

The Five Things Strong Families Have in Common

Prosperous communities are built on strong families. Strong families have five things in common that help their children's well-being. When these "protective factors" are present, parents have the support and tactics they need to parent well, even in times of stress.

Parent Flexibility and Inner Strength: This is the ability to bounce back when things aren't going well. It includes knowing where to find help in times of trouble. Your ability to deal with life's ups and downs also serves as a model for your children.

Ways to Build and Maintain Flexibility and Inner Strength

- Take care of yourself - get enough sleep, eat well, and exercise
- Manage stress by exercising regularly, relaxing to music, or using meditation or prayer
- Plan ahead and have a plan in place for stressful situations
- Ask for support from family, friends, your church, and other community sources when you need it
- If needed, look for community programs that offer services or support, such as mental health and counseling services, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence programs, and self-help support groups

Knowledge of Child Development: This is awareness of normal infant, childhood, and teen development. Parents with this information:

- Have consistent rules and expectations
- Treat their children with respect
- Listen to their children
- Provide opportunities for children to make decisions
- Adjust their parenting style to the personality and age of each child

Strong Emotional Attachments: Bonding with your child and meeting their basic needs is the foundation of a positive and loving connection. When you respond to your young children, you are building healthy brain architecture on which all later development is formed. As your children get older, you are teaching them how to treat others in positive ways.

The Ability to Meet Needs: This is the ability to meet your family's basic needs for food, clothes, housing, and transportation. It is also knowledge of how to find services such as child care, health care, and mental health services when you need them.

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina works with communities throughout the state to implement the Circle of Parents Program. The program offers parents a way to strengthen the five protective factors in their families through sharing in each other's challenges and successes while developing a network of support.

The program helps parents:

- Build social connections
- Understand positive parenting strategies and typical child behavior and development
- Find information and resources in their community
- Improve their communication skills leading to more positive family interactions

To learn more about the Circle of Parents Program, go to www.preventchildabusenc.org.

Social Connections: Parents need a group of supportive friends, family, and neighbors. These are the people you can call on when you need to talk things out, advice, or help meeting a basic need.

Benefits of a social group

- Helps ease the burden of parenting
- Models positive social relationships for children
- Gives children access to other supportive adults
- Provides support in crises
- Offers opportunities to help others

Ways to meet new people

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors
- Join or start a parent's group or playgroup
- Join a story time group at your local library
- Attend PTA meetings at your child's school
- Volunteer in your child's classroom or offer to chaperone field trips
- Take your children to a local park or playground

To learn more about the five protective factors, go to www.childwelfare.gov/can/factors/protective.cfm

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