“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.”
Alexander Den Heijer

Building Protective Factors refers to facilitating experiences and conditions that support adult and child survivors of domestic violence in ways that help them to increase their well-being.

What does it mean for child welfare staff, DV practitioners, educators, faith leaders, treatment providers, community residents and leaders, and others to build protective factors?

Building protective factors must be a primary focus for those interested in helping adult and child survivors of domestic violence. Better outcomes for children, adults, and families will be achieved if protective factors are addressed in all human domains: societal, community, interpersonal, and individual.

Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Societal Domain

1. Identify to policy-makers and leaders the impact of systemic barriers on adult and child survivors’ well-being (e.g., policies that create barriers for survivors trying to access safer housing, or discipline policies that result in a school-to-prison pipeline for students whose true need is trauma-responsive educational settings).

2. Collaborate with community stakeholders to improve availability and access to resources, support, and services for adult and child survivors of domestic violence.

Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Community Domain

1. Engage a wide range of community collaborators to identify and act on ways that they can build or promote protective factors in the lives of children and families they work with.

2. Work with community collaborators to address the ways in which they may be impeding the promotion of protective factors in the lives of children and families in the community.

Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Interpersonal Domain

1. Practice self-care by prioritizing ways to support your own well-being even when you may find it difficult to do so.

2. Recognize and change any patterns of communication that may negatively impact the well-being of survivors and their children.

Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Individual Domain

1. Engage in practices that promote healthy development and well-being (e.g., exercise, healthy eating, stress reduction, etc.).

2. Identify and seek support from family and friends that can be relied upon in times of crisis.
Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Interpersonal Domain

1. Facilitate adult and child survivors’ access to parent support groups, children’s playgroups, legal representation, immigrants’ rights organizations, DV support groups, housing, and other resources and supports that address their self-identified and unique needs.

2. Engage family members and friends of adult and child survivors in order to strengthen or create a strong, positive social network.

Examples of Building Protective Factors in the Individual Domain

1. Foster a safe, sensitive, and empowering working relationship with survivors that values their voice and enables them to reclaim their autonomy.

2. Employ trauma-aware and trauma-competent practices with adult and child survivors.


THE FIVE KEY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- SAFER AND MORE STABLE CONDITIONS
- SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS
- RESILIENCE AND A GROWTH MINDSET
- NURTURING PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS
- SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ABILITIES

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