

# 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."



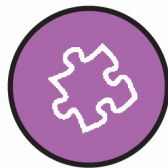
## COMFORT

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 FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Washtenaw  
**SUCCESS BY 6**



[www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org](http://www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org)

Find more information and helpful tips at [ChangingMindsNOW.org](http://ChangingMindsNOW.org)

## CELEBRATE

- Greet children by name and tell them at least one thing you like about them.
- Ask if children have any family/cultural traditions that make them feel happy (e.g. singing, dancing, praying) and if they would tell you about them.
- Establish a climate of respect that supports “put-ups, not put-downs.”
- Remember to praise the small things children do, such as being helpful or kind. Tell them that you notice and that you are proud of them.
- When children have setbacks or frustrations, praise their efforts and help them figure out next steps.
- Identify and support children’s strengths and unique talents by engaging them in activities they enjoy.

## COMFORT

- Take children’s concerns seriously and offer validating statements. Seek out additional support and resources if needed.
- Set clear, consistent boundaries and limits with children.
- Don’t make promises you can’t keep.
- Help children identify early warning signs of anger, sadness, and fear, and develop strategies that they can use to calm down in the moment.
- Praise children’s efforts to regulate their emotions, and offer healthy, non-violent ways to express negative feelings.
- Help children identify and expand their network of consistently caring adults.

## LISTEN

- Be present in the moment by removing physical barriers such as phones, notebooks, or paperwork. Show them, by your actions, that what they have to say is worthy of your full attention.
- Listen to physical and emotional complaints seriously. This will help children see you as someone they can go to in times of need.
- Remain open and curious. Show children that you care about what happened to them, and not just “what’s wrong with them.”

## COLLABORATE

- Engage children in increasingly challenging tasks as they build skills.
- Practice relaxation techniques when children are calm. This will make them more likely to use these techniques in times of stress.
- Set up rules and expectations for group activities or games.
- Encourage kids to take on small leadership roles.
- Share your experience. Tell stories about how you’ve handled similar situations in the past.
- If you’re a social worker, work with children, especially if they’re older, to generate safety plans. Collaborate on decisions about treatment, placement, and other issues.
- Praise children when they succeed or master a task.
- Role model healthy interactions with your peers and other children. Encourage good friendship skills.
- Take emotional or physical complaints seriously as they may be connected to a more serious issue.
- Encourage children to rely on you in times of struggle, and help them identify other sources of support in their life.
- During sports, encourage teamwork and support your players to work together toward common goals.

## INSPIRE

- Provide helpful and constructive experiences that focus on cooperation rather than competition.
- Support children’s abilities to speak up when things go wrong or when they’re victimized. Help them become advocates for change.
- Connect children to after-school programs such as theater, dance, sports, and opportunities to participate in community service.
- Provide children with opportunities to experience success or to develop and practice their leadership skills.
- Create opportunities for children to spend time with other caring adults who can act as role models.