

# Connecting Children and Families with Nature

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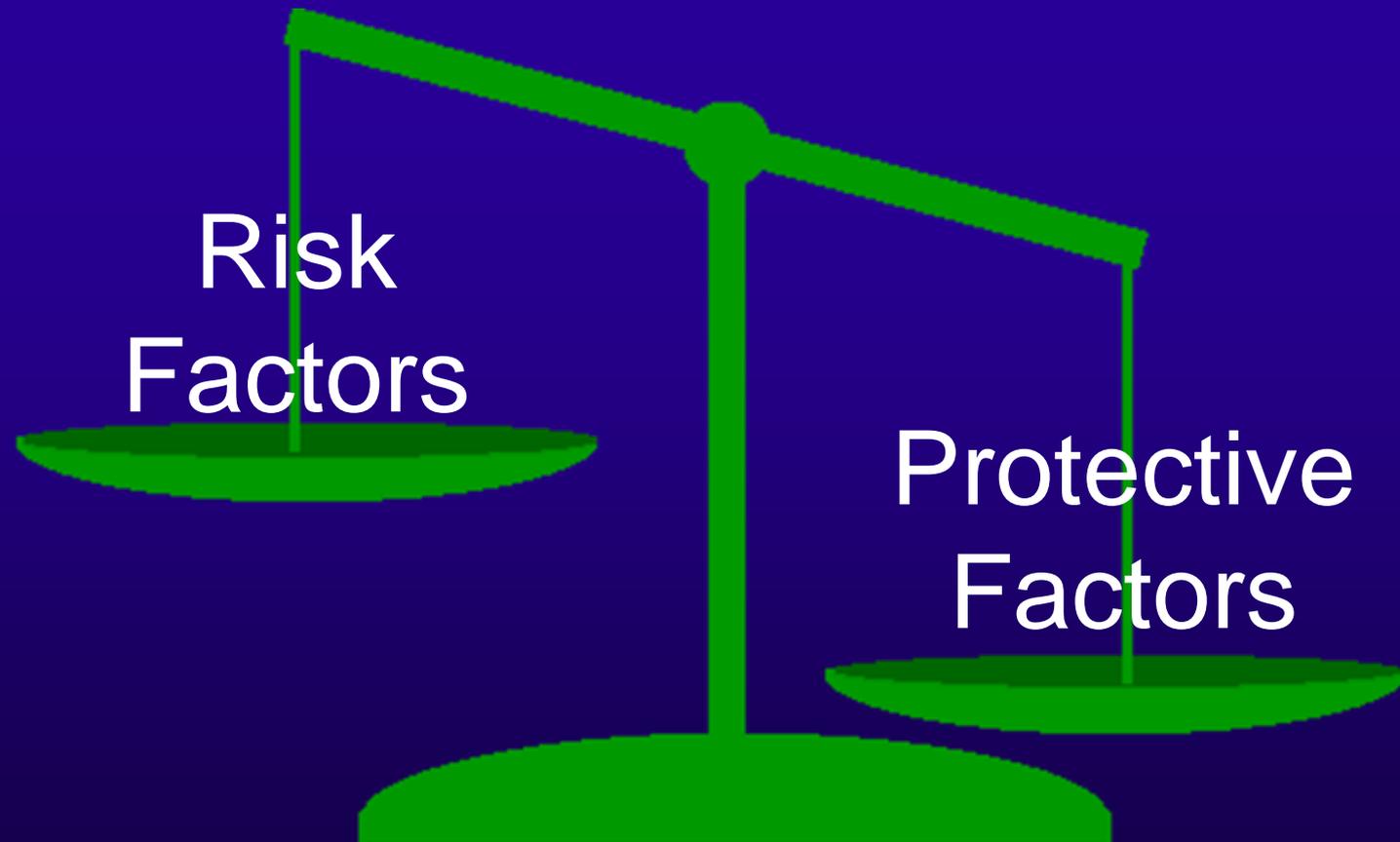
Midwest Natural Resources Group: 2020 Vision  
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
November 28, 2007

Since the 1970s my work  
has addressed these large  
research questions:

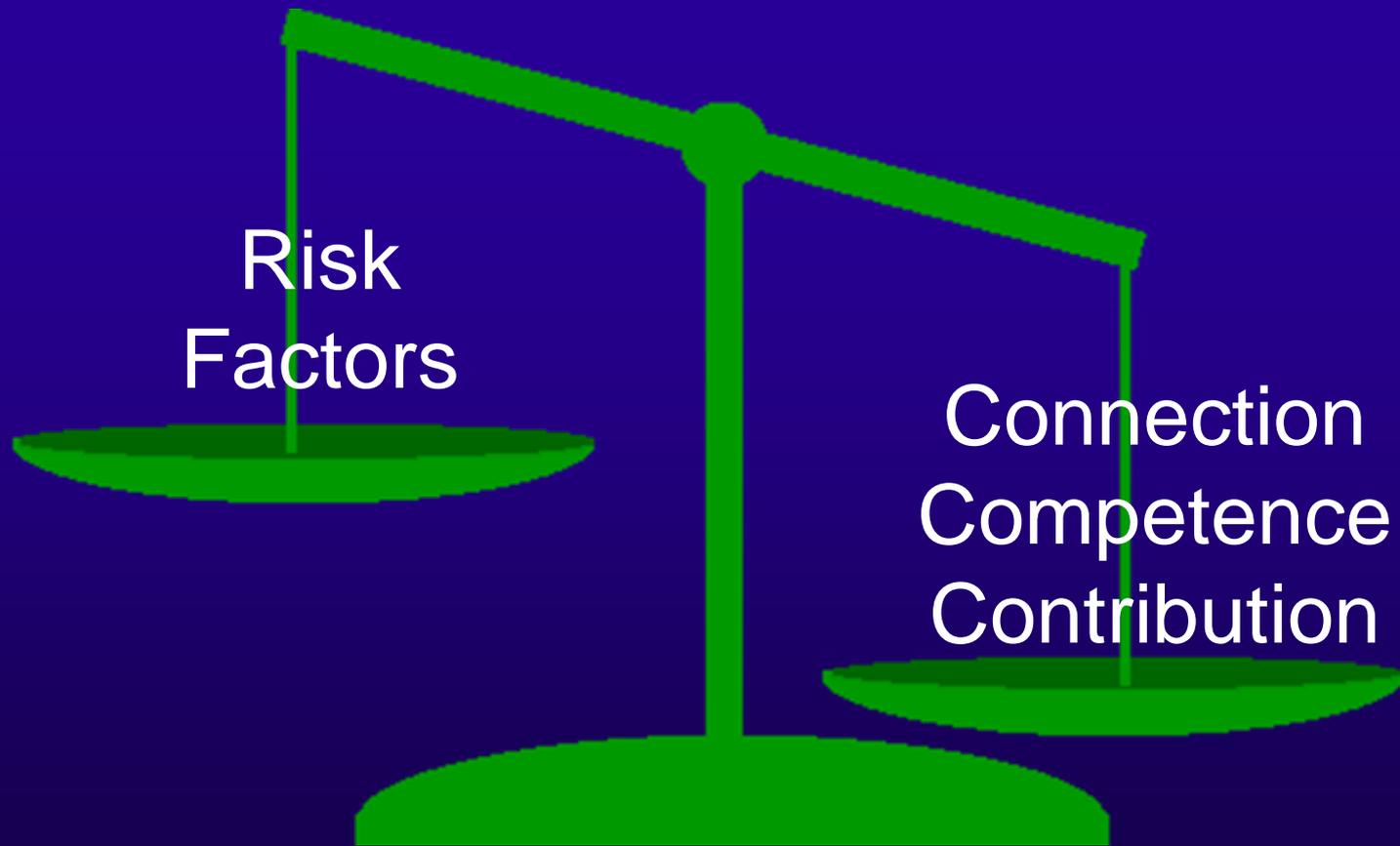
What does it take to raise a child to become a caring, responsible, respectful adult?

Especially for a child in high-risk circumstances, what are the protective factors that will enable that child to thrive and succeed?

# Tipping the Balance Toward Promise



# Tipping the Balance Toward Promise



# Strong connections from the start



But while my colleagues and I were studying these important risk and protective factors, something else was happening to children and families across America, and we weren't paying close enough attention!

# To what extent -- and in what ways -- are children spending time outside today?

- Less time playing outside than parents did
- Decreased use of national parks
- Declining access to public play spaces
- Time outside is structured and adult-directed

# Why does this matter? What are the benefits when children play outside?

- Better physical health
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Better concentration
- Improved cooperation, problem-solving and creativity
- More likely to be stewards of the environment as adults

# What stops children from playing outside?

- Parental fear
- Lack of access
- Seductiveness of technology



## The Children & Nature Network

[www.cnaturenet.org](http://www.cnaturenet.org)

Inspired by Richard Louv's  
2005 book, *Last Child in the  
Woods: Saving Our Children from  
Nature Deficit Disorder*

# Windows of Opportunity



- Educate parents
- Reframe the issue to meet parents' needs
- Return nature to the schools
- Use connection to nature as a lens for policy, planning and community-building

*Leave no child inside!*

The theory of biophilia:

Children have an innate attraction to natural things.

E.O. Wilson





Tap into their natural  
sense of wonder.

It's never too soon!



Strengthen family connections through nature.

De-stress your kids  
and yourself!



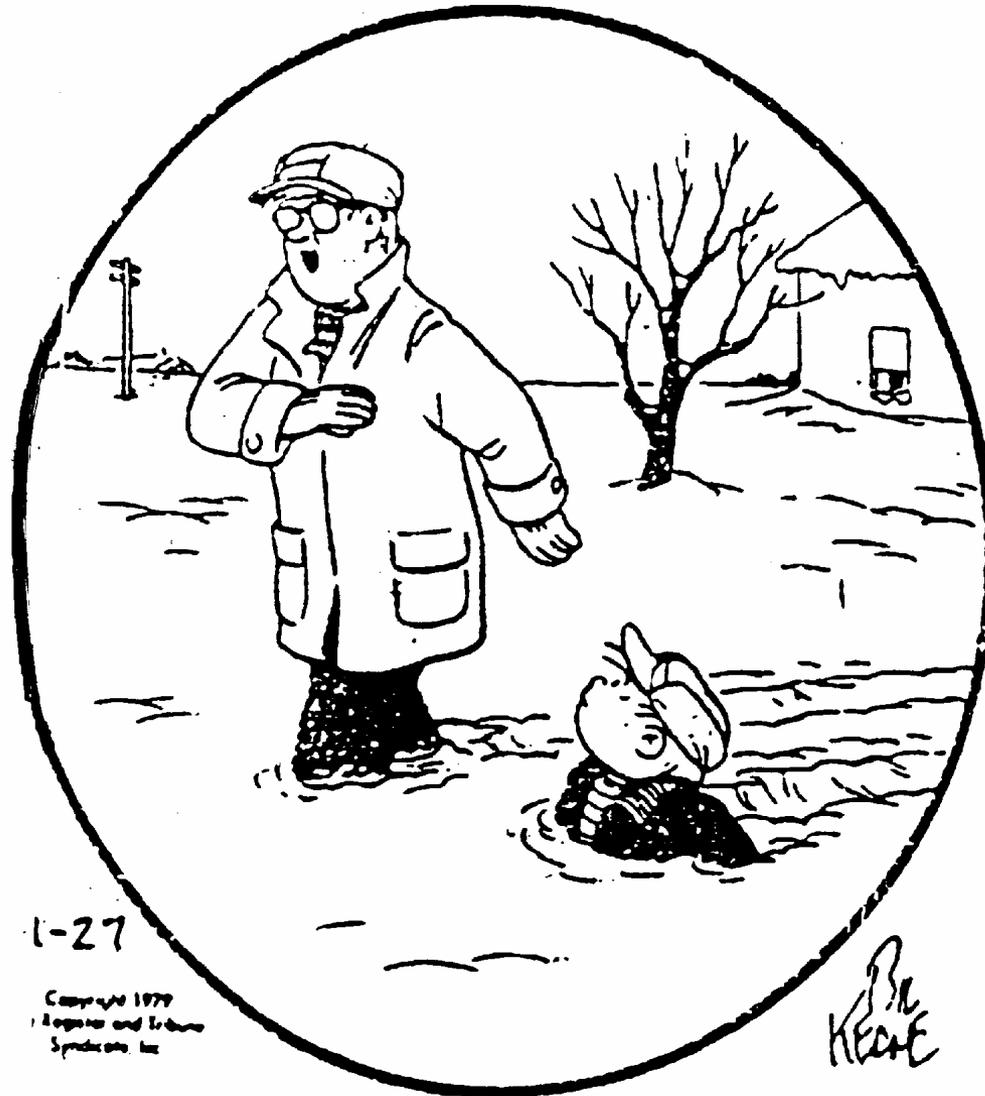
“The only voyage of discovery... consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust, 1923

See the world through new eyes!



By Bil Keane



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"This is nothing. When I was your age we had snow that came all the way up to here on me."

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- Reframe the issue to meet parents' needs
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*Leave no child inside!*

“Whatever kids do is based on how adults have made the environment. Adults will control the government for the next 20 years. Kids do what adults allow them to do. They build highways that kids can’t cross to get to the forest. They make video games that keep kids inside. If adults provided better opportunities, kids would go out more.”

Simon, age 13



YOU have the power to  
“make the environment”  
that will reconnect  
children and families to  
nature!

*To learn more, visit  
[www.cnaturenet.org](http://www.cnaturenet.org)*