

Building Stronger Families: The Protective Factors

The Protective Factors are the foundation for the Center of the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Approach. The six protective factors are: nurturing and attachment, parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social/emotional competence of children. Research supports the common-sense notion that when certain protective factors are well established in a family, they build strengths and an environment that promotes optimal child development. JWB offers a *Building Stronger Families* workshop where parents, providers, grandparents, teachers, and community members will have an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas on the many ways that can help children grow up safe, strong, and happy.

Nurturing and Attachment (Love) - Research consistently shows that babies who receive affection and nurturing from their parents or caring adults have the best chance of developing into happy, healthy, and competent individuals. A relationship with a consistent, stable, and caring adult in the early years is associated in later life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

Parental Resilience (Courage) - No one can eliminate stress from parenting, but a parent's capacity for resilience can affect how he or she deals with stress. Resilience is the ability to manage and bounce back from challenges that emerge in every family's life. It means finding ways to solve problems, building and sustaining trusting relationships, and knowing how to seek help when necessary.

Social Connections (Relationships) - Friends, family, neighbors, and community members provide emotional support, help solve problems, offer parenting advice, and give concrete assistance to parents. Networks of support are essential and offer opportunities for parents to *give back* - an important part of self-esteem, as well as a benefit for the community.

Concrete Support in Times of Need (Community Support) - Meeting basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, and health care is essential for families to thrive. Likewise, when families encounter a crisis such as loss of job, health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental illness, adequate services and supports are needed to provide stability, treatment, and help for family members to get through the crisis.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (Knowledge) - Accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations at every age helps parents see their child in a positive light and promotes a child's healthy development. Information can come from many sources, including family members, parent education classes, and the internet.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children (Compassion) - A child or youth's ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior, and effectively communicate his or her feelings has a positive impact on their relationships. Identifying and working with children early to keep their development on track helps keep them safe, and helps their parents facilitate their child's healthy development.

*For more information on the **Protective Factors Workshop** contact JWB Community Facilitator, Dawna Sarmiento at (727) 453-5695 or dsarmiento@jwbpinellas.org.*