

When we help children do better today, we all do better tomorrow.

DO ALL YOU CAN FOR KIDS!

The expression “children are our future” has been around for quite awhile and is never more true than now. Exciting new research is providing insight into how we can improve early childhood development so that everyone’s future is brighter.

We know that child development is a foundation for community and economic development, as capable children grow to become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society.

We also now know that the basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues through adulthood. The interactions a child has in his home, school, and community become part of this intricate brain architecture.

The latest science says that a child’s nurturing relationships literally build the architecture of his or her maturing brain and establish the foundation for all future development.

Toxic stress, such as neglect and abuse, damages the developing brain and leads to problems in learning, behavior, and increased susceptibility to physical and mental illness.

The ability to change brain architecture and behavior decreases over time. Getting it right early is less costly, to society and individuals, than trying to fix it later.

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota works to prevent child abuse before it occurs. We believe everyone in the community has a role to play in preventing child abuse.

Helping those who care for children is fundamental. The effects of child abuse and neglect are far-reaching. Research has shown that children who have been abused and neglected are more likely to perform poorly in school, get involved in criminal activities and abuse or neglect their own children.

Preventing abuse and neglect minimizes the costs of long-term intervention for crime, corrections, truancy, hospitalization, special education and mental health care.

Here are some things you can do today:

1. Read about *The Wakanheza Project* and *The Protective Factors* on the back of this sheet and take steps to create welcoming environments that promote protective factors in your business, organization, congregation, school, etc.
2. Invite Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota (PCAMN) to do The Protective Factors or The Wakanheza Project training.
3. Start a Circle of Parents® group.
4. Place child neglect and abuse prevention information in your community center.
4. Call 1-800-CHILDREN to learn more.



What Caregivers Can Do When Pressure Builds Up

When you feel like lashing out, stop. Try these...

- ⇒ Stop in your tracks. Step back. Sit down.
- ⇒ Take five deep breaths. Inhale. Exhale. Slowly.
- ⇒ Count to 10. Better yet – 20. Or say the alphabet out loud.
- ⇒ Phone a friend. A relative. The weather. Or call 1-800-CHILDREN.
- ⇒ Still mad? Punch a pillow. Or munch on an apple.
- ⇒ Thumb through a magazine, newspaper, or photo album.
- ⇒ Do some sit-ups.
- ⇒ Pick up a pencil and write down your thoughts.
- ⇒ Take a hot bath. Or a cold shower.
- ⇒ Lie down on the floor or just put your feet up.
- ⇒ Put on your favorite music.
- ⇒ Water your plants.

THE PCAMN MISSION

To prevent child abuse and neglect by promoting positive parenting, healthy families, and supportive communities where children are respected and valued.

CONTACT PCAMN

(651) 523-0099 or 1-800-CHILDREN
1821 University Avenue West, Suite 202S
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
www.pcamn.org



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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

There are specific research-informed protective factors that help to prevent the occurrence of child neglect and abuse. We can work to create community environments and public policies that promote these protective factors.

1. Nurturing and attachment. Building a close bond helps parents better understand, respond to, and communicate with their children.

2. Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development. Parents learn what to look for at each age and how to help their children reach their full potential.

3. Parental resilience. Recognizing the signs of stress and enhancing problem-solving skills can help parents build their capacity to cope.

4. Social connections. Parents with an extensive network of family, friends, and neighbors have better support in times of need.

5. Concrete supports for parents. Caregivers with access to financial, housing, and other concrete resources and services that help them meet their basic needs can better attend to their role as parents.



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HOW TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE IN PUBLIC PLACES

The Wakanheza Project provides simple, usable tools and strategies that allow individuals, businesses, and communities to create welcoming, respectful environments for children, young people, adults, and families. If you are witnessing adults and children struggling in public: avoid judging, assess the situation, and assess yourself. If you are ready, then . . .

1. Offer assurance through a smile or a positive comment.
2. Show empathy – imagine yourself in the other person’s shoes.
3. Offer encouragement – say something positive that you see about the child or adult.
4. Distract and redirect their attention away from the stressful situation.

The Wakanheza Project is built around the power of the Dakota word for child – Wakanheza – which translates in English as “Sacred Being” and six principles that can change the way people regard and treat one another. The Wakanheza Project principles provide a lens for people to understand and effectively respond to stressful situations in order to create more welcoming environments.

Judgment: We make judgments every day to help us make decisions. When we see a person who is struggling and we make assumptions and judgments about who they are and why they are behaving as they are, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see ways to be helpful; it is difficult to see them as fellow, worthy human beings. It’s important to move those judgments out of the way in order to help out in situations.

Culture: The power and impacts of showing kindness and understanding through simple gestures including smiles and offers of assistance crosses cultural and language barriers. We all bring culture to the world in many ways. The Wakanheza Project offers the universal experience of empathizing with fellow humans and respectfully reaches across perceived cultural barriers (race, ethnicity, poverty, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) to lend a hand.

Powerlessness: Violence typically arises from a sense of powerlessness. We may witness people acting violently, misusing their power, but it is generally in response to a feeling of powerlessness.

Empathy: Empathy is defined as “the capacity for participating in the feelings or ideas of others”. We all have this capacity, and when we practice it, place ourselves in the shoes of another, it becomes simple to show understanding and offer a helping hand.

Environment: People tend to respond very well to welcoming environments. Parents and children can immediately sense whether a public environment is welcoming, and this sense will have a great impact on their behaviors within the building.

The Moment: The Wakanheza Project is all about suspending judgment, understanding the impacts of powerlessness and environment, rejoicing in culture, and practicing empathy. We all have the ability, and the obligation, to show caring, kindness and respect in the moment. We do not know what happened before or what will happen next, but we can practice The Wakanheza Project in the moment and greatly increase the likelihood of peaceful, positive interactions in our communities.

To schedule The Wakanheza Project training in your community, please contact PCAMN.

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