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## Active Parenting update

Active Parenting 4th Edition (AP4) is a parenting program designed to improve your parenting skills to achieve a fuller, satisfying and less stressful family life.

The program is sponsored locally by NRVCS and it is open to families with children ages 5-12 in Montgomery, Pulaski, Floyd and Giles counties, as well as the City of Radford. This course is a six-week program that meets once a week for two hours. AP4 begins with a family dinner each night before parents and youth proceed to their respective class.

NRVCS Prevention Services staff has just completed a successful cycle of AP4 in Pulaski County and will begin two more cycles in Montgomery County and Radford starting in February 2019. The program received many positive reviews from participating parents as they learned the value of giving choices to their children, as well as appropriate consequences related to their child's behavior.

"I'm a grandparent raising a granddaughter and everything has changed," noted a recent participant. "I learned a lot from the facilitator explaining everything and from the group discussions with other parents."

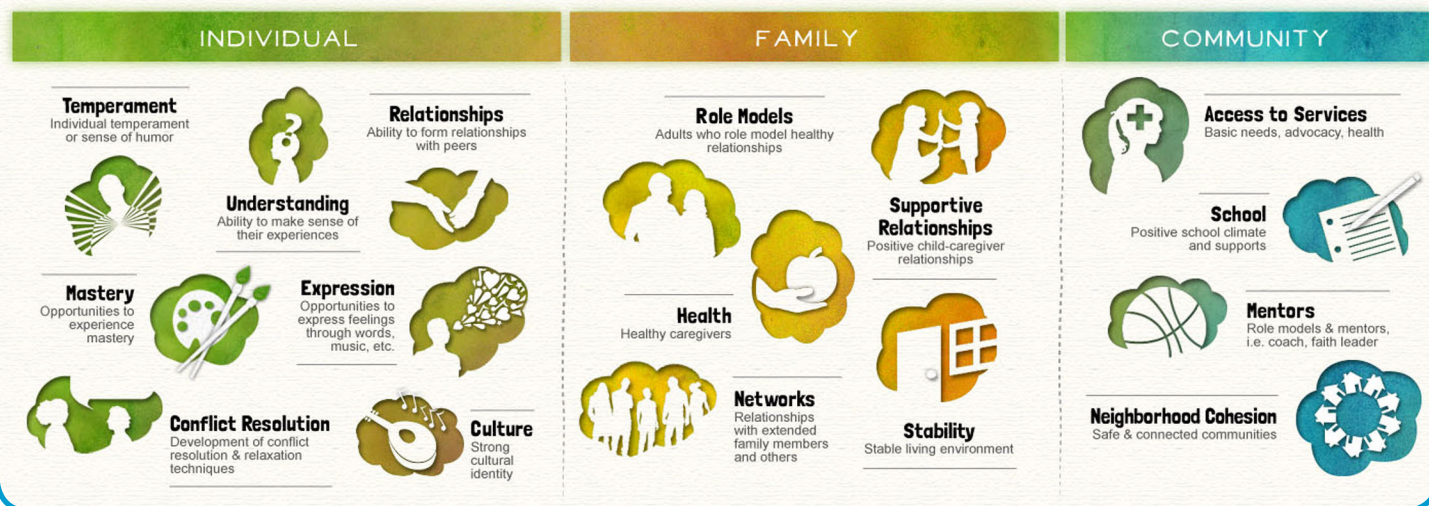
The parenting program also incorporates information about how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - sometimes referred to as "trauma" - affect a child's brain development and behaviors, which can often have a lifelong impact.

## PROMISING FUTURES PROMOTING RESILIENCY among children and youth experiencing domestic violence

Almost 30 million American children will be exposed to family violence by the time they are 17 years old.<sup>[2]</sup> Kids who are exposed to violence are affected in different ways and not all are traumatized or permanently harmed. Protective factors can promote resiliency, help children and youth heal, and support prevention efforts.

Research indicates that the #1 protective factor in helping children heal from the experience is the presence of a consistent, supportive, and loving adult—most often their mother.<sup>[1]</sup>

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCY



Parenting is a challenge because of two main reasons, it's a 24/7 job, and we all run out of energy. Some of the most challenging times come when you or your child are sick, tired or hungry. That's when rules fly out the door and tempers flare. So, when your precious little one greets you with a rude remark rather than a slobbery kiss, ask yourself if this might be one of the reasons. Then deal with the situation with compassion and tenderness.

Another common issue when dealing with kids is that, as parents, we often find ourselves operating on automatic pilot. Our increasingly busy lives require us to go at breakneck speed to get everything done, which, in turn, makes us feel like we just don't have the time to simply 'be' with our kids. That is a myth.

The truth is, children need some quality face-to-face interaction every-day, but not as much as you might think. If a child has 10 to 15 minutes of good, quality interaction where they feel heard, appreciated and loved, that will go a long way. We can do this by learning to talk *to* our kids rather than *at* them. To make a point or give an instruction we should stop, look them in the eye, gently touch them on the shoulder or arm, and speak in a kind and loving voice.

Start the day by being fully present with your kids in their morning routines. By helping them transition smoothly without rushing, listening with empathy - without judgement - or stopping for a hug or snuggle (if they are struggling), you will find your whole day will be better.

You would be surprised at how much quality time you can spend with your child when you allow them to help you prepare a meal, do the laundry or even shop for groceries. Like adults, kids like to feel useful, needed and appreciated. Asking a young one to be the kitchen helper and having pleasant conversations while working together may not be as efficient as doing it yourself, but you'll be making memories, and that trumps efficiency any day!

*Cathy 'Cat' Songer, NRVCS Prevention Educator and Parent Coach, is the lead parent facilitator of the Active Parenting Program*

## **Relationships foster resilience**

The adolescent years are called your 'formative years' because that time period has such a strong influence on the rest of your life. Research has shown that stress and hardship in childhood - such as that caused by abuse, neglect, exposure to violence and mental illness in caregivers - can alter the brain architecture of a developing child.

These changes can raise the risk of cognitive and developmental delays, physical health problems such as diabetes and heart disease, and behavioral and mental health problems such as substance abuse and depression.

Researchers have also found that the 'resilience' of an individual depends on drawing resources from many other systems. Some of those resources are the individuals' ability to problem solve, as well as self-control, emotional regulation, and motivation to succeed. But external influences are very important, too, including having a supportive family, parents/caregivers, as well as close relationships with other caring adults, and peers.

## **Resilience Guide for Parents**

**Make connections:** Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Encourage your child to be a friend in order to get friends. Build a strong family network to support your child through his or her disappointments and hurts.

**Help your child by having him or her help others:** Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work, or ask for assistance yourself with some task that he or she can master.

**Teach your child self care:** Set a good example and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest. Make sure your child has time to have fun, and allow for 'down time' to relax.

**Maintain a daily routine:** Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives.

**Take a break:** While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what is worrying him or her. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it be the news, the Internet or other social media. Be mindful of adult conversations that you have around your child and make sure your child takes a break from those things.



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