

Article #1- Positive Parenting during COVID-19 Pandemic

Hello Manistee County! This is hopefully going to be the first in a series of articles that help us as parents feel better about what we are doing for our kids and share some helpful tools. This article is going to talk about what we as parents can do to increase our kids “**protective factors**”. What are protective factors? They are things that “protect” our kids or buffer them, what we as parents can put “around them” to help them from making high risk choices (drugs, skipping school, teen pregnancy, wanting to meet with and hang with friends during a pandemic etc.) Why do we want to do this? Because it has been shown (through A LOT of research) that kids who have a lot of protective factors are able to be more successful in life. We all have hard stuff we go through, but why not increase our kids’ ability to get through it?

Protective Factor: How to build a relationship with a child

One gem that Communities that Care attempts to put into our community is how to connect with kids, or bond with youth. The idea is simple, teach your kid a skill (how to wash dishes, care for a pet, draw something, mow the lawn), and through that you will heap on the praise and rewards through telling them “good job”, “I am so proud of you”, “look how well you have taken care of our pet, see how happy and healthy it is”. Through teaching and praise, a connection will occur, thus they will be more likely to follow your family rules. Recently I taught our 9-year-old how to make pancakes. She loved it and felt empowered to safely cook them using a stove. The reward was seeing our family enjoy her work. Next time she will try it on her own! This concept is also called the Social Development Strategy. Opportunity + Skills + Recognition = Bonding. As you start to attempt these new skills remember it will take many attempts to get this, it will not happen immediately. Practice, practice, practice.

Easy enough right? Maybe, give yourself credit for trying. That is awesome and kids notice. No one expects perfection from the start. Here is a list to help you get started (consider this your homework for the week):

Skills:

- Work on a puzzle
- Learn a new game
- Learn a new sport/exercise (many are free online right now)
- Do some yard work
- Write a letter to grandma/grandpa/aunt/uncle
- Cook a meal or a dessert

Rewards:

- Verbal “thank you”, “great job”, “I am proud of you”, “you really tried hard”
- Allowance (a little money can go a long way)
- Earn more technology time
- Choose a sweet treat
- Let them plan an activity with you- “family date night”

