

SOCIAL *and* EMOTIONAL ABILITIES



Importance for Adult and Child Survivors of Domestic Violence

Social and emotional abilities help adult and child survivors persist when things are challenging, seek help when they need it, make responsible decisions, and achieve goals. These abilities are essential for success in school, employment, and interpersonal relationships.

Overall Role of Practitioners

Practitioners can facilitate experiences and conditions that help adult and child survivors to understand and express their emotions in a constructive way, regulate their own behaviors, make proactive plans, and solve problems.

Examples of How Practitioners Can Help

1. Pace your efforts to match the energy level and needs of survivors whenever possible. For example, give adult or child survivors the chance to stop and then come back to a conversation or activity if they feel overwhelmed or distracted.
2. Talk directly to a child or sibling group about how they feel, what they worry about, and what they love about their family.
3. Play a game or engage in another activity with a child. Ask about their interests, then find ways to support those interests.
4. Encourage adult and child survivors to identify their feelings and thoughts about the violence in their home.
 - Explore what an adult survivor does to help their child to make sense of what's happening and to help them heal.¹
 - Ask an adult survivor about ways their child's behavior, emotions, or attitudes have been affected by violence in the home.
5. Work with adult survivors to prioritize personal and family goals, break down goals into small and achievable steps, identify the skills and resources necessary to reach each step, and implement actions needed to achieve goals. Encourage them to persevere if obstacles arise.

6. Help survivors learn strategies for regulating their behavior and teaching their children how to regulate and have control over their behavior and emotions, such as:

- Take a pause between feeling and responding.
- Create a plan for handling problem situations.
- Forgive yourself for mistakes.
- Create a 5-point scale to help gauge how upset you and your child are.

7. Talk with adult survivors about the characteristics of effective decision making, such as:

- Taking into account trusted people's opinions and advice.
- Having clear priorities and values that help to define the path to success.
- Considering and being realistic about the potential outcomes of different choices.

"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

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Examples of Questions to Ask Survivors

1. What do you love about your family? What are your worries?
2. How are you or other people helping your child to deal with any worries, anxieties or fears about what's happening with your partner?
3. How do you think about your addiction/depression/other challenges and whether/how they're connected to the violence or abuse you're experiencing?
4. What's your number one goal for yourself for the next 3 – 6 months? What's your top goal that will take longer than 6 months?
5. How does your child respond to their peers and siblings when conflict occurs, and how do you help them navigate conflict?
6. Tell me about a time when you helped your child solve a problem and they felt really good about how they solved it.
7. If you were helping a friend who was navigating (a system), what advice would you give them and why?
8. What do you do for yourself to try to stay healthy both physically and emotionally?

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/>

1. See <https://changingmindsnow.org/gestures/> for five healing gestures for children and youth who have experienced trauma.