

Handout #7.10 Tips for Families in Promoting Resilience and Positive Youth Development

Listed here are twenty research-based tips for families (including youth themselves) for actions that will support resilience, reduce risks, and increase protective factors for young people.

- **Catch 'Em Being Good.** You get more of what you pay attention to, so when someone in the family does something you appreciate, or something you see as a positive step (even if small), it is important to show that you notice it.
- **Use Recognition Notes.** A simple note on the refrigerator, on a pillow, or hung on the mirror is often an unexpected and powerful way to recognize positive things others in the family have done.
- **Discuss Accomplishments.** "Tell me how you did that!" One very powerful form of recognition, often better than an everyday compliment, is to ask someone to discuss an accomplishment. This shows real interest.
- **Encourage Positive Friendships.** Given the power of peers (for youth and in fact adults), encouraging youth and adults to spend time with people everyone respects helps to support positive action.
- **Encourage Youth to Experiment.** Young people who have found a "passion," something they really enjoy, are at lower risk for problems, and are more likely to flourish. Youth need opportunities to try a variety of new activities so they can learn where their passions lie.
- **Show Warmth.** A simple smile when someone comes home, a touch or a hug, produces a flood of neurotransmitters in the brain that supports a sense of satisfaction and safety.
- **Stop Putdowns.** Despite the high levels of minor (and major) insults and hurtful jokes common in the media, such put-downs increase levels of stress hormones and interfere with social bonding and learning. Active steps to stop such put-downs at home will lead to greatly improved youth outcomes—and a much more pleasant home atmosphere.
- **Make Your Home a No-Hitting Zone.** The research is now very clear. The more hitting (spanking, fighting) young people experience, the more involved in antisocial behavior—including violence and dishonestly—they are likely to be later in life.
- **Talk to Youth.** Families usually want young people to talk at home; modeling how to talk respectfully and really honestly shows them the way. Youth are very keen in detecting dishonesty, but respond well to those who speak truth.
- **Listen to Youth.** When youth do talk, it is important to actually listen with respect, and without criticizing what they say. If what youth say is punished (e.g., "You don't know what you are talking about!"), youth will simply stop talking. Respectful disagreement, however, can be important—if it is truly respectful.
- **Give Youth Choices.** Youth learn how to function in a confusing world by practicing, and experiencing consequences of choices. So long as it is safe, letting youth make their own choices is important.
- **Partner with Teachers.** Youth, parents and guardians, and teachers are all in it together when it comes to education. It is important to work together, and to get to know each

other to form a working team to support academic goals. Try to avoid blame on any side, and acknowledge cultural differences when appropriate.

- **Keep an Adult Eye on Youth.** Research indicates that parental monitoring is highly associated with positive outcomes. Young people who spend a lot of time without adult monitoring are much more likely to be exposed to situations for which they are not yet emotionally prepared.
- **Include Youth in Decision-Making.** Young people feel more connected to the family if they feel that their views are important and respected. Participating in family decisions gives that message, opens their eyes to life's realities and the responsibilities of growing up, and gives young people practice in a critical life skill.
- **Work Together on Projects.** Whether it is a project around the house or some form of community service, working together on projects provides a richer connection between family members and offers youth an opportunity to use their gifts and power in a way that teaches teamwork and contributes to others.
- **Limit Stress in Your Own Life.** When a family member is highly stressed, they tend to be more punitive and to give less emotionally. The effects of stress, therefore, tend to be contagious and ripple through the family.
- **Demonstrate Effective Problem-Solving.** If young people observe adults solving problems in mature and creative ways, they learn to cope with their own challenges in the same way.
- **Help Youth Think of Solutions.** Although it is tempting to simply tell youth what to do when they experience problems, they learn more from thinking carefully about their possible choices, and the likely consequences of each. Other family members can guide them through that process.
- **Help Youth "Talk it Out."** When young people are involved in conflict, or are emotionally upset, it is very important that they learn to talk about their experiences. Help them to put it into words for themselves, and as they calm down, to learn to talk about the issue calmly with others involved in the conflict.
- **Join Your Community.** A rich network of positive, supportive relationships is important to youth development. The more connected the family is with positive neighborhood and community people, groups, and institutions, the stronger that network will be. Turn off the TV and video games, and join the community on a regular basis!

Source: <http://www.helpstartshere.org/kids-and-families/youth-development/youth-development-tip-sheet-tips-for-families.html>