

MONTHLY MESSAGE: Building Strong Families

Taking care of yourself is an important part of caring for your family. Children learn and grow best in families that have the supports and skills necessary to manage stressful times. All families go through stressful situations, from job loss to broken radiators. While challenges can't be avoided, there are practices families can adopt to better cope during stressful times. These skills help families become more likely to thrive, increase kindergarten readiness, and reduce the likelihood of abuse or neglect. Every family can benefit from building skills in each of these areas.

1

Bounce back from challenges

Taking care of a family can be hard work even if you are flexible and patient! You can help your family face challenges by managing stress and resolving problems. Taking care of yourself during times of stress can help your family be strong.

2

Have friends you can count on

Your family is not alone. There are other adults who may be there to support you and help you feel connected when you need it. Positive relationships also provide an example for your children on how to turn to others for help.

3

Learn how your children learn and develop

Parents aren't expected to know all the answers. Children's needs change with age. Understanding how your child grows and where you can go to get the information you need may help you better understand your child and reduce frustrations.

4

Get your basic needs met

When basic needs (such as housing, clothing, food and transportation) are met, you can focus on being the best family possible. Knowing where to go to meet your family's needs can help you feel supported.

5

Teach your children how to have healthy relationships

Your children watch your every move and learn from you. You can teach them to understand and manage their feelings and how to have good relationships. Teaching children how to build healthy relationships will provide life-long benefits.

6

Make sure your children feel loved and safe

Children thrive in a safe, loving family and you can help provide a nurturing family environment where they can develop a secure bond with adults. This is the foundation of how they will build their future relationships, and it also helps predict future success.



IDEAS TO BUILD STRENGTH



Cope with stress and bounce back from challenges

- Take time to refuel. Watch a funny movie, take a bath, sing
- Do some physical activity: Stretch, walk, dance, yoga
- Share feelings with someone you trust
- Surround yourself with people who support you
- Take a timeout when you feel angry, tired, frustrated

Build social connections with people you can lean on

- Participate in neighborhood activities such as potluck dinners or block parties
- Visit libraries with your child for story times and other programs
- Attend events hosted by your child care program
- Join a church, temple or mosque that welcomes and supports parents
- Connect regularly with family, friends and neighbors who encourage you
- Attend a local [United Way Born Learning[®] Academy](#)

Learning and celebrating what your child can do at different ages and stages

- Ask your family doctor questions, as well as your child's teacher
- Share what you learn with anyone who takes care of your child
- Track your child's [developmental milestones](#) to know what to expect and to spot delays early
- Download the [Vroom](#) app for daily brain building activity ideas
- Participate in the free [H.A.N.D.S.](#) home visiting program for new parents
- Request a free [parent guide](#) for kindergarten ready tips ages 0-5

Meet everyday needs

- Know it's ok to ask others for help
- Attend community resource fairs
- Seek out programs that offer help (ex. Community Action, [H.A.N.D.S.](#), [First Steps](#))
- Call 2-1-1, where available, to get connected to local services
- Contact your local [Family Resource and Youth Service Center](#)

Children learn how to build healthy relationships

- Create routines and communicate them with anyone else who cares for your child
- Teach your child the words to express his or her feelings
- Encourage your child to problem solve (ex. sharing toys)
- Be a positive example
- Set up play opportunities that encourage positive play (ex. cooperation)
- Set limits and enforce them

Children Feel Loved and Safe

- Connect daily with your child through a hug, a smile, a song, or reading a book together
- Have back and forth communication by asking questions or imitating your babies sounds and gestures
- Praise your child's efforts not ability
- Allow your child to express his or her feelings in safe ways