

Chapter 5:

Tip Sheets for Parents and Caregivers

The following pages contain tip sheets on specific parenting issues. Spanish versions are provided for all resources in this section. Tip sheets are designed for service providers to distribute to parents and caregivers in the context of a particular concern or question. The tip sheets are not intended to tell the whole story; they merely provide a starting point for a discussion between parent and provider that is grounded in the protective factors. The information is easy to read and focuses on concrete steps that parents can take to strengthen their family.

We encourage you to make additional copies of those resources that are most useful to the families with whom you work.

Tip sheets address the following topics:

How to Develop Supportive Communities—Provides families with ways to identify a nurturing, supportive community and how to develop one in their neighborhood.

Keeping Your Family Strong—Describes the protective factors in parent-friendly language and offers simple ways parents can strengthen their own families.

Making Healthy Connections With Your Family—Suggests ways for families to bond while improving their health through eating well and increasing their physical activity.

Feeding Your Family—Offers tips to help feed children all year around.

Managing Stress—Discusses the negative impacts of stress and how parents can learn to manage it more effectively.

Managing Your Finances—Provides simple tips to help families move toward greater financial stability.

Bonding With Your Baby—Helps new parents understand the importance of early and secure attachment.

Dealing With Temper Tantrums—Includes tips on how to prevent and handle toddler tantrums while modeling calm behavior.

Parenting Your School-Age Child—Helps parents understand and parent their school-age children more effectively.

Connecting With Your Teen—Encourages parents to maintain strong bonds with their teens as they move toward independence.

Parenting Your Child With Developmental Delays and Disabilities—Supports parents who are raising a child who has developmental delays or disabilities.

Ten Ways to Be a Better Dad—Encourages fathers to be involved and help their children live happy, healthy lives.

Building Resilience in Children and Teens—Provides tips for helping children learn to cope and recover from difficulties.

Teen Parents...You're Not Alone—Suggests ways that teen parents can find support and cope with the challenges of raising a new baby.

Raising Your Kin—Recommends ways for caregivers to deal with some of the unique challenges of parenting children of relatives, including finding concrete supports in their community.

Military Families—Encourages families to support parents and caregivers who are in the military.

Support After an Adoption—Offers information on support for adoptive parents.

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse—Offers tips to help adults protect children from sexual predators.

Parenting After Domestic Violence—Provides information about the effects of domestic violence on children and encourages parents to help their children feel safe and secure.

Helping Your Child Heal From Trauma—Describes how trauma can affect children's development and behavior and includes suggestions for how parents and caregivers can help.

Human Trafficking: Protecting Our Youth—Describes human trafficking and how to protect your child.

Two additional tip sheets not included in this guide are available on the Information Gateway website:

Finding Housing Help for Your Family—Directs families to valuable resources for affordable housing and other help.

Preparing Your Family for an Emergency—Outlines the components of a family emergency preparedness plan.

These tip sheets, like the other resources in this guide, were created with information from experts from federal agencies and national organizations that work to promote child well-being. Additional resources are available through the national organizations listed in chapter 6.

Print and online-only tip sheets may be downloaded individually for distribution at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>.

For more parenting resources, please visit Child Welfare Information Gateway at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/parenting>.

How to Develop Supportive Communities

What's Happening

Communities have a great influence in families' lives. Just as plants are more likely to thrive in a garden with good soil and plenty of sunlight and water, families are more likely to thrive in supportive communities. A safe place for children to play is one feature of a supportive community. Other features include the availability of food, shelter, and medical care for families as well as a culture that encourages neighbors to get to know and help one another. Supportive communities can help build strong families.*

What You Might Be Seeing

Supportive communities that are nurturing to families will have the following:

- Parks and recreation facilities that are accessible, safe, and inviting places for families
- Resources to help families in need access food, jobs, medical care, and other resources
- Early education programs that are easily accessible and welcoming
- Safe, affordable housing available to all families
- Clean air and water

What You Can Do

Baby Steps

- Meet and greet your neighbors.
- Go to a parents' meeting at your child's school.
- Participate in an activity at your local library or community center.



Small Steps

- Set up a playgroup in your community at people's homes or a local park (consider inviting people who may not have children at home, such as local seniors).
- Organize a community babysitting co-op.
- Volunteer at your child's school through the school's administration or the parents' organization.
- Encourage local service providers to produce a directory of available services in the community.

Big Steps

- Organize a community event (a block party, father/daughter dance, parent support group).
- Run for an office in the parent organization at your child's school.
- Attend local government meetings (city council or school board meetings) and let them know how important resources are in your community. Let them know how parks, strong schools, and accessible services help to strengthen your family and other families.
- Join or create a group in which parents and children meet regularly to play or serve together, such as scouting, a flag football league, or service club.

Remember: Everyone can take steps to make communities more supportive of families!

* To learn more about protective factors that support child and family well-being, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>. This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Keeping Your Family Strong



Every family has strengths, and every family faces challenges. When you are under stress—the car breaks down, you or your partner lose a job, a child’s behavior is difficult, or even when the family is experiencing a positive change, such as moving into a new home—sometimes it takes a little extra help to get through the day.

Protective factors are the strengths and resources that families draw on when life gets difficult. Building on these strengths is a proven way to keep the family strong and enhance child well-being. This tip sheet describes six key protective factors and some simple ways you can build these factors in your own family.

Protective Factor and What It Means	What You Can Do
<p>Nurturing and Attachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our family shows how much we love each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time at the end of each day to connect with your children with a hug, a smile, a song, or a few minutes of listening and talking. • Find ways to engage your children while completing everyday tasks (meals, shopping, driving in the car). Talk about what you are doing, ask them questions, or play simple games (such as “I spy”).
<p>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know parenting is part natural and part learned. • I am always learning new things about raising children and what they can do at different ages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore parenting questions with your family doctor, your child’s teacher, family, or friends. • Subscribe to a magazine, website, or online newsletter about child development. • Take a parenting class at a local community center (these often have sliding fee scales). • Sit and observe what your child can and cannot do. • Share what you learn with anyone who cares for your child.
<p>Parental Resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have courage during stress and the ability to bounce back from challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take quiet time to reenergize: take a bath, write, sing, laugh, play, drink a cup of tea. • Do some physical exercise: walk, stretch, do yoga, lift weights, dance. • Share your feelings with someone you trust. • Surround yourself with people who support you and make you feel good about yourself.

Protective Factor and What It Means	What You Can Do
<p>Social Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have friends, family, and neighbors who help out and provide emotional support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in neighborhood activities such as potluck dinners, street fairs, picnics, or block parties. Join a playgroup or online support group of parents with children at similar ages. Find a church, temple, or mosque that welcomes and supports parents.
<p>Concrete Supports for Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our family can meet our day-to-day needs, including housing, food, health care, education, and counseling. I know where to find help if I need it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a list of people or places to call for support. Ask the director of your child’s school to host a Community Resource Night, so you (and other parents) can see what help your community offers. Dial “2-1-1” to find out about organizations that support families in your area.
<p>Social and Emotional Competence of Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My children know they are loved, feel they belong, and are able to get along with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular routines, especially for young children. Make sure everyone who cares for your child is aware of your routines around mealtimes, naps, and bedtime. Talk with your children about how important feelings are. Teach and encourage children to solve problems in age-appropriate ways.

This tip sheet was created with information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being, including the Strengthening Families Initiatives in New Jersey, Alaska, and Tennessee. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Making Healthy Connections With Your Family

Good health starts with eating the right foods and getting plenty of physical activity. A healthier lifestyle may help your family in many ways, including the following:

- Less stress, depression, and anxiety
- Better sleep and more energy
- Less disease and lower health-care costs

Healthy habits don't have to take time away from your family. Do it together and make it fun!

Eating Well

Children learn their future eating habits from watching you. Set a good example, and set the stage for a lifetime of good health. Consider the following tips:

- Family meals are an important time to connect with your children. Offer a variety of healthy foods. Then focus on what your children are saying rather than what they are eating.
- Allow children to decide how much to eat based on their hunger. Let go of “clean plate” expectations.
- Reward your children with attention and kind words instead of food. Comfort them with hugs, not sweets.
- Plan, shop, and cook more meals at home together. Involve children in choosing, washing, and (for older children) cutting and cooking fruits and vegetables.
- Let kids invent their own healthy recipes. No-fail options include trail mix, smoothies, and fruit salads.
- Having difficulty providing enough healthy food for your family? Apply for food stamps or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (also known as WIC), or check out local food banks to ease your budget.



Physical Activity

Children and teens need 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day. For adults, aim for at least 30 minutes per day, most days of the week. Try the following suggestions to increase your whole family's activity level:

- Find activities you enjoy and do them as a family. Shoot hoops, dance, swim, or rollerblade—it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you are moving together.
- Support your children's participation in sports by helping them practice. Kick soccer balls while your child plays goalie, or hit pop-ups for her to catch.
- Take a family walk after dinner instead of turning on the TV. Make up games for younger children, such as “I spy” or “Who can count the most ... [e.g., red cars].” With school-age kids and teens, use the time to ask how things are going at school or with friends.
- Walk or bike with your child to and from school.
- Set family challenges, such as completing a “mud run” or a long hike together. Celebrate when you reach your goals.
- Local community centers often offer free or low-cost exercise classes, clubs, teams, and other activities for children and families. Many offer sliding-scale memberships.

Remember: Making a commitment to health together is more fun than doing it alone—and it can bring your family closer together.

* This tip sheet was adapted using information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ChooseMyPlate.gov (<http://choosemyplate.gov>). At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/prevention/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Feeding Your Family



What's Happening

About one in five households with children in the United States face food insecurity at some point during the year. This means that the family sometimes cannot afford enough healthy food to feed everyone well. Some or all members of the family may go hungry, skip meals, or eat nothing for an entire day (or longer).

What You Might Be Seeing

Healthy food is very important for children's growth and well-being. This is especially true during the first 3 years. A lack of food affects children's:

- **Bodies.** Children may get sick and go to the hospital more often.
- **Behavior.** A lack of healthy food at home can cause fighting, hyperactivity, and mood swings in school-age children. Older youth may feel depressed, anxious, or suicidal.
- **Learning.** Children can have a hard time getting to school every day or making progress in reading and math.

What You Can Do

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several programs to help families feed their children.

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps, helps low-income families pay for food. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides short-term help for low-income women, infants, and young

children. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/who-gets-wic-and-how-apply>.

- The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs offer children free or reduced-price meals at many schools. Apply at your child's school or visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>.
- The Summer Food Service Program provides free, healthy meals to children and teens in low-income areas during the summer. For more information, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>.

Most communities also offer food banks and other help for low-income families. In many areas, dialing 2-1-1 can connect you with local resources and support.

Remember: There are resources in every community to help families provide healthy food for their children.

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Managing Stress

What's Happening

Everyone has stress, whether it's a bad day at work, car trouble, or simply too many things to do. However, too much stress can make it hard to parent effectively. After a while, your children may show signs of being stressed out too!

What You Might Be Seeing

Some signs that you are stressed include the following:

- Feeling angry or irritable a lot of the time
- Feeling hopeless
- Having trouble making decisions
- Crying easily
- Worrying all the time
- Arguing with friends or your partner
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Being unable to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time

A build-up of stress also can contribute to health problems, including allergies, a sore neck or back, headaches, upset stomach, and high blood pressure.

What You Can Do

It is important to learn how to manage your stress—for your own sake and for your children. The following suggestions may help:

- **Identify what's making you stressed.** Everyone's stressors are different. Yours might be related to money, work, your surroundings (traffic, crime), your partner, your children's behavior, or health issues.
- **Accept what you cannot change.** Ask yourself, "Can I do anything about it?" If the answer is "no," try to focus on something else. If there is something you can do (look for a new job, for example), break it into smaller steps so it doesn't feel overwhelming.



- **Have faith.** Look back at previous times when you have overcome challenges. Think "This too shall pass." Consider that people who attend church, pray regularly, or practice other forms of spirituality tend to have less stress.
- **Relax!** Try deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or listening to music. Take 30 minutes to play a board game and laugh with your kids.
- **Take care of your health.** Getting enough sleep can make a big difference in your stress level. So can eating healthy foods and getting some exercise.
- **Take time for yourself.** Take a bath, read a book, or pick up a hobby. When you can, hire a babysitter (or trade time with a friend or neighbor) and get out for a few hours.
- **Develop a support network.** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Older children can set the table. Your spouse or partner could take over bedtime a few nights a week. Friends might pick up the kids from school to give you a break.

Remember: Learning to manage your stress will improve your happiness and show your children that they can handle stress, too!

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Managing Your Finances



What's Happening

If you feel like your finances are out of control, you are not alone! Many people worry about money. While common, a daily struggle to pay bills creates stress that can harm your family life and your child's well-being.

What You Might Be Seeing

Your family is said to have “financial stability” if you have:

- The ability to pay bills on time
- A manageable amount of debt
- A 3 to 6 month emergency fund to protect you against loss of income

What You Can Do

No matter what your situation, you can take steps to move your family toward greater financial stability.

- **Know where your money goes.** Track your family's spending for a month, and balance your checkbook regularly. These steps will help you feel more in control and will help you create a realistic budget.
- **Get organized.** Make sure you know how much each person in your household gets paid and when. Know which bills need to be paid out of each paycheck. Keep all bills in one place so they don't get lost, and review your finances often.
- **Spend only what you make.** Put away credit cards and use cash instead. This will help ensure that you buy only what you really need and want.
- **Get help to stretch your budget.** State and federal programs include the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), low-cost child care or housing, Head Start, and others.

- **Get a bank account.** Check-cashing services and payday loans charge high fees. One program that helps people access free or low-cost checking accounts is Bank On at <http://www.joinbankon.org/#/about>.
- **Start saving.** Individual development accounts (IDAs) match your savings to help you reach a goal such as buying a home, training for a new job, or starting a small business. Find an IDA program near you at http://cfed.org/programs/idas/directory_search/.
- **Seek new employment opportunities.** Work readiness, vocational training, job placement, and career counseling programs can help you find and qualify for new opportunities that may pay better and move you toward greater security.

Remember: It is possible to achieve financial stability, even after a setback. The steps you take today will help create a brighter future for your family!

* This tip sheet was adapted using information from the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (<http://www.nfcc.org/>). At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Bonding With Your Baby

What's Happening

Attachment is a deep, lasting bond that develops between a caregiver and child during the baby's first few years of life. This attachment is crucial to the growth of a baby's body and mind. Babies who have this bond and feel loved have a better chance to grow up to be adults who trust others and know how to return affection.

What You Might Be Seeing

Most babies:

- Have brief periods of sleep, crying or fussing, and quiet alertness many times each day
- Often cry for long periods for no apparent reason
- Love to be held and cuddled
- Respond to and imitate facial expressions
- Love soothing voices and respond to them with smiles and small noises
- Grow and develop every day
- Learn new skills quickly and can outgrow difficult behaviors in a matter of weeks

What You Can Do

No one knows your child like you do, so you are in the best position to recognize and fulfill your child's needs. Parents who give lots of loving care and attention to their babies help their babies develop a strong attachment. Affection stimulates your child to grow, learn, connect with others, and enjoy life.

Here are some ways to promote bonding:

- Respond when your baby cries. Try to understand what he or she is saying to you. You can't "spoil" babies with too much attention—they need and benefit from a parent's loving care even when they seem inconsolable.

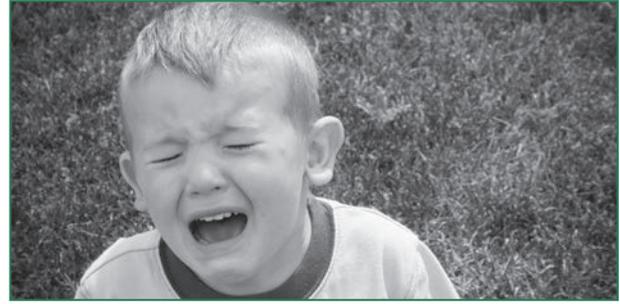


- Hold and touch your baby as much as possible. You can keep him or her close with baby slings, pouches, or backpacks (for older babies).
- Use feeding, bathing, and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile, and talk to your baby.
- Read, sing, and play peek-a-boo. Babies love to hear human voices and will try to imitate your voice and the sounds you make.
- As your baby gets a little older, try simple games and toys. Once your baby can sit up, plan on spending lots of time on the floor with toys, puzzles, and books.
- If you feel you are having trouble bonding with your infant, don't wait to get help! Talk to your doctor or your baby's pediatrician as soon as you can.

Remember: The best gift you can give your baby is YOU. The love and attention you give your baby now will stay with him or her forever and will help your baby grow into a healthy and happy child and adult.

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Dealing With Temper Tantrums



What's Happening

Two- and 3-year-olds have many skills, but controlling their tempers is not one of them. Tantrums are common at this age because toddlers are becoming independent and developing their own wants, needs, and ideas. However, they are not yet able to express their wants and feelings with words. Take comfort in the fact that most children outgrow tantrums by age 4.

What You Might Be Seeing

Most toddlers:

- Love to say “No!” “Mine!” and “Do it myself!”
- Test rules over and over to see how parents will react
- Are not yet ready to share
- Need lots of fun activities, play times, and opportunities to explore the world
- Respond well to a routine for sleeping and eating (a regular schedule)
- Like to imitate grownups and to “help” mom and dad

What You Can Do

It is often easier to prevent tantrums than to deal with them after they get going. Try these tips:

- Direct your child’s attention to something else. (“Wow, look at that fire engine!”)
- Give your child a choice in small matters. (“Do you want to eat peas or carrots?”)
- Stick to a daily routine that balances fun activities with enough rest and healthful food.
- Anticipate when your child will be disappointed. (“We are going to buy groceries for dinner. We won’t be buying cookies, but you can help me pick out some fruit for later.”)
- Praise your child when he or she shows self-control and expresses feelings with words.

If you cannot prevent the tantrum, here are some tips for dealing with it:

- Say what you expect from your child and have confidence that your child will behave.
- Remain calm. You are a role model for your child.
- Holding your child during a tantrum may help a younger child feel more secure and calm down more quickly.
- Take your child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely. Speak softly or play soft music.
- Some children throw tantrums to seek attention. Try ignoring the tantrum, but pay attention to your child after he or she calms down.
- Resist overreacting to tantrums, and try to keep your sense of humor.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website provides additional information and tips for parents of toddlers and preschoolers at <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/index.html>.

Remember: When your child is having a floor-thumping tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let your child’s behavior cause you to lose control too.

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Parenting Your School-Age Child



What's Happening

Children ages 6–12 go through big changes. As they spend more time at school and away from home, they are working to develop an identity of their own. Their bodies are growing stronger and changing quickly, a process that will continue through puberty and the teen years. They are learning to control their feelings, use reason, and solve problems. Yet children in this age group still need rules and structure and, most of all, their parents' love and support.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal school-age children:

- Mature unevenly. Their bodies may be growing, but they are still capable of having temper tantrums and need reminders to take baths and brush their teeth.
- See things in black and white. They are concerned about fairness and rules.
- Are capable of doing chores and homework more independently but may need you to remind and teach them (not do it for them).
- Get distracted easily and may lack organizational skills.
- Develop deeper relationships with peers and care deeply about “fitting in.”

What You Can Do

- **Model the behavior you want to see.** Your children are watching and learning from you. Meet your responsibilities, follow house rules, and communicate with respect.
- **Make a few important rules and enforce them every time.** Remember, children want freedom, so give them choices in smaller matters (e.g., clothing, room decorations).
- **Talk to children about what you expect.** Post rules and routines where everyone can see them. Fewer “grey areas” mean less to argue about.

- **Support their growing bodies.** Children this age still need nutritious meals (especially breakfast) and 10 hours of sleep each night.
- **Limit time spent watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer.** Monitor Internet use for safety, and encourage your children to participate in hobbies and sports.
- **Be involved with your children's school.** Talk to their teachers and attend parents' night and school conferences. Show that school is important to you by providing a quiet space for homework, volunteering in your child's school, and celebrating your child's hard work.
- **Offer support and understanding when your child has problems with peers.** Explore ways to resolve conflicts, but do not interfere. If your child is being bullied at school, alert school staff and work with them to keep your child safe.
- **Don't wait for your children to learn about sex, alcohol, and drugs from peers.** Educate yourself and talk to your children about your values. Help them practice ways to resist peer pressure.

Remember: Talk to your children and listen to what they have to say. School-age children may sometimes act like they don't care what their parents say, but they still want your love, attention, and guidance!

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Connecting With Your Teen

What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore. But teens still need their parents' love, support, and guidance.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal teens:

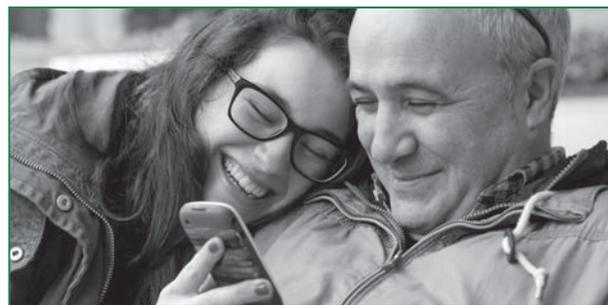
- Crave independence
- Question rules and authority
- Test limits
- Can be impulsive
- Make mature decisions at times and childish ones at other times

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make room in your schedule for special times as often as you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Tips to keep in mind:

- **Have family meals.** If it's impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child's schedule.
- **Share "ordinary" time.** Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what's on his or her mind.



- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.** Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Learn about your teen's favorite websites and apps. Look for chances to join in your teen's latest hobby.
- **Get to know your child's friends.** Knowing your child's friends is an important way to connect with your teen. Make your home a welcoming place for your teen and his or her friends.
- **Be interested.** Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you'll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents, too, when possible.
- **Set clear limits.** Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and be consistent in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.

Remember: Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don't forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

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Parenting Your Child With Developmental Delays and Disabilities



What's Happening

Children develop at different rates. But there are some skills that children are expected to develop by certain ages. When children do not reach these milestones within the expected timeframe (or at all), parents and caregivers may worry.

What You Might Be Seeing

Parents and primary caregivers are in the best position to see any problems with their child's development that may require action. Some differences between children are normal, but others may be signs of developmental delays or disabilities. These can occur in any of the following areas:

- Using large groups of muscles to roll over, sit up, stand, walk, run, etc.
- Using hands to eat, draw, dress, play, or write
- Speaking, using gestures, and understanding what others say
- Thinking skills such as learning, understanding, problem-solving, and remembering
- Relating to family, friends, and teachers; cooperating; and responding to the feelings of others

What You Can Do

First Steps

- If you are worried about your child, tell someone who can help you get answers. Don't accept others dismissing your concerns. You know your child and are his or her best advocate.
- If your child starts to not be able to do things he or she could do in the past, have him or her seen by a doctor right away. Ask for a "developmental screening."

- At your child's screening, if you don't understand the words used to describe your child, be sure to ask "What does that mean?"

Next Steps

- If your child is diagnosed with a developmental delay or disability, remember that you are not alone. Seek out other families of children with special needs, including those with your child's disability. Find or start a support group.
- Learn about your child's special needs and options for treatment. Begin treatment as early as possible so your child can make the best possible progress.
- Ask your doctor for referrals to professionals and agencies that will help your child. Some services for your child may also benefit your entire family.

Ongoing Strategies

- Take a break when you need it. Give yourself time to connect with supportive family members and friends. You will be a better champion for your child when you take the time to care of yourself.
- Don't let your child's challenges become your family's entire focus. Seeing your child grow and develop as part of the family is one of the great pleasures of being a parent.

Remember: You are your child's best advocate. Trust your feelings, be confident, and take action!

This tip sheet was created with information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Ten Ways to Be a Better Dad



What's Happening

Involved fathers can help children lead lives that are happier, healthier, and more successful than children whose fathers are absent or uninvolved. Fathers who spend time with their children increase the chances that their children will succeed in school, have fewer behavior problems, and experience better self-esteem and well-being.

What You Can Do

- 1. Respect your children's mother.** When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.
- 2. Spend time with your children.** If you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Set aside time to spend with your children.
- 3. Earn the right to be heard.** Begin talking with your kids when they are very young, and talk to them about all kinds of things. Listen to their ideas and problems.
- 4. Discipline with love.** All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits and help children learn from natural or logical consequences. Fathers who discipline in a calm, fair, and nonviolent manner show their love.
- 5. Be a role model.** Fathers are role models whether they realize it or not. A girl with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility, and responsibility.
- 6. Be a teacher.** A father who teaches his children about right and wrong and encourages them to do their best will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to teach the basic lessons of life.
- 7. Eat together as a family.** Sharing a meal together can be an important part of healthy family life. It gives children the chance to talk about what they are doing, and it is a good time for fathers to listen and give advice.
- 8. Read to your children.** Begin reading to your children when they are very young. Instilling a love for reading is one of the best ways to ensure they will have a lifetime of personal and career growth.
- 9. Show affection.** Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted, and loved by their family. Showing affection every day is the best way to let your children know that you love them.
- 10. Realize that a father's job is never done.** Even after children are grown and leave home, they will still look to their fathers for wisdom and advice. Fatherhood lasts a lifetime.

Adapted from the National Fatherhood Initiative (<http://www.fatherhood.org/>). At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Building Resilience in Children and Teens



What's Happening

All youth face difficulties, which can range from traumatic losses to everyday disappointments. The ability to cope and recover (or “bounce back”) after a setback is important to their success. Experts call this “resilience,” and it’s a skill that can be learned.

What You Can Do

You can help your children develop resilience by taking the following steps:

- **Model a positive outlook.** Children will learn from your ability to bounce back from difficulties. When faced with a challenge yourself, model an “I can do it” attitude. Remind yourself and your child that the current problem is temporary and “things will get better.”
- **Build confidence.** Comment frequently on what your child does well. Point out when he demonstrates qualities such as kindness, persistence, and integrity.
- **Build connections.** Create a strong, loving family and encourage your child to make good friends. This will help ensure that she has plenty of support in times of trouble.
- **Encourage goal-setting.** Teach children to set realistic goals and work toward them one step at a time. Even small steps can build confidence and resilience.
- **See challenges as learning opportunities.** Tough times are often when we learn the most. Resist the urge to solve your child’s problem for him—this can send a message that you don’t believe he can handle it. Instead offer love and support, and show faith in his ability to cope. Remind him of times when he has solved problems successfully in the past.

- **Teach self-care.** Many challenges are easier to face when we eat well and get enough exercise and rest. Self-care can also mean taking a break from worrying to relax or have some fun.
- **Help others.** Empower your child by giving her opportunities to help out at home or do age-appropriate volunteer work for her school, neighborhood, or place of worship.

For More Information

For more about building resilience, see the following:

- Building Resilience (American Academy of Pediatrics): <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/default.aspx>
- Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers (American Psychological Association): <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>

Remember: With your help and support, children can learn to be more resilient.

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Teen Parents... You're Not Alone!

What's Happening

Being a parent is a 24-hour-a-day job, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming. You may be juggling the demands of a baby, your family, school, and work. Chances are you're not able to do all of the things you enjoyed before your baby was born.

Many Teen Parents Sometimes Feel

- **Confused and uncertain**—about their future or their skills as a parent
- **Overwhelmed**—they don't know where to begin or they feel like giving up
- **Angry**—at the baby's other parent, their friends, or even their baby
- **Lonely**—as though they are the only person dealing with so many problems
- **Depressed**—sad and unable to manage their problems

These feelings do not mean you are a bad parent!

What You Can Do

Every parent needs support sometimes. If you think stress may be affecting how you treat your baby, it's time to find some help. Try the following:

- **Join a support group.** A group for young moms or dads could give you time with new friends who have lives similar to yours. Your children can play with other children, and you can talk about your problems with people who understand. Look on the Internet (e.g., Meetup.com, Yahoo! groups) or call your local social services agency for information about support groups in your community.



- **Find ways to reduce stress.** Take a break while someone reliable cares for your baby. Take a walk with the baby in a stroller, or rest while your baby naps. A social worker or nurse can help you learn other ways to manage stress.
- **Become a regular at baby-friendly places in your community.** The playground and story time at the local library are great places to bond with your baby while getting to know other parents.
- **Finish school.** Even though it may be difficult, finishing high school (or getting a GED) is one of the most important things you can do to help your baby and yourself. A diploma will help you get a better job or take the next step in your education, such as vocational training or college.
- **Improve your parenting skills.** Don't be afraid to ask for advice from experienced parents. Classes for parents can also help you build on what you already know about raising a happy, healthy child.
- **Call a help line.** Most states have help lines for parents. Parents Anonymous® Inc. runs a National Parent Helpline (1.855.4A PARENT) for parents who need help or parenting advice.

Remember: Stay in contact with friends and family who support you and make you feel good about yourself. Help is just a phone call away!

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Raising Your Kin

What's Happening

No matter why or how they came to live with you, your relative's children will benefit from being in your home. When children cannot be with their parents, living with a family member may provide:

- Fewer moves from place to place
- The comfort of a familiar language, culture, and family history
- A chance to stay with siblings
- More contact with their parents, depending on the situation

What You Might Be Seeing

Despite these benefits, the children will face some unique challenges:

- They may feel insecure and unsure that you will take care of them.
- They may act out or challenge you.
- They will miss their parents.
- They may be anxious or depressed.
- They may seem young or act too old for their ages.

What You Can Do

It will take time for your relative's children to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. You can encourage these good feelings in a number of ways:

- Set up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities.
- Help the children feel "at home" by creating a space just for them. Allow them to bring comfort items from home, such as bedding, stuffed animals, and photos or posters.
- Talk to the children, and listen when they talk to you.
- Set up a few rules and explain your expectations. Then, enforce the rules consistently.



- Reward positive behavior. When children make mistakes, focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Be as involved with their school as you can, and encourage your children to participate in school activities.

This is a big job, and you may need help from your community. Here are some suggestions:

- Help with housing or other bills, clothing, or school supplies may be available in your community to help you meet the children's needs.
- Join or start a support group in your neighborhood. Often there are local kinship caregivers support groups.
- Ask for help and referrals from a church leader, the counselor at the children's school, or a social services agency.
- If necessary, get professional help to address any special needs your relative's children may have, such as medical care, mental health care, or special education. Use respite care if it is available.

For more information on support for kin raising children, visit Information Gateway's About Kinship Care web section at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/about/>.

Remember: Parenting a relative's child brings special challenges and special joys. Do not hesitate to ask for help or seek services in your community for yourself and your children.

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Military Families



What's Happening

Military families live in almost every community. Some parents in the military are on active duty and wear a uniform every day. Others may be in the National Guard or Reserves and only wear a uniform when they are called to active duty.

What You Might See

All military families face unique stresses that can make the difficult job of parenting even harder:

- The military parent must deal with periodic absences and the stresses associated with preparing for duty or reentering civilian life.
- Children must adjust to a parent being away from the family (and, in some cases, in harm's way) and then to the parent's reintegration into the family. Many military children also deal with frequent moves, changing schools, and new caretakers.
- A spouse, partner, or extended family member may face new and increased responsibilities while a military parent is away.

What You Can Do

- **Express appreciation for the family's service to our country.** Invite parents and children to share their positive experiences of military life.
- **Get to know your military neighbors, particularly if they serve in the National Guard or Reserves.** Include them in neighborhood and community activities. Don't wait for your neighbor to ask for help—offer to mow the grass, share a meal, help with small household repairs, or care for the children for a few hours.

- **Share information about community resources that provide support in times of need.** Ask military parents what would help them most when they are facing a military-related separation, and help them to connect with these supports early.
- **Help military parents and the other caregivers in their family understand how transitions, separation, and anxiety can affect their child's behavior.** Knowing that acting out or withdrawing are normal can make these challenges easier to deal with.
- **Invite military children in your neighborhood to share their thoughts and feelings about the separations and transitions they may be experiencing.** If you plan activities for children in your community, remember to include a way for children with a faraway parent to participate.

For more information on supporting military families, please visit Child Welfare Information Gateway's web section, Working With Military Families, at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/military/>.

Remember: Military families need to feel supported and included in their neighborhoods and communities. You can help!

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Support After an Adoption

Why You Might Need Support

Adopting a child is a joyful event. However, adoption also involves loss for all of those involved and comes with a unique set of family issues. Like all children, those who are adopted may face difficulties with emotions, development, friendships, or school. Even parents who are well prepared to adopt can have feelings they did not expect. Challenges are a normal part of the adoption process.

Adoption Support and Preservation Services Can Help

- Children and youth process feelings of loss or grief related to the adoption.
- Parents build trust and attachment with their children.
- Families heal from childhood trauma.
- Older children and youth explore questions of identity (“Who am I? How am I like and different from my parents?”).
- Children find ways to succeed in school.
- Children and families learn more effective ways to respond to stress.
- Children and adoptive parents navigate safe and positive connections with birth relatives.
- Prevent crises that can result in adoption disruption or “rehoming.”

Types of Services

Different types of adoption support and preservation services exist in many communities. These can include the following:

- Mental health counseling or therapy
- Support groups for parents or youth (in person or online; for all adoptive families or specific to the child’s culture or special needs)
- Workshops, seminars, and publications
- Camps and other social events for children, parents, and families
- Birth parent search and reunion support
- Educational support
- Respite care



Finding Services

It is important to find service providers who understand adoption-related issues and how to help adoptive families. To find effective adoption support and preservation services in your community, ask one or more of the following:

- Other adoptive parents and local support groups
- Your adoption agency
- Your doctor or your child’s doctor
- Your employer’s human resources department or employee assistance program (EAP)
- Your state postadoption services contact, which you can find through the National Adoption and Foster Care Directory—now available as a mobile app (Go to <https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/> and check the box for “State Foster Care and Adoption Officials.”)
- The Adoption Assistance by State Database, which includes information about services for after adoption: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance/>

Remember: Every family has ups and downs. Adoption support and preservation services can help your family enjoy the ups and survive the downs.

Child Welfare Information Gateway offers a factsheet for families that describes some of the issues that may arise after an adoption is finalized, the different types of adoption support and preservation services available, and how and where families can obtain services. The factsheet also explains what parents can do if quality services are not readily available to them and includes a list of additional resources. Access the factsheet, *Finding and Using Postadoption Services*, at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-postadoption/>.

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Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

What You Can Do

To prevent child sexual abuse, it is important to keep the focus on adult responsibility while teaching children skills to help them protect themselves. Consider the following tips:

- Take an active role in your children’s lives. Learn about their activities and people with whom they are involved. Stay alert for possible problems.
- Watch for “grooming” behaviors in adults who spend time with your child. Warning signs may include frequently finding ways to be alone with your child, ignoring your child’s need for privacy (e.g., in the bathroom), or giving gifts or money for no particular occasion.
- Ensure that organizations, groups, and teams that your children are involved with minimize one-on-one time between children and adults. Ask how staff and volunteers are screened and supervised.
- Make sure your children know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers or confuses them.
- Teach children accurate names of private body parts and the difference between touches that are “okay” and “not okay.”
- Empower children to make decisions about their bodies by allowing them age-appropriate privacy and encouraging them to say “no” when they do not want to touch or be touched by others—even in nonsexual ways.
- Teach children to take care of their own bodies (e.g., bathing or using the bathroom) so they do not have to rely on adults or older children for help.
- Educate children about the difference between good secrets (such as birthday surprises) and bad secrets (those that make the child feel unsafe or uncomfortable).



- Monitor children’s use of technology, including cell phones, social networking sites, and messaging. Review contact lists regularly and ask about any people you don’t recognize.
- Trust your instincts! If you feel uneasy about leaving your child with someone, don’t do it. If you are concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions.
- If your child tells you that he or she has been abused, stay calm, listen carefully, and never blame the child. Thank your child for telling you. Report the abuse right away.

Remember: You can help protect your children from sexual abuse by being active in their lives and teaching them safety skills.

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

The following may indicate sexual abuse and should not be ignored:

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness, or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior or appearing to be in a trance
- Angry outbursts or sudden mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Anxiety or depression
- Sudden, unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language, or behavior that is unusual for the child’s age

This tip sheet was created using information from Prevent Child Abuse America, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the Enough Abuse Campaign, and Stop It Now. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Parenting After Domestic Violence

What's Happening

When one person in a relationship uses any kind of abuse to control the other, this is domestic violence. You may have recently left a relationship that is abusive, or you may still be in one. Your children may have heard or seen the abuse, or they may have been targets themselves.

Living with domestic violence takes a toll on all family members. Your children may still feel afraid, even if the danger is past. But with your help, they can find ways to cope with stress, be safe, and heal.

What You Might Be Seeing

Some children living with abuse do not show signs of stress. Others struggle at home, at school, or in the community.

You may notice increased fear or anger, clinging, difficulty sleeping, or tantrums. If the abuse goes on for a long time, children can experience more serious problems, like depression or anxiety, skipping school, or using drugs.

What You Can Do

A strong relationship with a caring, nonviolent parent is important to help your children grow up in a positive way. You can help them by taking the following steps:

- **Plan for safety.** If you are still in an abusive situation, make a safety plan with your children. Teach them how to call 911, where to go for help, and never to get in the middle of an adult fight. Local domestic violence advocates can help you plan!
- **Take care of yourself.** Finding ways to cope with your own stress is good for you and for your children. Make time to connect with friends, exercise, listen to music, take a bath, or do something else that helps you relax and refocus.
- **Help your children feel secure.** Keep your kids close to you when you can, and give them lots of eye contact, kisses, and hugs. Play together, even if just for a few minutes at a time. Provide routines such as bedtime reading and regular meal times.
- **Stay calm.** Children who have lived with violence will sometimes act in ways that make life more chaotic. Set clear limits and follow through, but keep your voice calm. Get help if you need it.



- **Talk about it.** Be willing to listen to your children talk about what has happened and how they feel. Tell them the truth when they ask questions. Reassure them that you are working to keep your family safe.
- **Help your children develop relationships.** Positive relationships with peers and other supportive adults can help your children manage stress and stay strong and happy.
- **Celebrate their strengths.** Find the things your children are good at. Encourage them in school and other activities.

Remember: You are the most important person in your children's lives. Your children need to know that you are there for them, you love them, and you will do all you can to keep them safe.

If you are in danger, contact:

- 911 for emergency police assistance
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1.800.799.7233) for safety planning and referrals to local help

Other resources:

- Resources for Families (Child Welfare Information Gateway): <https://childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/domviolence/resources/>
- National Network to End Domestic Violence: <https://nnedv.org/>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <http://www.nctsn.org/content/resources>
- Futures Without Violence: <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>

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Helping Your Child Heal From Trauma



What's Happening

Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm, either physical or emotional. Trauma can occur as a result of a natural disaster (such as an earthquake or flood), violence, or abuse. Seeing violence happen, even if you are not the victim, also may cause trauma.

Trauma can have a lasting effect on brain development in children. If not addressed, it can lead to trouble with school, relationships, or drugs and alcohol.

What You Might Be Seeing

Children's reactions to traumatic events vary with age, culture, and personality. Some children show the following signs of trauma:

- Startling easily and having difficulty calming down
- Behaviors common to younger children (e.g., thumb sucking, bed wetting, fear of the dark, clinging to caregivers)
- Tantrums, aggression, or fighting
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn, wanting to be left alone
- Wanting to talk about the traumatic event all the time, or denying that it happened
- Changes in eating or sleeping (sleeping all the time, not sleeping, nightmares)
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches

What You Can Do

Try the following to help your child heal from trauma:

- **Help your child feel safe.** Stay calm and keep a regular routine for meals, play time, and bedtime. Prepare children in advance for any changes or new experiences.

- **Encourage (don't force) children to talk about their feelings.** Tell children it is normal to have many feelings after a trauma. Listen to their stories, take their reactions seriously, correct any misinformation about the traumatic event, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.
- **Provide extra attention, comfort, and encouragement.** Spending time together as a family may help children feel safe. Younger children may want extra hugs or cuddling. Follow their lead and be patient if they seem needy.
- **Teach children to relax.** Encourage them to practice slow breathing, listen to calming music, or say positive things ("That was scary, but I'm safe now").
- **Be aware of your own response to trauma.** Parents' history of trauma and feelings about their child's experience can influence how they cope. Seek support if you need it.
- **Remember that everyone heals differently from trauma.** Respecting each child's own course of recovery is important.
- **Find help when needed.** If your child's problems last more than a few weeks, or if they get worse rather than better, ask for help. Find a mental health professional who knows proven strategies to help children cope with trauma.

Remember: With patience and support, families can heal and recover from trauma.

This tip sheet was adapted using information from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's former Safe Start Center. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Human Trafficking: Protecting Our Youth



What's Happening

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery. It includes both sex trafficking and forced labor. Youth with difficult family situations or histories of trauma, including those in foster care, can be at greater risk.

States are required to consider any child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking (as defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act) as a victim of “child abuse and neglect” and “sexual abuse.” The term “sex trafficking” means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. The term “severe forms of trafficking in persons” means sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.

Any child under age 18 engaged in commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking even if the youth’s participation is not forced or coerced. This includes:

- Prostitution
- Pornography
- Stripping

Human trafficking also includes forced labor. Common examples involve:

- Selling illegal drugs
- Hair and nail salons
- Begging
- Farm work
- Door-to-door sales crews (e.g., magazines)
- Au pairs and nannies
- Domestic work
- Restaurant work

What You Might Be Seeing

Cases of human trafficking have been reported in all 50 states. Victims can be children or adults, U.S. citizens or foreign nationals, male or female. Children as young as 9 years old may be at risk.

Signs that a child or youth may be involved in human trafficking include the following:

- Frequent, unexplained absences from school
- Running away from home
- Unexplained bruises or scars, withdrawn behavior, or anxiety/fear
- Knowledge of sexual situations or terms beyond what is normal for the child’s age
- Signs of drug addiction
- Sudden changes in clothes, friends, or access to money
- Having a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older and/or controlling
- Expressing concern for family members’ safety if he or she shares too much information

- Working unusually long hours and being paid very little
- Living at a workplace or with the employer, or living with many people in a small space

What You Can Do

- **Be aware of recruiting tactics.** Traffickers target victims through social media websites, telephone chat lines, afterschool programs, at shopping malls and bus depots, in clubs, or through friends and acquaintances. Ask questions about your youth’s friends—especially new friends and those who appear to be significantly older. Monitor computer use and know where he or she hangs out. Traffickers may also be family members or even peers.
- **Understand that trafficked youth are victims, not criminals.** If a person has been forced to commit illegal acts, he or she is a victim and is not guilty of a crime. Help the youth understand that he or she will not be punished for seeking help.
- **Report suspected trafficking.** The following are actions you can take if you think a youth may be involved in trafficking:
 - If the youth is in immediate danger, call your local police department or emergency access number (e.g., 911).
 - To report suspected human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1.888.373.7888, text BeFree (233733), or submit a tip online at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>.
 - To report a sexually exploited or abused minor, call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1.800.THE.LOST or report online at <http://www.missingkids.org/cybertipline>.

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