

# YOUR EVERYDAY GESTURES CAN HELP A CHILD HEAL.

Research continues to show that witnessing or experiencing traumatic events in childhood can impact the physical development of a child's brain. You can help reverse the effects. In fact, as a caring adult, you could be the most important factor in helping children heal. Here's what you can do:



## CELEBRATE

Use "put-ups," not "put-downs."



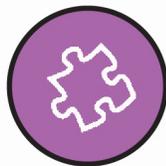
## COMFORT

Stay calm and patient.



## LISTEN

Show an interest in their passions.



## COLLABORATE

Ask for their opinions.



## INSPIRE

Expose them to new ideas.

Childhood trauma  
**Changing minds.**

DEFENDING CHILDHOOD Ad Council FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Washtenaw  
**SUCCESS BY 6**



[www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org](http://www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org)

Find more information and helpful tips at [ChangingMindsNOW.org](http://ChangingMindsNOW.org)

## CELEBRATE

- Respond to a baby's cues consistently and they will come to see themselves as worthwhile.
- Praise them for their hard work, for sticking with a difficult task, or for helping others.
- Support them when they are frustrated with a task and offer the least amount of help needed for them to accomplish it.
- For children over 1 year, support their quest for independence and to explore the world. Be the persistent physical presence that makes them feel safe and secure.
- For toddlers, tell them what you like about them and why you think they're special.
- Provide opportunities for children to experiment with trial and error, so they learn that they can persevere through difficulty. Celebrate the process.

## COMFORT

- Foster a deep, nurturing connection with children. Babies learn to soothe themselves in times of distress by being soothed by their caregivers.
- Offer physical and emotional affection to create a feeling of safety. For infants, swaddling, shushing, and rocking can help them calm down.
- Be patient during the tough times. By supporting babies even at their most difficult moments, you are letting them know they can trust and rely on you.
- Provide children with acceptable, non-violent ways to share strong feelings. For example, toddlers can rip paper, stomp their feet, or throw a foam ball when they're very mad.
- Respond to children's needs for increased attention, comfort, and reassurance. Increase your response to match their needs.
- Pay close attention to children's feelings and validate them.
- Help children identify their feelings by naming them. For example, you might say, "I can see that you feel really angry at him for knocking over your blocks."
- Very young children work through frightening events by reenacting them through play. Try not to discourage how they play, even if you find it disturbing. Comfort children who seem distressed by their play, and gently redirect them to other activities.
- Be patient and calm when children are clingy, whiny, or aggressive. They need you to help them regain control and feel safe.
- Help children feel safe enough to feel emotions, even while limiting their actions. For example, "You can be as mad as you want, but I won't let you hit."
- Provide young children with a comfort object, like a special stuffed animal or a soft blanket. For very young children, using a pacifier or allowing them to suck their thumb can help them self-soothe.
- Stay calm in stressful situations. Infants take their emotional cues from their caregivers.

## LISTEN

- Bend down or sit on the floor with children to make them feel safe and comfortable.
- Be patient. Young children might need some extra time and space to express themselves.
- Pay attention to a child's body language and nonverbal cues, or even to their drawings—these can sometimes tell you more than what the child is or is not saying.
- Enter their world through play and activities.

## COLLABORATE

- Set clear boundaries. Provide age-appropriate activities.
- Help toddlers understand others' perspectives during activities by offering reflective statements such as, "It looks like James might be upset because you grabbed the toy away from him."
- Give them time to work out a task independently. Children can be motivated by a little frustration to use their problem-solving skills. But try to catch them before they become too frustrated and give up on solving a problem. Read their cues. When you see frustration start to increase, provide the least amount of support you can that still allows them to achieve their goals.

## INSPIRE

- Establish routines for children. This can help them feel in control of their world and free to explore, play, grow, and learn.
- Create spaces for unstructured play and nurture creativity such as art, modeling clay, building blocks, and make believe.
- Expand their network of caring adults. Expose them to potential role models.
- Create opportunities to learn new skills and tasks. Read to children to help expand their sense of the world.