Funding for developing and sharing this and our child abuse prevention toolkit was provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services with a Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant from the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Learn more at familiesforwardva.org.
Helping your child build self-esteem is a balancing act. Sometimes you want to step back and other times you want to fight his or her battles.

The best way to help your child grow up to be confident is by encouraging your son or daughter to pursue experiences that make him or her feel capable, effective and accepted. That means sometimes your child will tackle challenges and win and other times he or she will fail. But struggles and failures can build self-esteem too.

Help your child build confidence by encouraging your son or daughter to:

1. **Take healthy risks.** Risks help your child stretch and grow. Allow your child to figure out problems, make choices and experience the results.

2. **Develop competence.** Encourage your child to explore and develop interests and talents. To progress, your child should stick with what he or she started.

3. **Set realistic goals.** It’s OK for your child to go big with his or her dreams, but the goal must be within reach. A short person will probably not make the NBA, regardless of how many hours he or she has practiced.

4. **Earn praise.** When praise is appropriate it can make your child feel like a million dollars. Too often children are overpraised, which lowers the bar. Praise your child’s effort or achievement and not his or her worth. For example, don’t tell your son he is awesome; tell him you loved how he achieved his goal of all As.

5. **Help at home.** Asking your child to help out at home can build a sense of responsibility. Make him or her feel valued and channel energy into desirable behavior. Whether a toddler or a teen, every child can help set the table, collect dirty clothes for the washer and pick up around the house.

6. **Make choices.** Allow your child to make age-appropriate choices and live with his or her consequences.

7. **Know your love is unconditional.** Your child will make mistakes. But when your child fails to meet your expectations, your son or daughter needs to know you will continue to support and love him or her.

Remember, you can’t give your child self-esteem. But you can provide the guidance and tools to help your son or daughter build confidence.
Using a Trauma-Informed Approach

Being informed about trauma is essential for anyone working with families and individuals. People experiencing trauma in their lives can have long-lasting effects, especially if the trauma was in childhood.

There is a direct link between trauma and physical health. Children with four adverse childhood experiences (trauma) are 12 times more likely to have a long list of chronic health problems as adults than children without trauma. They are also at much higher risk for depression, promiscuity, drug abuse and suicide attempts.*

A trauma-informed approach to care helps shift the care given to individuals that experience these traumatic events.

Anyone following a trauma-informed approach to care:**

1. Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
2. Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system.
3. Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices.
4. Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

A trauma-informed approach adheres to six key principles rather than a prescribed set of practices or procedures. **

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice and choice
6. Cultural, historical and gender issues

Trauma-specific intervention programs generally recognize the following:**

- The survivor’s need to be respected, informed, connected and hopeful regarding their own recovery;
- The interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma such as substance abuse, eating disorders, depression and anxiety;
- The need to work in a collaborative way with survivors, family and friends of the survivor, and other human services agencies in a manner that will empower survivors and consumers.

*Information from Collaborative for Educational Services

**Information from the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth need to feel socially, emotionally and physically safe and supported. Negative attitudes toward them can sometimes lead to violent behaviors such as bullying, teasing, harassment and physical assault.

Parents should be supportive and have honest and open talks with their teens. Parental rejection has been linked to depression, drug and alcohol use and risky sexual behavior among teens.

The following are research-based steps parents can take to support the health and wellbeing of their LGBTQ teen:

- **Talk and listen.** Parents who talk with and listen to their teen in a way that invites an open discussion about sexual orientation can help their teen feel loved and supported. Parents should have honest conversations with their teens about sex and how to avoid risky behaviors and unsafe situations.

- **Provide support.** Parents who take time to come to terms with how they feel about their teen’s sexual orientation will be more able to respond calmly and use respectful language. Parents should develop common goals with their teen, including being healthy and doing well in school.

- **Stay involved.** Parents who make an effort to know their teen’s friends and know what their teen is doing can help their teen stay safe and feel cared about.

- **Be proactive.** Parents can access many organizations and online information resources to learn more about how they can support their LGBTQ teen, other family members and their teen’s friends.

According to data from the 2015 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual students:

- 10% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property
- 34% were bullied on school property
- 28% were bullied electronically

*Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
MOMENTS IN VIRGINIA

Every 13 days a child dies as a result of abuse/neglect.

Every 69 minutes 1 child drops out of school.

Every 25 minutes a child in Virginia becomes homeless.

Every 135 minutes a child is served by a CASA volunteer.

Every 81 minutes a child is abused or neglected in Virginia.

Every 5 minutes a child is born in Virginia.

5,322 children are currently in foster care in Virginia. 49% of which are due to neglect.

Information obtained through the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Education, Children’s Advocacy Centers of Virginia, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

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Medical doctors and dentists often prescribe opioids after surgery to help reduce severe pain. Taken as prescribed, opioids are relatively safe and effective. However, because of the nature of these drugs, dependence and addiction are still potential risks. The risks increase when these drugs are abused. Painkillers are one of the most commonly abused drugs by teens, after tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. Parents can have a significant influence over their children’s decision to use drugs or alcohol.

How can parents help?

• Build a trusting relationship with their children, regularly discuss the risks of substance use, and model healthy behaviors for children to learn from.

• Be aware of and monitor children’s risk factors. Children with a family history of addiction, a mental health condition, an impulsive/risk-taking personality, and/or a history of trauma are at greater risk of substance use and addiction.

* Information from CurbTheCrisis.com
The abuse of opioids has led Virginia, like other states across the nation, to declare opioid addiction as a public health crisis. More Virginians now die every year from an overdose than in car accidents.

Addiction or abuse of heroin and prescription drugs commonly prescribed for pain (oxycodone, hydrocodone and fentanyl) will erode a parent’s ability to provide good nutrition, supervision and basic care for their child.

Family life with an opioid abuser is often chaotic and unpredictable. This instability increases the risk for adverse childhood experiences, which research shows can seriously affect a child’s health and wellbeing as an adult.

If you or someone you know struggles with addiction, it’s important to take steps to keep children safe. The first step is to admit you have a substance abuse problem and seek treatment.

Timely access to substance abuse treatments, as well as recovery coaches or mentoring, is available.

Reaching out for help to recover from addiction is the first step toward protecting your child’s safety and wellbeing. Be the best parent you can be by overcoming your addiction with determination, guidance and education. START NOW.

Go to curbthecrisis.com to find treatment information, access to resources, and the latest research and data on this crisis.
Unhealthy relationships and environments can lead to child abuse and neglect.

Maltreatment in founded cases of abuse included physical neglect, physical and sexual abuse and mental abuse/neglect. The Centers for Disease Control cites several strategies to prevent child abuse. They include the following:

- Early child home visitation
- Early education with family engagement
- Improving parenting skills and family relationship approaches
- Behavioral parent training programs
- Treatment to lessen the harms of abuse and neglect exposure
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence

*Information provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services.
Bullying does not always happen in person.

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens online or through text messages or emails. There are things you can do to protect yourself.

- **Always think about what you post.** You never know what someone will forward. Being kind to others online will help to keep you safe. Do not share anything that could hurt or embarrass anyone.

- **Keep your password a secret from other kids.** Even kids that seem like friends could give your password away or use it in ways you don’t want. Let your parents have your passwords.


- **Keep your parents in the loop.** Tell them what you’re doing online and who you’re doing it with. Let them friend or follow you. Listen to what they have to say about what is and isn’t okay to do. They care about you and want you to be safe.

- **Talk to an adult you trust** about any messages you get or things you see online that make you sad or scared. If it is cyberbullying, report it.

*Information from Stopbullying.gov*
A form of youth violence, bullying can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. It can include everything from name calling to spreading rumors. Children who are being bullied may become depressed or anxious. They may have trouble sleeping or begin to have difficulties at school.

Most bullying happens in middle school. The most common types are verbal and social bullying.

There is no reason for anyone to be mean to others. Children and teens can take an active stance by doing the following:

- Stop and think before you say or do something that could hurt someone.
- If you feel like being mean to someone, find something else to do. Play a game, watch TV, or talk to a friend.
- Talk to an adult you trust. They can help you find ways to be nicer to others.
- Keep in mind that everyone is different. Not better or worse. Just different.
- If you think you have bullied someone in the past, apologize. Everyone feels better.

*Information from Stopbullying.gov

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STAND UP FOR OTHERS

When you see bullying,
there are safe things you can do to make it stop.

• **Talk to a parent, teacher, or another adult you trust.** Adults need to know when bad things happen so they can help.

• **Be kind to the kid being bullied.** Show them that you care by trying to include them. Sit with them at lunch or on the bus, talk to them at school, or invite them to do something. Just hanging out with them will help them know they aren’t alone.

• **Not saying anything could make it worse for everyone.** The kid who is bullying will think it is ok to keep treating others that way.

*Information from Stopbullying.gov*
MANAGING STRESS

Stress is a fact of life, but it’s how you manage it that counts. You’ll find it more beneficial to respond positively to stress than to react in a kneejerk way. You need to be in control of your thoughts, emotions and actions. You can’t take care of others unless you first take care of yourself. When you are stressed it’s important to practice self-care.

- Use your breaks at work to breathe and relax. Get out and take a short walk, change the scenery. If you have a door to your office, close it and do a quick meditation exercise.
- Take at least three to five minutes every hour to become aware of your breathing. Let your mind settle and relax. Use this time to focus just on the present, rather than recent or expected stressors.
- At the end of the day congratulate yourself for your accomplishments. Acknowledge the work you’ve done and be proud.
- Take time out to focus on the positive and relax. Smile, whistle a tune, spend time with your pet, walk, hike, dance, sing. Keep a gratitude journal and write in it every day.
- A simple smile can turn a bad day upside down. Take time to give someone a compliment. And, do something for yourself – eat some chocolate, practice kindness, laugh out loud, watch a sunset, focus on your senses.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. You may look at this as a temporary fix to feel better, but in the long run drugs and alcohol can create more problems and add to your stress—instead of taking it away.
- Find support. Don’t be afraid to ask for support. Seek help and support from positive people in your life, a family member or friend for example. Having someone with a sympathetic, listening ear and sharing your stress really can lighten the burden.
- Connect socially. After a stressful event, it is easy to isolate yourself. Make sure you are spending time with loved ones. Consider planning fun activities with your partner, children or friends.
- Take care of yourself.
  - Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Get plenty of sleep – six to eight hours a night.
  - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out for example, treat yourself to a therapeutic massage.
  - Maintain a normal routine and a sense of humor.
  - Be optimistic. Engage in positive thinking.
- Stay active. You can take your mind off your problems with activities like helping a neighbor, volunteering in the community and taking the dog on a long walk. These can be positive ways to cope with stressful feelings.
- Find ways to relax. Become proficient in meditation or mindfulness or take a yoga class.

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If your child disclosed sexual abuse, please contact your local social services department for further guidance, or call 1-800-552-7096.

AWARENESS is the first step in protecting your son. The sexual abuse of boys is more common than most people expect.

Abuse of boys often goes unreported for many reasons. Boys can be more reluctant to talk about painful experiences. They do not want to appear weak or they may be afraid of being given a label or called names.

Did you know that boys are more likely to be physically harmed during a sexual assault? The first step you can take as a parent is to be aware that your son can be harmed in this way. The effects of abuse can be serious and lifelong. They may include anxiety disorders, aggressive behavior, poor self-image and substance abuse.

Talk to your son about the importance of confiding in you about unwanted touching.

Help him understand that no person, regardless of age, should ask him to keep a secret about touching his body. It’s important to remember that

As many as 

ONE IN SIX BOYS 

are sexually abused nationally.
Voluntary home visiting matches parents with trained professional home visitors to provide information and support during pregnancy and throughout their child’s first five years. Home visits help improve pregnancy outcomes for high-risk women and babies as well as improve children’s health and development and strengthen family functioning.

Home visitors can complement care being provided by:
- Assisting women with keeping health care appointments
- Making referrals to needed health and social services
- Providing information on healthy nutrition
- Encouraging initiation of breastfeeding
- Providing information on child health and development
- Promoting positive parent-child relationships

Research and scientific studies demonstrate the effectiveness of home visiting and the positive outcomes it produces in maternal and child health, family functioning and reductions in child maltreatment.

Benefits of home visiting include:
- Improved parenting skills
- Reduced child behavioral problems
- Improved child intellectual development
- Improved maternal employment and education
- Reduced postpartum/postnatal depression
- Reduced frequency of unintentional injuries among children
- Enhanced quality of social supports to mothers
- Improved rates of breastfeeding

Home visits are voluntary, free, long-term, community based and data driven. Home visitors:
- Have good teaching skills
- Offer encouragement and hope
- Provide resources to meet family needs
- Are caring and committed to their job

*Information from Early Impact Virginia

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WHAT PARENTS CAN SAY TO PREVENT SEXUAL ABUSE

To keep your child safe from sexual abuse, it’s important that you feel comfortable with your son or daughter talking about body safety. By the time your child is a toddler, you can help your child understand that his or her body is not to be touched by anyone without permission. Talking to your child about the need to keep his or her body safe is essential.

FOLLOW THESE AGE-APPROPRIATE TIPS FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS:

18 MONTHS
Teach your child the proper name for body parts.

AGES 3 TO 5
Teach your child about “private parts” of the body and how to say “NO!” to any type of touching that seems wrong or makes the child uncomfortable.

AGES 5 TO 8
Discuss safety away from home and the difference between being touched in private parts of the body, which are areas covered by a bathing suit, and never touching someone else’s private parts. Encourage your child to talk about scary experiences.

AGES 8 TO 12
Stress personal safety and give examples of possible dangerous areas, such as locker rooms, malls, social media sites and isolated places. Discuss the rules of sexual conduct expected by the family.

AGES 13 TO 18
Continue to stress personal safety and potentially higher risk locations. Discuss such issues as sexual assault and abuse as well as your family’s standards of sexual conduct.

Teach your child that saying “NO” is OK when it involves his or her body. Encourage your child to always share secrets with you about his or her private areas being touched.

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There are things you can do if you are being bullied:

• Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. You can also try to laugh it off. This works best if joking is easy for you. It could catch the kid bullying you off guard.

• If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don’t fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying on the spot.

There are things you can do to stay safe in the future, too.

• Talk to an adult you trust. Don’t keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.

• Stay away from places where bullying happens.

• Stay near adults and other kids. Most bullying happens when adults aren’t around.

*Information from Stopbullying.gov