

YOUR EVERYDAY GESTURES CAN HELP A CHILD HEAL.

Research continues to show that witnessing or experiencing traumatic events in childhood can impact the physical development of a child's brain. You can help reverse the effects. In fact, as a caring adult, you could be the most important factor in helping children heal. Here's what you can do:



CELEBRATE

Use "put-ups," not "put-downs."



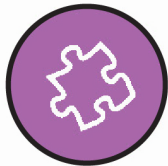
COMFORT

Stay calm and patient.



LISTEN

Show an interest in their passions.



COLLABORATE

Ask for their opinions.



INSPIRE

Expose them to new ideas.

Childhood trauma
Changing minds.

DEFENDING CHILDHOOD Ad Council FUTURE'S WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Washtenaw
SUCCESS BY 6



www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org

Find more information and helpful tips at ChangingMindsNOW.org

CELEBRATE

- Engage them in conversation about successes and challenges, and praise the process, not just the final achievement.
- Engage them in activities they enjoy and that you can do together, like video games, art projects, shooting hoops, etc.
- Encourage them to explore cultural traditions and identify sources of cultural pride.
- Their ideas of who they are may be constantly changing as they grow. Be supportive of this by helping them build a sense of personal identity around their likes, dislikes, hopes and values.

COMFORT

- Be present and pay attention. Look for changes in behaviors and check in with them about what you're noticing.
- Offer validating and reflecting statements to help them label their own emotions when in distress.
- Practice relaxation techniques when they are not under stress – like counting to ten, deep breathing, meditation, or positive self-talk. Repetition will make them more likely to utilize these techniques when they're upset.
- Help teens identify their strategies to manage stress and control their impulses.
- Help them identify friends that make them feel happy and confident.

LISTEN

- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer.
- Be open. Show interest in what they're saying.
- Reflect their emotions with your body language.
- Be alert for moments of honesty and vulnerability. Teens will, on occasion, break down and open up to you. Give them time to express themselves before offering advice or assistance.
- Restate, in your own words, what you heard them say (to make sure you heard it right).
- Pick a safe place to talk during an activity, while playing video games, or while driving in a car. Sometimes teens will be more encouraged to express themselves when you are not looking directly at each other.
- If a teen wants to talk about a difficult topic, supportive listening helps them express their thoughts and make sense of their experience. If a teen wants to share his or her story, allow them to share without interruptions.

COLLABORATE

- Engage them in the problem-solving process step by step, until you reach a solution.
- Help them to identify and understand what the obstacle is and how they are feeling. Encourage them to describe the problems they encounter in their own words.
- Once you identify the issue, encourage the teen to generate possible solutions and try them out. Help them think through the pros and cons of different ideas.
- Collaborate on when and how the teen can try out the solution, and help them consider what support they may need.
- Check in and reflect on how it went – provide support and encouragement if the solution didn't work out. What did they learn in trying that particular solution? Sometimes we have the right solution, but need to practice it a few times. Collaborate on possible next steps they could take.
- When teens are struggling, be their sounding board and help them to reach their own conclusions.
- Encourage them to rely on you in times of struggle, and assist them in identifying other sources of support at home, at school, and in their community.
- Engage teens in conversations about how their peers and friends might be feeling during conflicts. Help them to label others' emotions and to identify potential conflict resolution strategies.

INSPIRE

- Nurture voice and choice within a framework of risks and rewards.
- Encourage healthy risk-taking and trying new things.
- Encourage teens to participate in activities that allow them to practice skills and feel good about themselves.
- Engage them in short- and long-term goal setting – help them establish realistic, achievable goals. Anticipate success.
- Provide opportunities for increasingly challenging tasks.
- Explore their future goals by creating opportunities for them to meet or work with adults in areas that interest them.
- Ask teens who their role models are and why. Help teens focus on what qualities they admire. And serve as a positive role model yourself.