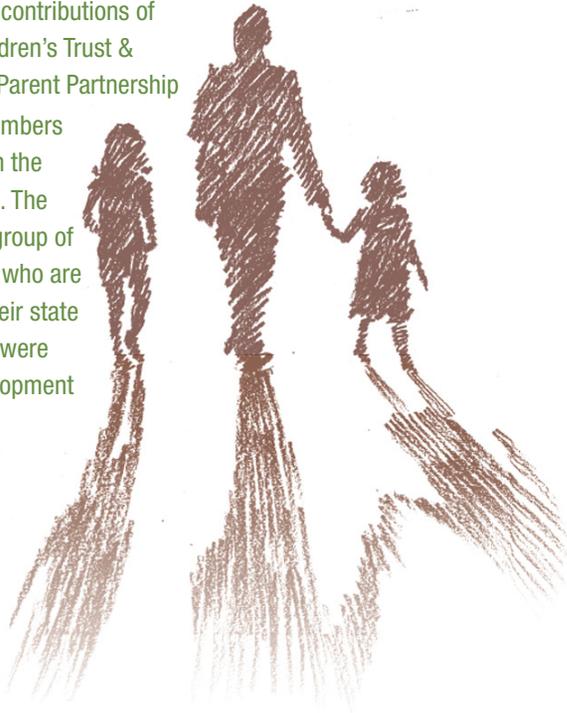


We appreciate the valuable contributions of the National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund's National Parent Partnership Council (ANPPC), whose members served as a vital resource in the development of this booklet. The ANPPC consists of a small group of experienced parent leaders who are nominated to this role by their state children's trust funds. They were an integral part of the development process for this booklet.



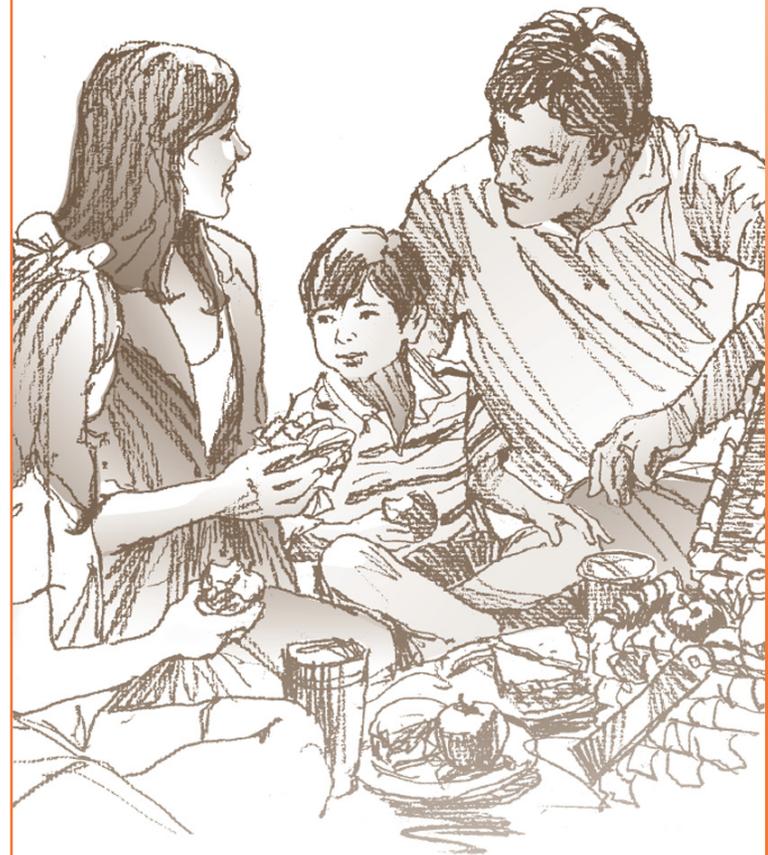
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Who Makes  
Families Strong?

*Parents*





*“When we choose to be parents, we accept another human being as part of ourselves, and a large part of our emotional selves will stay with that person as long as we live. From that time on, there will be another person on this earth whose orbit around us will affect us as surely as the moon affects the tides, and affect us in some ways more deeply than anyone else can.”*

Fred Rogers



In strong families, members ask each other for help. They speak up when they need somebody to listen to them or they need to know that someone cares.

Parents and caregivers play an important role in safe-guarding their children and strengthening their families. Every family has strengths. Building on those strengths, in the family and in the community, helps us to connect with and care about one another – the first step in keeping children safe. This booklet offers parents a few suggestions about how they can build on their families’ strengths. It also contains an introduction to the five Protective Factors that are an integral part of the Strengthening Families™

Protective Factors Framework.

We hope you find it to be a valuable tool for you and your family. For more information visit [www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net)



The National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds (Alliance) holds the unique position of serving as the membership organization for state children’s trust and prevention funds. Children’s trust and prevention funds are the backbone of our nation’s infrastructure to support children and their families. Across the nation, they are leading the way in strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment before it occurs. The Alliance is pleased to provide this and many other resources to parents and practitioners in multiple fields who are committed to optimal outcomes for all children. To explore additional resources, please see the Alliance’s website at [www.ctfalliance.org](http://www.ctfalliance.org).



# What are Protective Factors?

Protective factors are the strengths and resources that families can draw on when life gets difficult. Taking those good characteristics and building on them is a proven way to strengthen the entire family and thus decrease the likelihood of maltreatment. Each of the protective factors is essential, but most important is what they do together to create strength and stability in families.

This booklet outlines the Protective Factors and provides a few ways in which those factors can be addressed:

1. **Parental Resilience** – Helping parents problem solve, place difficulties in perspective, and draw on trusting relationships and other resources when things go wrong can make a big difference when a family is under stress.
2. **Social Connections** – Helping parents build a social network goes a long way to decreasing their isolation – a major factor in child abuse and neglect.
3. **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development** – Knowing ways to parent or what to expect at different developmental levels lessens stress for parents.
4. **Concrete Support in Times of Need** – Parents who know what's available to them and how to get it – should they ever need it – are less stressed when difficult situations occur.
5. **Social & Emotional Competence in Children** – How caregivers support children's emotional and social expressions profoundly influences how young children learn, develop self-esteem, and understand the world around them.

# Social and Emotional Competency of Children

A child's ability to interact appropriately with others and to express age acceptable emotions is essential to getting along well in the world.

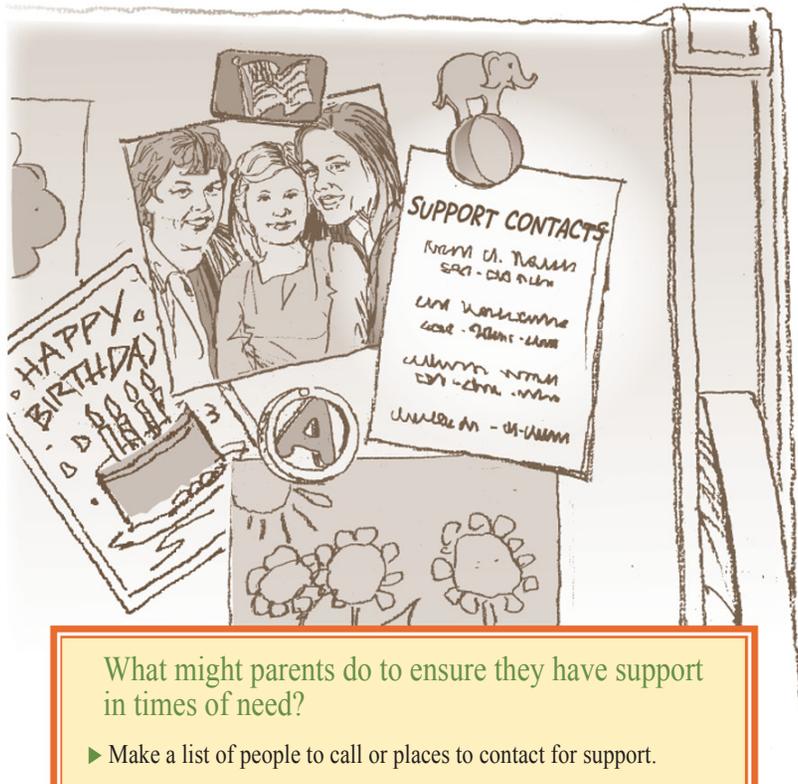


How might parents help develop these appropriate social and emotional characteristics?

- ▶ Sit with your children and talk about how important feelings are.
- ▶ Encourage your children to use positive coping skills and to problem solve in age appropriate ways.

## Concrete Support in Times of Need

No matter what life brings, many families occasionally need help. Knowing where to get that help in the community reduces their stress and helps to make the family stronger.

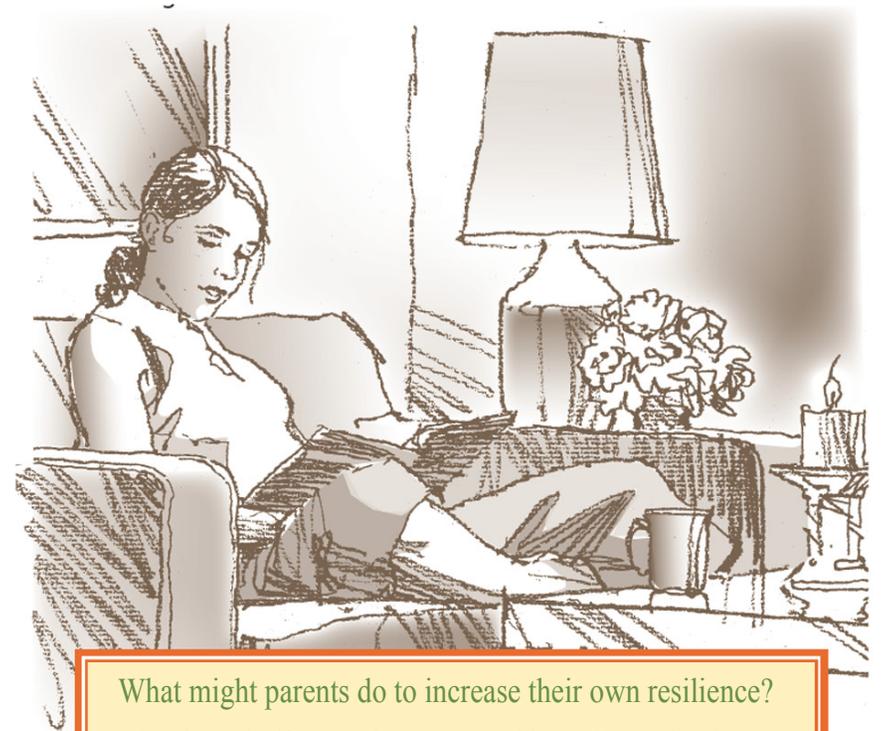


What might parents do to ensure they have support in times of need?

- ▶ Make a list of people to call or places to contact for support.
- ▶ Ask the director of your child's school to host a Community Resource Night so you can see what your community offers.
- ▶ Dial "2-1-1" to find out about family service organizations in your area.

## Parental Resilience

Resilience can be inborn or can be strengthened or created by supportive experiences and people in our lives. It enables us to develop positive attitudes that help us "bounce back" from the challenges we face.



What might parents do to increase their own resilience?

- ▶ Nurturing and self care are important to resilience. Have a place in your home where you have quiet time to refresh and reenergize physically and mentally.
- ▶ Share your feelings with someone you trust and who can identify with you and support you.
- ▶ Surround yourself with people who make you feel confident and competent.

## Social Connections

Having family, friends, and neighbors who are there for us, lessens stress and isolation and helps us feel valued.

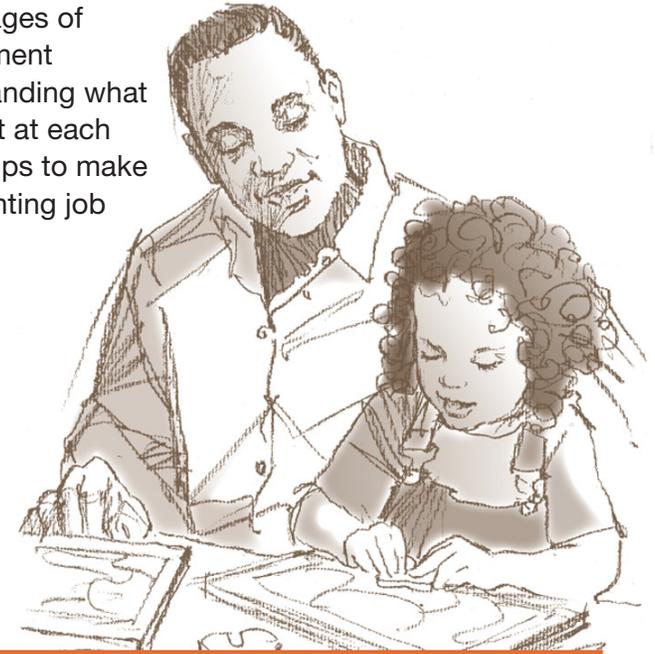


### What might parents do to build social connections?

- ▶ Participate in neighborhood activities like pot luck dinners, street fairs, picnics or community get-togethers.
- ▶ Join a “Get To Know Another Parent” activity at your center.
- ▶ Visit the “Parent Corner” at your child’s school.

## Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

There is no such thing as a perfect parent. Parenting is part natural and part learned. Children go through many stages of development. Understanding what to expect at each stage helps to make our parenting job easier.



### What might parents do to increase their knowledge of parenting and child development?

- ▶ Ask your family doctor, child care teacher, family or friends about parenting or stages of child development.
- ▶ Take the time to sit and observe what your child can and cannot do.
- ▶ Share what you have learned with anyone who cares for your child.