

NURTURING PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS



Importance for Adult and Child Survivors of Domestic Violence

Nurturing parent-child interactions are beneficial for both adult and child survivors of domestic violence because they create a mutual bond of trust, love, affection, and predictability. Warm, caring, and loving parent-child interactions promote a sense of security in children and strengthen parents' belief in their ability to take good care of their children.

Overall Role of Practitioners

Practitioners can provide what adult survivors need to establish environments that sustain or strengthen their relationship and healthy interactions with their child.

Examples of How Practitioners Can Help

1. Provide resources and advocacy to create safer and more stable conditions, which can increase a survivor's capacity and opportunity to be the kind of parent they want to be.
2. Support adult survivors' efforts to maintain their families' or children's routines and schedules to the extent possible (e.g., having family meals and activities, going to school and playdates, doing homework with siblings).

3. Identify and support opportunities for adult and child survivors to have fun together.

4. Talk with adult survivors about positive caregiving practices and parent-child interactions.

- If survivors have participated in parent coaching or education, support them to practice and reinforce what they have learned.
- Find humor in parenting missteps and reframe them as learning experiences that all parents go through. Talk about ways parents can correct missteps, e.g., acknowledging the misstep with their child and apologizing.

5. Help adult survivors to create age-appropriate and non-shaming narratives for their children about domestic violence and safety planning. Reassure children that the violence is not their fault.

- A series of tip sheets for parents to help them talk to their children about domestic violence can be found here: https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/children_domestic_violence_entire_series.pdf
- See <https://changingmindsnow.org/gestures/> to learn five healing gestures for children and youth who have experienced trauma.

6. Identify free community and online resources an adult survivor can access for reliable parenting and child development information.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics provides information on topics such as child development, health, safety, and family issues at www.healthychildren.org.
- The University of Illinois website www.parenting247.org was developed to be a “one-stop” source of news, information, and advice on parenting.

“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.”

Alexander Den Heijer



Advancing an Adult & Child Survivor-Centered Approach

Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, Grant #90CA1850-01. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Examples of Questions to Ask Survivors

1. What are your child’s strengths, interests, and abilities? What do you do to support their interests and abilities?
2. What do you find most rewarding and most challenging about being a parent?
3. How does what’s happening with (the person using violence) affect your ability to be the kind of parent you want to be?
 - Does (the person using violence) undermine you or interfere when you’re dealing with your child? What does that look like, and what effect does it have?
 - What do you say to help your child make sense of what’s happening?
4. Of the things you remember about how you were parented as a child, what parts do you want to hang on to, and what parts do you want to let go of?
5. Where do you turn to for reliable parenting information or advice?
6. Who supports you as a parent?
7. How do you respond when your child does something well or achieves something? When your child does something that you find problematic?

This is part of a series of Practice Tips on Protective Factors for Adult and Child Survivors of Domestic Violence. Find the others here: <https://dvchildwelfare.org/resources/protective-factors-practice-tips/>