

# SIMPLE WAYS TO 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."



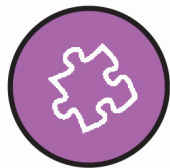
## COMFORT

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**

GREAT START  
COLLABORATIVE  
Washtenaw County

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

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

## CELEBRATE

- Tell them that you like them and why you think they're special.
- Be spontaneous and affectionate. Give hugs and tell children you're proud of them when you can see them putting effort toward something or trying something at which they previously failed. Put notes in your child's book bag with messages like, "I think you're terrific!"
- Make time for you and your child to do things together that your child enjoys. Songs and rhymes can help your child feel connected.
- Try to spend some time every day playing with your child, without distractions like phone calls. And remember, child-directed activities can occur anywhere—on the bus, while grocery shopping, at the laundromat, or at home.
- Create a wall of fame in your house. Every child is good at something. Discover it, encourage it, and display it.
- Give children age-appropriate responsibilities, like helping to make a meal, taking the trash out, or cleaning up after themselves. When they're done, tell them you appreciate their hard work.
- Remember to praise even the small things children do, such as being helpful or kind. Tell them that you notice, and that you are proud of them.

## COMFORT

- Bond physically with your child. Simple things like eye contact, kisses, and hugging will help them feel safe and secure.
- Take care of their everyday needs. Make sure they are getting their sleep, meals, snacks, baths, and playtime.
- Be reliable and dependable as much as possible. Help children know what to expect by developing routines and creating a safe, welcoming home.
- Be patient. Listen to and accept children's feelings, and remember that negative behavior is often a result of feeling out of control, not an attempt to upset you on purpose.
- Talk about your own feelings and use language to describe your emotions. For example, "I feel sad that my favorite necklace broke and that I can't wear it anymore."
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings. Help them think of the words to describe their emotions.
- Help children notice the early warning signs of anger, sadness, and fear, and think of ways that they can calm down in the moment.
- Praise children's efforts to control their emotions, and offer healthy, non-violent ways to express negative feelings.
- Play games, read stories, and participate in activities that help children develop the ability to identify and control their emotions. Encourage them to label other people's emotions while reading or watching television.

## LISTEN

- Remove distractions, such as cell phones and the TV. Show children, by your actions, that what they have to say is worthy of your full attention.
- If your child isn't ready to talk, reassure them that you'll still be here when they're ready. Stay physically close, if appropriate.
- Listen to what they're saying and not saying. Keep a close eye on their body language too.

## COLLABORATE

- Teach them how to resolve conflicts and solve problems in a positive way, without violence or blaming.
- Encourage children to make their own choices, when appropriate, rather than choosing for them.
- Let them express their feelings with creative play, and play with them.
- Think about which situations are toughest for your child. Think about how you can change your own behavior to help them better cope with tough situations.
- Practice relaxation techniques with them.
- Be upfront with your child's teacher about what your child has been through and what particular triggers might upset them. Ask the teachers to tell you if there are sudden changes in behavior or school performance. Ask the teacher to let you know if your child is behaving differently.

## INSPIRE

- Talk to children about how you, and other adults they look up to, chose their careers. Children might dream of being a pop singer or an astronaut. Encourage them to dream big.
- Help children see the connections between everyday tasks and long-term goals. Show the "why" behind the ordinary.
- Encourage children to believe that anything is possible, and help them set goals to achieve their dreams.