



MONTHLY MESSAGE : PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

From crying babies to an unexpected job loss, every family has encountered stress at some point. Learning to cope with stress in healthy ways helps families bounce back from challenges and provides a safe environment for children to grow up. During the early years, experiences shape the brain. You mainly influence what kind of experiences your child is exposed to. When children get the best start possible, they are likely to learn well in school, trust adults and have healthy relationships.

Families are stronger when they are connected, supported and informed. Below are some activities you can do that can lead to healthy childhoods and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

- Learn what your child can and can't do at every stage. This helps create realistic expectations and reduces frustrations.
- All families have strengths they can draw from. Identify what helps you during life's ups and downs like humor, asking for help or exercise.
- Build a support network to provide a listening ear, help in times of need and encouragement. Neighborhoods, faith-based organizations and libraries are some possible sources to build community.
- Having basic needs met helps provide safety for children and reduces stress. To get connected to services in your community, try contacting your local Family Resource and Youth Services Center.
- Teach your child how to communicate their feelings and needs to you with words rather than acting out.
- Children *need* love and attention to grow up healthy. You can't spoil a child with kind words, hugs and smiles.

SOURCE: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>

The *end* of child abuse and neglect starts with prevention.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and it takes everyone to commit to prevent child abuse. While most families never plan to harm their children, it does unfortunately happen. All children deserve the chance to learn, grow and succeed. Protecting children means protecting futures. When families look out for each other, it's easier to cope with stress and communities are stronger. Below are some ideas from the organization Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky to inspire creative ways you can help prevent child abuse in your community.



We can ensure they have safe and healthy childhoods.

54
THOUSAND
children are born in
Kentucky every
year.

Ways to Support Other Families

- Offer to babysit for free so a parent you know can take a break.
- Arrange a "parent's group" so mom/dad can share the joys and challenges of parenting while the children have an opportunity to play together.
- Tell other parents about 1-800-CHILDREN, a confidential parent helpline for support and referrals to local resources.
- Spread the word that it's NEVER ok to shake a baby. On social media, use the hashtag #committoprevent.
- Learn the names of the children, and parents, living on your street.
- Plant a pinwheel garden in your community (pinwheels are the official symbol of child abuse prevention month).
- Tell parents you know when they are doing a great job.
- Report suspected child abuse. Call 1-877-KY SAFE1 (1-877-597-2331).