How Protective Factors Can Make Families Strong during COVID-19 Pandemic

With current events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone is experiencing unprecedented stress and uncertainty. Research has found that when families are stressed, children are at an increased risk of being abused.¹

How can families stay strong and resilient during this time? We can call into action the protective factors we have been building to be resilient, stay socially connected (at a distance), access the concrete supports we need and support our children’s physical and social and emotional development in this time of need.

The Alliance National Parent Partnership Council (ANPPC) offers “Conversations for a Better Normal” as a way to generate important conversations with parents, community members, co-workers, staff and others. It is our hope that these conversations will help identify and acknowledge the protective factors that are operational in our lives and help us all learn to lean on each other in times of a crisis.

These conversations are organized around the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework. There are a number of Everyday Actions known to build each of the five protective factors. In this tool, you will find a question for each of the Everyday Actions for all five protective factors.

Ways to Use the Conversation Tool

The Group

- Consider the parent, staff or community group that might benefit from a conversation that focuses on strengths during this crisis.
- With your group in mind, use the facilitator worksheets to design your conversation for each protective factor.
- Brené Brown² shares that one of her key insights about remote learning is to deliver it in small chunks – not more than 30 minutes at a time.

The Questions

- Select the questions that seem to serve your group best at this time. Feel free to adjust or rewrite the questions to reflect your group’s culture.
- You may choose to focus on a specific protective factor, or you may decide to combine questions from selected protective factors.
- You’ll find a worksheet for each protective factor in the Participant Worksheets PDF. If you choose, you can distribute the worksheet to all of the participants before the scheduled meeting. Some virtual platforms, such as Zoom or GoToMeeting, will allow you to attach the worksheet as a handout for your meeting.
The Remote Platform

• Choose a remote platform for the conversation that serves you and your group’s needs. ²

• Organizing a virtual meeting requires some planning. There are many resources available to help you succeed in planning and promoting your conversation.³

• As we move forward from COVID-19, we may need to become more skilled in conversational leadership through multiple platforms and means.⁴

Facilitator Instructions

• Record and/or take comprehensive notes during the conversation. You may find that you need a volunteer to help with this if you are the facilitator. Capturing the wisdom and experiences shared during the conversation is key.

• Use the “Actionable Steps and Strategies” section of the tool to plan what actions you can take as a follow-up to what you learn from the conversation. You may learn of resources you would like to share more widely – or a specific need that needs to be met immediately. Sometimes a simple follow-up email or phone call to individual members of your group will help create lasting social connections and support during this stressful time.

• Complete the short Google Form at https://forms.gle/fZGQQjHBHevme3EK9. What we all learn collectively about how protective factors are supporting children and families during COVID-19 will help us be better prepared for future crises. Please take just a few minutes to share the wisdom of your peers and colleagues.

Endnotes


2 Brown, Brené. “Collective Vulnerability, the FFTs of Online Learning, and the Sacredness of Bored Kids” Unlocking Us. Web. 21 March 2020. brenebrown.com/blog/2020/03/21/collective-vulnerability


5 Gurteen, David. “Conversational Leadership: An Online Book” Retrieved online on 1 April 2020. conversational-leadership.net (This website is a blook – a cross between a blog, a website and a book – that is updated daily. Anyone is free to browse the blook, but you will have to register and login to access the full site.)
Questions to Ask

1. What are some ways parents in your community are being valued during this crisis?
   - What is one of the kindest things someone in your community has done for you during the current COVID-19 pandemic?
     - Facilitation tip: How are people helping people – being willing to do more than is normally asked of them?

2. How has your community, race, faith, culture or belief system helped you remain strong or feel valued during this crisis?
   - How can we learn from each other to demonstrate diverse ways to cope with crisis?

3. What are some ways that you can remind yourself to deal with stress effectively?
   - How can you encourage others to do the same?
     - Facilitation tip: During stressful times, what are the benefits of having someone in your corner reminding you “that you’ve got this!”?

4. Staying positive during times of crisis can be challenging. Our children and peers look to us for leadership. How do you find the courage to lead by example in your family and community?
   - What do you need to know so that you can feel strong in being a parent during these times? How are you staying strong to face each day?

5. As you face this COVID-19 crisis, what are some ways that you protect your child from being negatively impacted?
   - Seeing this crisis from your children’s eyes, what are some ways you are protecting them during this time? Both physically and emotionally?

Actionable Steps and Strategies

Complete the Google Form HERE

cctalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/anppc

Notes

Feel free to personalize the questions, add additional questions and record key thoughts.


FACILITATOR: Everyday Actions that Help Build Social Connections during COVID-19 Pandemic

Questions to Ask

1. During this time of social distancing, what are some ways you are finding to sustain your relationships with friends and family? (At the same time demonstrating your awareness of the risks involved with those at risk?)
   - In what ways have you become a support system to others during times of distancing?
   - What ways are you staying connected to those you love and care about?

2. Since we are all trying to respect what is being asked of us and practice social distancing, what kinds of virtual groups seem to be helpful to you?
   - What are you looking for in terms of support from virtual groups?
   - What are some positive things you've tried, that you want other parents to consider to build a network of support?

3. The COVID-19 crisis is definitely not something any of us planned on. It has brought up many unexpected challenges. What is the most critical support you need right now as a parent?
   - What have you learned about yourself, that might help inform the way you support other parents?

4. How is your community rising to the occasion in the COVID-19 crisis in a positive manner?
   - What has your community, family and friends done to ensure you’re connected to virtual conversations and spaces to learn from others?
   - How is this working for those who cannot connect virtually?

Actionable Steps and Strategies

Notes

Feel free to personalize the questions, add additional questions and record key thoughts.

Complete the the Google Form HERE
**Questions to Ask**

Note that some of the Everyday Actions are combined in one question.

1 and 2 Learning happens in multiple ways. What are some of the things your family is doing to support your child’s/children’s learning during this crisis?
   - In what ways have your children helped your family learn new ways of supporting each other?

3 What credible sources are you relying on to address your parenting concerns and to remain strong during this crisis?

4 and 5 What ways are you letting other parents know how strong they are?

**Actionable Steps and Strategies**

- Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children
- Provide opportunities to try out new parenting strategies
- Provide information and resources on parenting and child development
- Encourage exploration of parenting issues or concerns
- Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective

**Notes**

Feel free to personalize the questions, add additional questions and record key thoughts.

1 and 2

3

4 and 5

Complete the Google Form [HERE](https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/anppc)
**FACILITATOR:** Everyday Actions that Help Build Social and Emotional Competence of Children during COVID-19 Pandemic

### Social and Emotional Competence of Children
Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

### Everyday Actions that Help Build Social and Emotional Competence of Children
1. Help parents foster their child’s social emotional development
2. Model nurturing support to children
3. Include children’s social and emotional development activities in programming
4. Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
5. Respond proactively when social or emotional development seems to need support

### Questions to Ask

1. How are you talking with your children about their BIG feelings?
   - Can you share any tools or specific activities you are using during this crisis that you use when you talk to your children about their emotions?

2. How are you balancing virtual nurturing (screen time, etc.) with emotional and physical nurturing?
   - What do your children seem to need the most right now?

3. What are some of the activities your community has set up to keep you engaged and allow you and your family to feel connected during this period of social isolation?

4. What are some of the ways that you are celebrating and acknowledging your child’s unique strengths during this time?
   - How are your children feeling and communicating those feelings?

5. If you are sensing that your child needs more help than you can give them right now, what can you do to get to the next step?

### Actionable Steps and Strategies

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

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**Notes**

Feel free to personalize the questions, add additional questions and record key thoughts.

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Complete the Google Form [HERE](https://www.ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/anppc)
Questions to Ask

1. Across the social-ecological model:
   - What are the top three things you need right now?
   - What are the top three things your family needs right now?
   - What does your community need right now?
   - What do you think our society will need to create a better normal in the post-COVID-19 world?

2. How are you staying informed about how to access services in your community?
   - Do you feel ready to share with others?
   - What are some of the concrete supports you have and what more do you need?

3. What are you learning about what it takes to handle a crisis?
   - As an individual?
   - In your family?
   - As a community?

Actionable Steps and Strategies

Notes

Feel free to personalize the questions, add additional questions and record key thoughts.