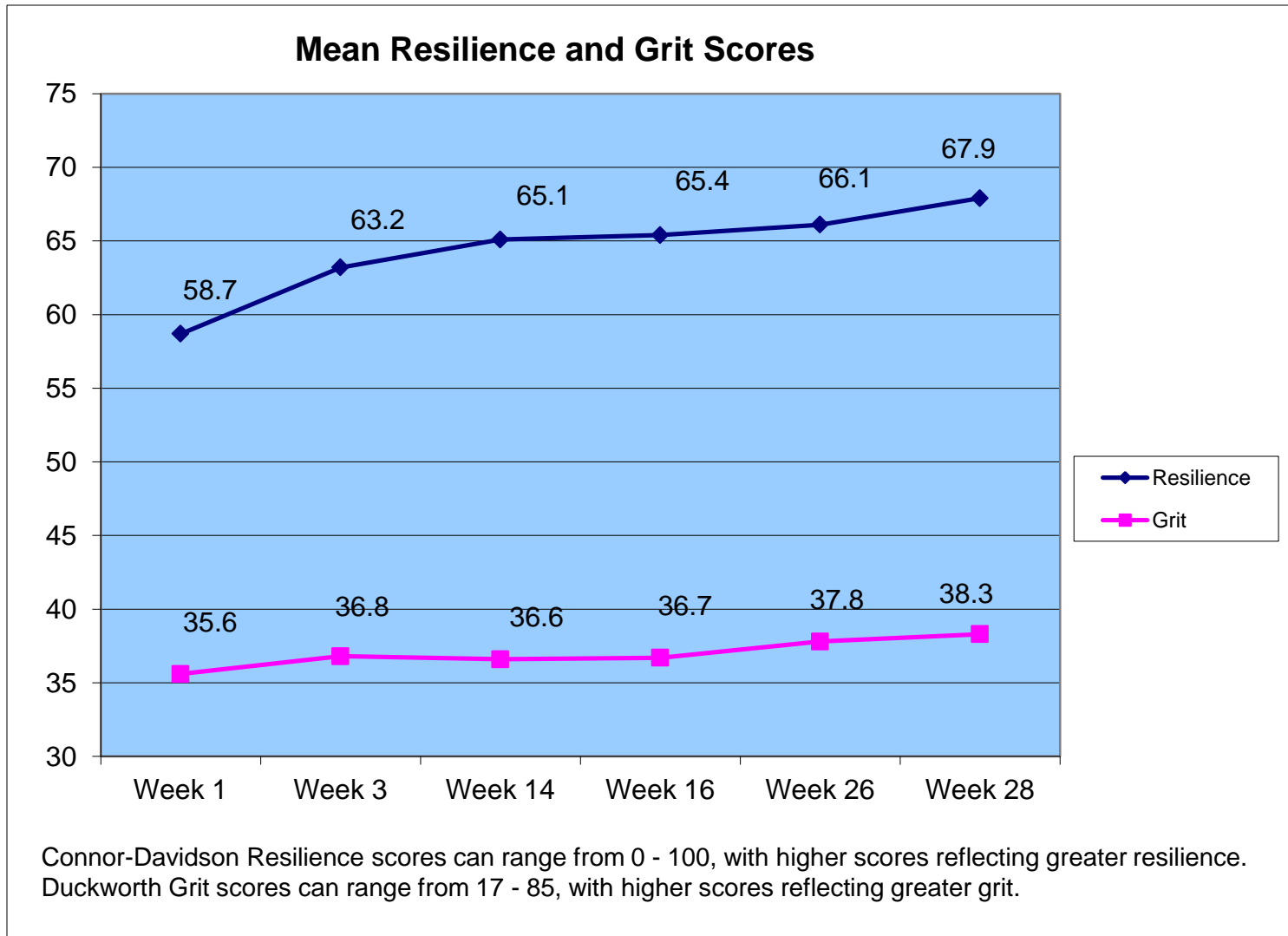
- Quickly recruited 47 participants
- Across 9 sessions, average attendance was 56%

## Control Group

- Quickly recruited 47 participants
- Across 3 sessions, average attendance was 98%
- Incentivized with \$20 gift cards

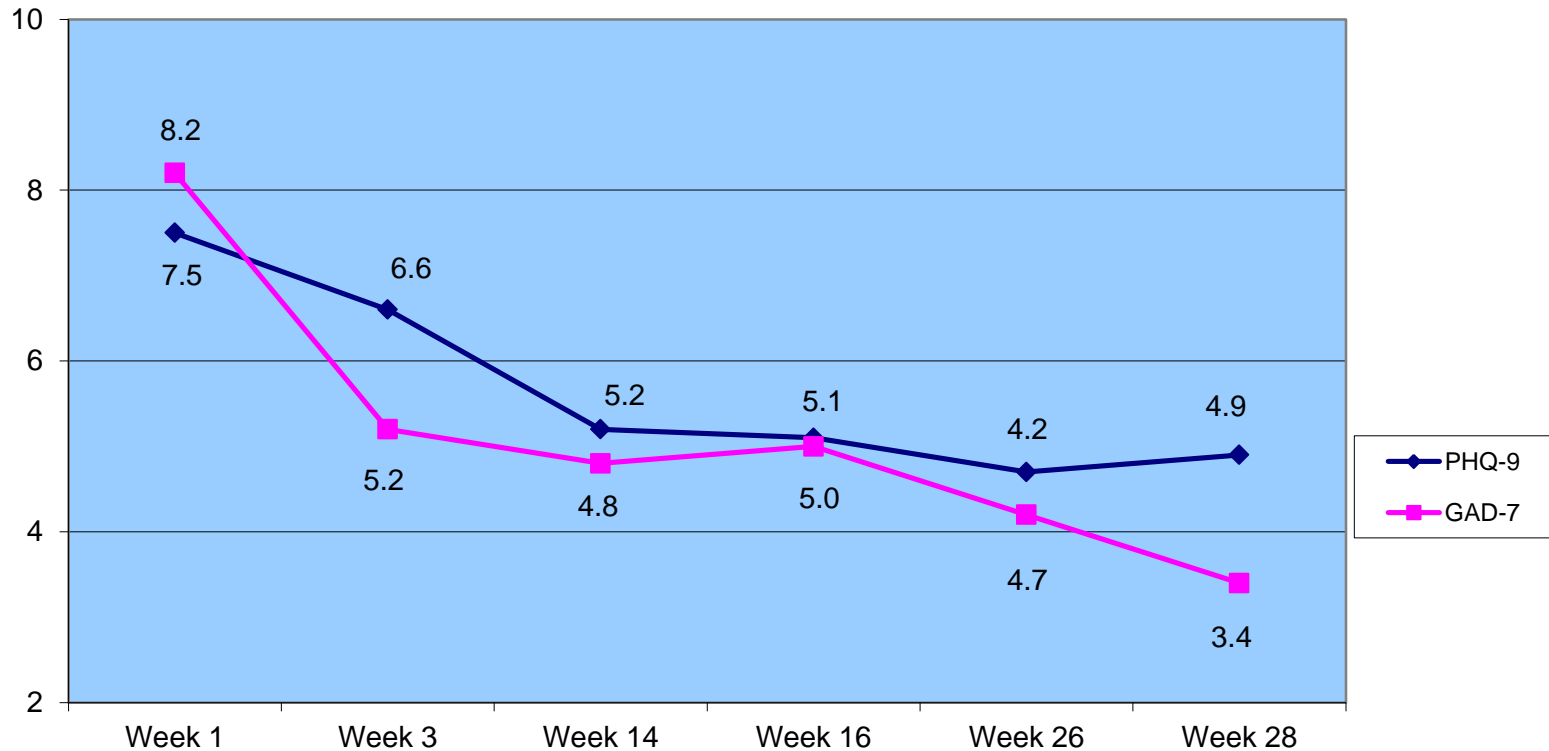


# Impact – Experimental Group



# Impact – Experimental Group

Mean PHQ-9 and GAD-7 Scores

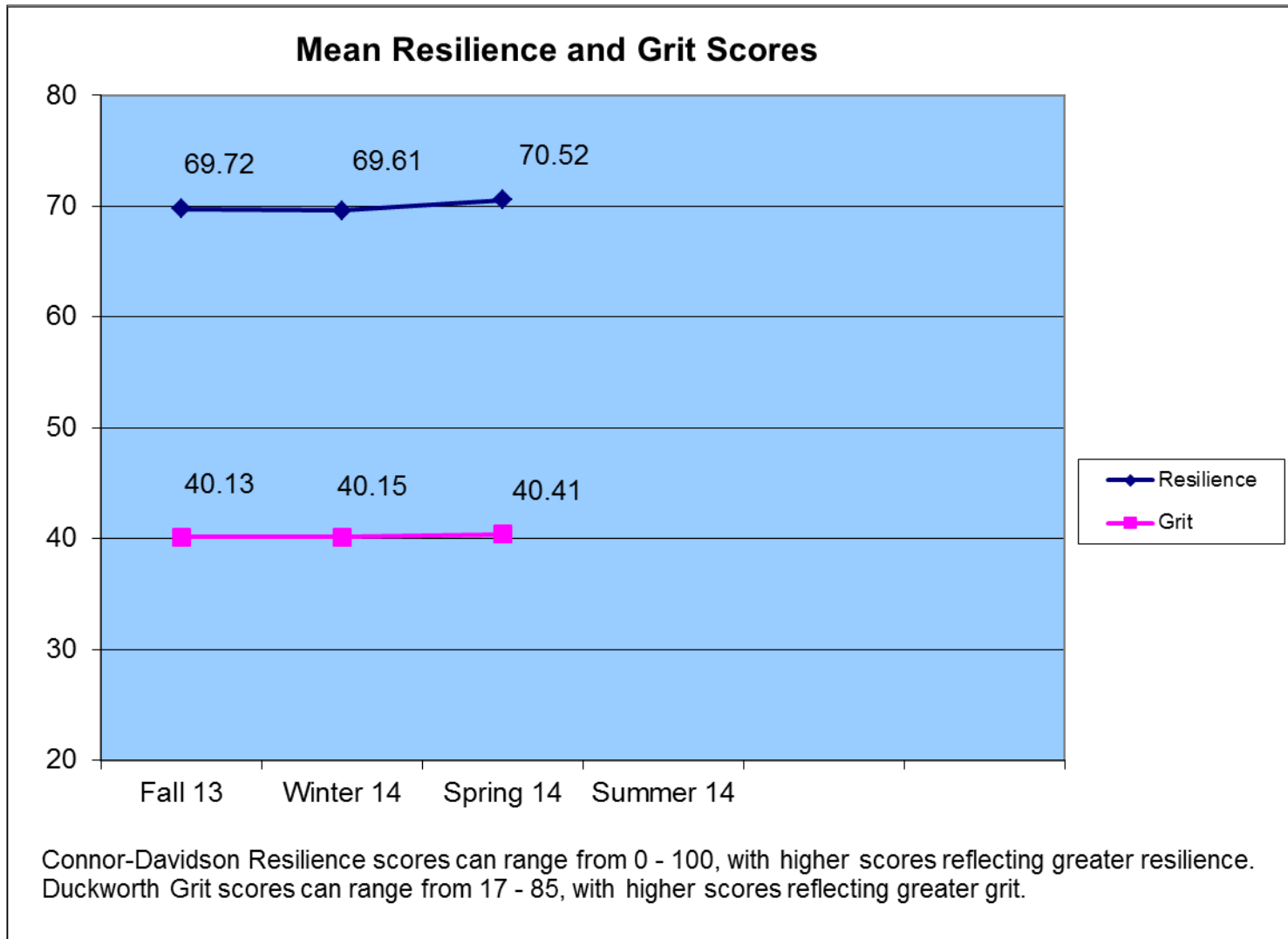


PHQ-9 scores can range from 0 - 27, with higher scores reflecting greater depression.  
GAD-7 scores can range from 0 - 21, with higher scores reflecting greater generalized anxiety.

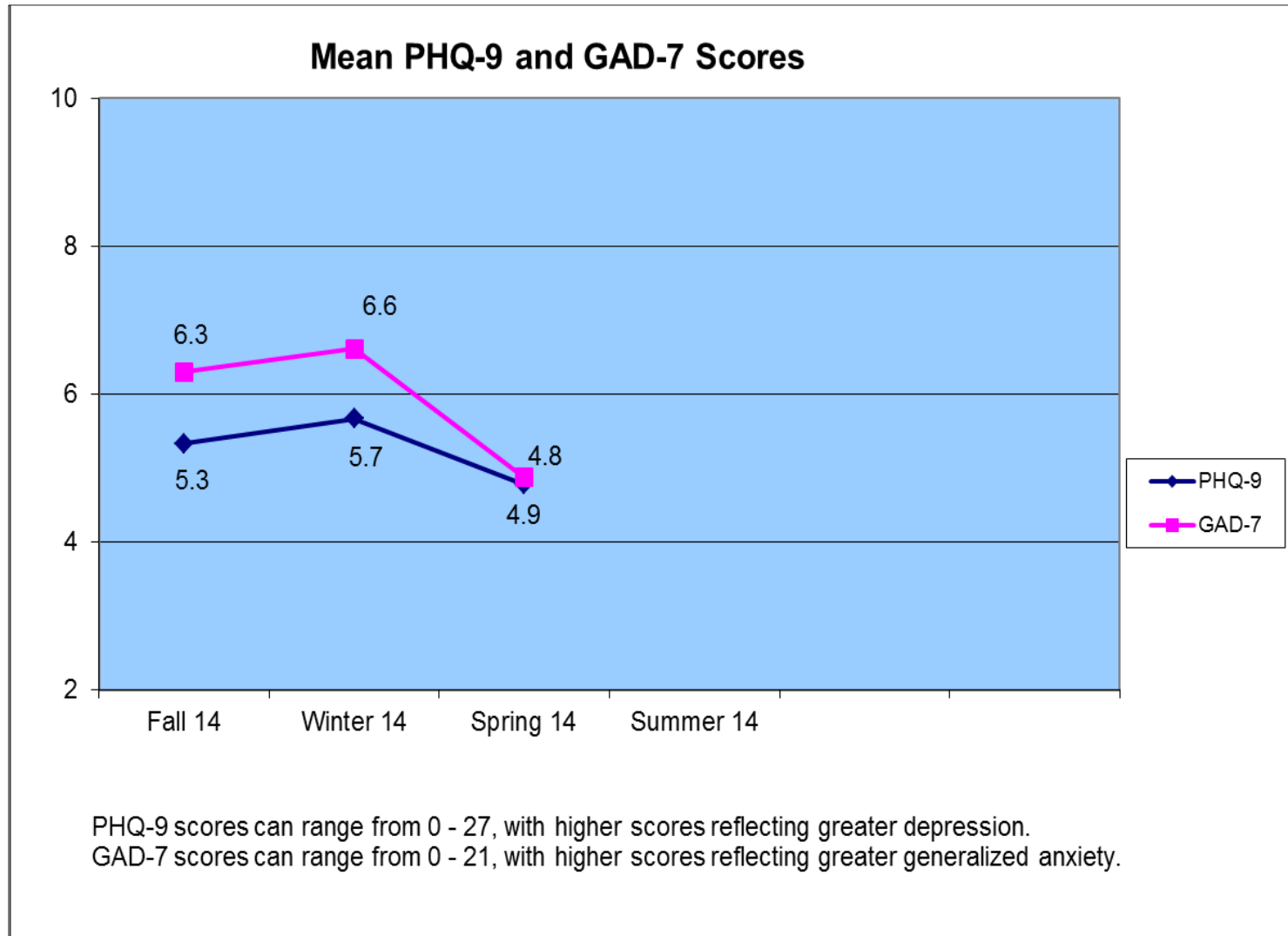




# Impact – Control Group



# Impact – Control Group





# Model Workshop – Accept Pain



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# Activity

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- Write down a goal, experience, or desire you have been avoiding because of the pain it involves
- List steps to accomplish the goal or move forward
- Name the unpleasant feelings associated with each step
- Share your experience and list with your group

