Social Connections – A Promotive and Preventive Protective Factor

Diane Bellem, Director/Vice President, Georgia Training Institute, Sheltering Arms

AGENDA

• Announcements
• Overview of the Webinar - Objectives
• What is Social Connections?
• Why is it a Protective and Promotive Factor?
• Resources

Objective

To understand the importance of social connections in building protective and promotive factors

Protective Factors

• Parental resilience
• Social connections
• Concrete support in times of need
• Knowledge of parenting and child development
• Social and emotional competence of children

Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families ™ Protective Factors Framework is a framework developed by CSSP over the last decade to

• Reduce and prevent child abuse and neglect,
• Promote optimal development of children, and
• Strengthen families.

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Protective and Promotive Factors

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<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Promotive Factors</th>
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<td>Parental Resilience</td>
<td>Youth Resilience</td>
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<td>Social Connections</td>
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<td>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development</td>
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<td>Concrete Support in Times of Need</td>
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<td>Social Emotional Competence of Children</td>
<td>Cognitive and Social Emotional Competence in Youth</td>
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What are Protective and Promotive Factors?

- Protective factors are conditions or attributes that mitigate or eliminate risk
- Promotive factors are conditions or attributes that actively enhance well-being
- **TAKEN TOGETHER, PROTECTIVE AND PROMOTIVE FACTORS INCREASE THE PROBABILITY OF POSITIVE, ADAPTIVE AND HEALTHY OUTCOMES, EVEN IN THE FACE OF RISK AND ADVERSITY.**

Social Connections

- Emotional support
- Help solve problems
- Offer parenting advice
- Give concrete assistance

Isolated families may need extra help in reaching out to build positive relationships.

Benefits of Social Connections

- Sense of belonging
- Increased sense of self-worth
- Feeling of security

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What do Social Connections “Look Like”? 

**Both Formal and Informal**
- regular meetings with an official leader
- a coffee break with a friend at work,
- a quick chat with a neighbor,
- a phone call to/from family members,
- a visit to church

Social Capital
The fabric of a community and the community pool of human resources available to it is often called its “social capital.”

This term refers to the individual and communal time and energy that is available for such things as community improvement, social networking, civic engagement, personal recreation, and other activities that create social bonds between individuals and groups.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

How does social capital work?
The term social capital emphasizes not just warm and cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks.

Creating a Greenhouse Atmosphere for Children and Their Families

The power of community is neighborhoods where people care for one another... the place where everyone knows your name.

Where is the community, the neighborhood?

Any place where people gather together to work, play, worship, live or share...

EVEN THE CENTER or Network.

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Family-Centered Child Care
is the natural and logical place
to provide mothers and fathers and families with

INFORMATION, INSPIRATION & INVOLVEMENT.

The center or network becomes a “community”, a place where parents and professionals learn from one another. Needs are met through activities at the center or network as well as through linkages to the community.

Universal Human Needs
✓ Safety
✓ Food
✓ Shelter
✓ Recreation
✓ Fellowship
✓ Culture
✓ Education
✓ The Arts

Creating Social Capital
Places where people - trust one another, join organizations, network, volunteer, vote, and socialize with friends - And these are the same places where children FLOURISH!

INFORM - How & What
✓ Initial inquiry
✓ Enrollment
✓ Parent Leadership Committee
✓ Happiness Course
✓ Parent Handbook
✓ Advisory Committee
✓ Wellness Series
✓ Health Fair
✓ Family Literacy
✓ Parenting Information
✓ Life Skills
✓ Hobbies
✓ Parenting Classes
✓ Leisure Skills
✓ Resources

Communication:
Frequent & Systematic
Both Formal and Informal
✓ Kitchen Talk
✓ Conferences
✓ Communication Log
✓ Opinion Polls
✓ Emails
✓ “Ask me about”
✓ Classroom Letters
✓ Crisis Intervention
✓ Personal Visits
✓ Office visits
✓ Surveys
✓ Calendars
✓ Home visits
✓ Lobby Talk
✓ Connections
✓ Neighborhood Visits
Social Connections: A Promotive and Preventive Protective Factor

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Social Media
Human beings are social creatures, and therefore, are dedicated to creating and participating in “social networks” in order to express and share their ideas.

With the rise of the internet, people began satisfying this natural necessity in online communities such as internet forums. The evolution of these social forums resulted in today’s global social networking.

Involve
- Parents as volunteers
- Parent Drop Ins
- Parent/Child Together
- Family Activities
- Movie Night
- Camp Out
- Teddy Bear Picnic
- Pajama Party
- Wish Night
- Welcome Night
- Open House
- Donut for Dads
- International Food Day
- Story Stroll
- All Pro Dad
- Intergenerational Day
- Potluck Supper
- Event Planning

Getting Started Conversations with Parents...
- What’s hard about being a parent?
- Are there ways our staff and parents could help each other deal with challenges?
  - We want to be a welcoming place where parents feel comfortable asking for help. What are some of your ideas about how we can do that?
  - How can we reach out to parents when they are particularly stressed, isolated or overwhelmed?
  - We want to make it easy for parents to make connections with one another and with the community. How can we do that?

Families YES!
Auxiliary Support
- Tutoring
- Dance
- Meals to Go
- Scouts
- Hair Cuts
- Food Bank
- Laundry Service
- Clothes Closet
- Toy Swap
- Transportation

Parent Leadership
Organization & Community Advisory Committees
A time for:
- Information Sharing
- Advocacy Action
- Opinion Poll
- Event Planning
- Fundraising Strategies
- Preparing volunteers to be our link to the community at large: “Our eyes, our ears, our voice”

Parent Cafes

Inspire
- Encourage
- Joyful Attention
- Assist
- Bolster
- Compassionate Presence
- Light at the end of the tunnel
- Authenticate
- Intentional
- Stress buffer
- Reinforce
- Validate
- Belong
- Normalize
- Attachment
- Validate
- Hopefulness
- Confirm
- Affirm
- Motivate
- Prompt
- Spur

Celebration
Celebration enhances our humanity.
To deny our need to celebrate is to deny a part of what it means to be human.

Resources/Ideas
- Annie E Casey: Making Connections
- Let’s Move
- Great Start Georgia
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center
- The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE Framework)
- 100 Greatest Books for Kids - Scholastic
- www.StrengtheningFamilies.net
- CafetoGo = world café guide book

Laughing Matters

2013 RESOURCE GUIDE
Preventing Child Maltreatment and Promoting Well-Being: A Network for Action

State Coordinator:
Jeanette B. Meyer
Statewide Coordinator Strengthening Families Georgia
Phone: 678-524-6141
Email: strengtheningfamiliesga@gmail.com
**CORE MEANINGS OF THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protective Factor</th>
<th>Core Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Resilience</td>
<td><strong>Resilience Related to General Life Stress</strong>&lt;br&gt;a. managing the stressors of daily life and functioning well even when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma&lt;br&gt;b. calling forth the inner strength to proactively meet personal challenges, manage adversities, and heal the effects of one's own traumas&lt;br&gt;c. becoming more self-confident and self-efficacious&lt;br&gt;d. having faith; feeling hopeful&lt;br&gt;e. believing that one can make and achieve goals&lt;br&gt;f. solving general life problems&lt;br&gt;g. having a positive attitude about life in general&lt;br&gt;h. managing anger, anxiety, sadness, feelings of loneliness, and other negative feelings&lt;br&gt;i. seeking help for self when needed&lt;br&gt;<strong>Resilience Related to General Parenting Stress</strong>&lt;br&gt;a. calling forth the inner strength to proactively meet challenges related to one's child&lt;br&gt;b. not allowing stressors to keep one from providing nurturing attention to one's child&lt;br&gt;c. solving parenting problems&lt;br&gt;d. having a positive attitude about one's parenting role and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;e. seeking help for child when needed&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connections</td>
<td>a. Building trusting relationships; feeling respected and appreciated&lt;br&gt;b. Having friends, family members, neighbors, and others who:&lt;br&gt;  • provide emotional support (e.g., affirming parenting skills)&lt;br&gt;  • provide instrumental support/concrete assistance (e.g., providing transportation)&lt;br&gt;  • provide informational support/serve as a resource for parenting information&lt;br&gt;  • provide spiritual support (e.g., providing hope and encouragement)&lt;br&gt;  • provide an opportunity to engage with others in a positive manner&lt;br&gt;  • help solve problems&lt;br&gt;  • help buffer parents from stressors&lt;br&gt;  • reduce feelings of isolation&lt;br&gt;  • promote meaningful interactions in a context of mutual trust and respect&lt;br&gt;c. Having a sense of connectedness that enables parents to feel secure, confident, and empowered to &quot;give back&quot; to others</td>
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### Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors

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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development</strong></td>
<td>Seeking, acquiring, and using accurate and age/stage-related information about: a. parental behaviors that lead to early secure attachments b. the importance of • being attuned and emotionally available to one's child • being nurturing, responsive, and reliable • regular, predictable, and consistent routines • interactive language experiences • providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for one's child • providing opportunities for one's child to explore and to learn by doing a. appropriate developmental expectations b. positive discipline techniques c. recognizing and attending to the special needs of a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concrete Support in Times of Need</strong></td>
<td>a. being resourceful b. being able to identify, find, and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves in order to grow (e.g., healthy food, a safe environment), as well as specialized medical, mental health, social, educational, or legal services c. understanding one's rights in accessing eligible services d. gaining knowledge of relevant services e. navigating through service systems f. seeking help when needed g. having financial security to cover basic needs and unexpected costs</td>
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| **Children's Social and Emotional Competence**        | **Regarding the parent:**  
a. having a positive parental mood  
b. having positive perceptions of and responsiveness to one's child  
c. responding warmly and consistently to a child's needs  
d. being satisfied in one's parental role  
e. fostering a strong and secure parent-child relationship  
f. creating an environment in which children feel safe to express their emotions  
g. being emotionally responsive to children and modeling empathy  
h. talking with the child to promote vocabulary development and language learning  
i. setting clear expectations and limits  
j. separating emotions from actions  
k. encouraging and reinforcing social skills such as greeting others and taking turns  
l. creating opportunities for children to solve problems  

**Regarding the child:**  
a. developing and engaging in self-regulating behaviors  
b. interacting positively with others  
c. using words and language skills  
d. communicating emotions effectively |
Social Connections

Exploring Strengths and Needs

Identifying and building on parents’ current or potential social connections, skills, abilities, and interests can be a great way to partner with them as they expand their social networks. For parents who have difficulty establishing and maintaining social connections, your discussion may help them identify what is holding them back.

Encourage parents to express goals regarding social connections in their own terms, such as, “I have friends and at least one person who supports my parenting.”

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<tr>
<th>In order to explore . . .</th>
<th>Ask the parent . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The parent’s current social support system, including family, friends, and membership in any formal groups</td>
<td>Do you have family members or friends nearby who help you out once in a while?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you belong to a church, temple, mosque, women’s group, men’s group?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a child in the local school or Head Start program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The parent’s social skills and capacity to make and keep friends</td>
<td>Who can you call for advice or just to talk?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you see them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The parent’s desire for new friends and social connections</td>
<td>What kinds of things do you like to do for fun or to relax?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you be interested in meeting some other moms and dads who also (have a new baby, have a teenager, like to cook, sing in a choir)?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The parent’s potential strengths and challenges in making social connections (including concerns such as parent’s language, comfort level in groups, access to babysitting and transportation, recent arrival in community)</td>
<td>What are some benefits of getting out or joining a group?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind of support would you need in order to be able to get out for an evening?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does your spouse or partner help out so that you have some time with friends?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs that might be met with better social connections (for instance, respite care, a sympathetic listener, a role model)</td>
<td>Would it help you to have more friends or acquaintances to call about ________?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would it help you to know other moms and dads who are dealing with ________?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The parent’s interest in starting or facilitating a community group</td>
<td>What would it take to get a group of parents together to ________?</td>
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</tbody>
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Social capital is built through hundreds of little and big actions we take every day. We've gotten you started with a list of nearly 150 ideas, drawn from suggestions made by many people and groups. Try some of these or try your own. We need to grow this list. If you have other ideas, post them at: http://www.bettertogether.org.


1. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor
2. Attend town meetings
3. Register to vote and vote
4. Support local merchants
5. Volunteer your special skills to an organization
6. Donate blood (with a friend!)
7. Start a community garden
8. Mentor someone of a different ethnic or religious group
9. Surprise a new neighbor by making a favorite dinner—and include the recipe
10. Tape record your parents' earliest recollections and share them with your children
11. Plan a vacation with friends or family
12. Avoid gossip
13. Help fix someone's flat tire
14. Organize/participate in a sports league
15. Join a gardening club
16. Go to home parties when invited
17. Become an organ donor or blood marrow donor.
18. Attend your children's athletic contests, plays and recitals
19. Get to know your children's teachers
20. Join the local Elks, Kiwanis, or Knights of Columbus
21. Get involved with Brownies or Cub/Boy/Girl Scouts
22. Start a monthly tea group
23. Speak at/host a monthly brown bag lunch series at your local library
24. Sing in a choir
25. Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores
26. Attend PTA meetings
27. Audition for community theater or volunteer to usher
28. Give your park a weatherproof chess/checkers board
29. Play cards with friends or neighbors
30. Give to your local food bank
31. Walk or bike to support a cause and meet others
32. Employees: encourage volunteer/community groups to hold meetings on your site
33. Volunteer in your child's classroom or chaperone a field trip
34. Join or start a babysitting cooperative
35. Attend school plays
36. Answer surveys when asked
37. Business: invite local government officials to speak at your workplace
38. Attend Memorial Day parades and express appreciation for others
39. Form a local outdoor activity group
40. Participate in political campaigns
41. Attend a local budget committee meeting
42. Form a computer group for local senior citizens
43. Help coach Little League or other youth sports — even if you don't have a kid playing
44. Help run the snack bar at the Little League field
45. Form a tool lending library with neighbors and share ladders, snow blowers, etc.
46. Start a lunch gathering or a discussion group with coworkers
47. Offer to rake a neighbor's yard or shovel his/her walk
48. Start or join a carpool
49. Employees: give employees time (e.g., 3 days per year to work on civic projects)
50. Plan a "Walking Tour" of a local historic area
51. Eat breakfast at a local gathering spot on Saturdays and mingle
52. Have family dinners and read to your children
53. Run for public office
54. Stop and make sure the person on the side of the highway is OK
55. Host a block party or a holiday open house
56. Start a fix-it group: friends willing to help each other clean, paint, garden, etc.
57. Offer to serve on a town committee
58. Join the volunteer fire department
59. Go to church...or temple...or walk outside with your children—talk to them about why its important
60. If you grow tomatoes, plant extra for an lonely elder neighbor — better yet, ask him/her to teach you and others how to can the extras
61. Ask a single diner to share your table for lunch
62. Stand at a major intersection holding a sign for your favorite candidate
63. Persuade a local restaurant to have a designated “meet people” table
64. Host a potluck supper before your Town Meeting
65. Take dance lessons with a friend
66. Say "thanks" to public servants — police, firefighters, town clerk...
67. Fight to keep essential local services in the downtown area — your post office, police station, school, etc.
68. Join a nonprofit board of directors
69. Gather a group to clean up a local park or cemetery
70. When somebody says "government stinks," suggest they help fix it.

Note: Expanded from original list of “100 Things You Can Do to Build Social Capital” (Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America project at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard); additional contributions from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and Rochester Area Community Foundation, as well as ideas from the public.
71. Turn off the TV and talk with friends or family
72. Hold a neighborhood barbecue
73. Bake cookies for new neighbors or work colleagues
74. Plant tree seedlings along your street with neighbors and rotate care for them
75. Volunteer at the library
76. Form or join a bowling team
77. Return a lost wallet or appointment book
78. Use public transportation and start talking with those you regularly see
79. Ask neighbors for help and reciprocate
80. Go to a local folk or crafts festival
81. Call an old friend
82. Enroll in a class and meet your classmates
83. Accept or extend an invitation
84. Talk to your kids/parents about their day
85. Say hello to strangers
86. Log off and go to the park
87. Ask a new person to join a group for a dinner or an evening
88. Host a pot luck meal or participate in them
89. Volunteer to drive someone
90. Say hello when you spot an acquaintance in a store
91. Host a movie night
92. Exercise together or take walks with friends or family
93. Assist with/create your town or neighborhood’s newsletter
94. Organize a neighborhood pick-up – with lawn games afterwards
95. Collect oral histories from older town residents
96. Join a book club discussion & get the group to discuss local issues
97. Volunteer to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in your neighborhood
98. Start a children’s story hour at your local library
100. Tell friends and family about social capital and why it matters
101. Greet people
102. Cut back on television
103. Join in to help carry something heavy
104. Plan a reunion of family, friends, or those with whom you had a special connection
105. Take in the programs at your local library
106. Read the local news faithfully
107. Buy a grill and invite others over for a meal
108. Fix it even if you didn’t break it
109. Pick it up even if you didn’t drop it
110. Attend a public meeting
111. Go with friends or colleagues to a ball game (and root, root, root for the home team!)
112. Help scrape ice off a neighbor’s car, put chains on the tires or shovel it out
113. Hire young people for odd jobs
114. Start a tradition
115. Share your snow blower
116. Help jump-start someone’s car
117. Join a project that includes people from all walks of life
118. Sit on your stoop
119. Be nice when you drive
120. Make gifts of time
121. Buy a big hot tub
122. Volunteer at your local neighborhood school
123. Offer to help out at your local recycling center
124. Send a “thank you” letter to the Editor about a person or event that helped build community
125. Raise funds for a new town clock or new town library
126. When inspired, write personal notes to friends and neighbors
127. Attend gallery openings
128. Organize a town-wide yard sale
129. Invite friends or colleagues to help with a home renovation or home building project
130. Join or start a local mall-walking group and have coffee together afterwards
131. Build a neighborhood playground
132. Become a story-reader or baby-rocker at a local childcare center or neighborhood pre-school
133. Contra dance or two-step
134. Help kids dance to a ball game (and root, root, root for the home team!)
135. Open the door for someone who has his or her hands full
136. Say hi to those in elevators
137. Invite friends to go snowshoeing, hiking, or cross-country skiing
138. Offer to watch your neighbor’s home or apartment while they are away
139. Organize a fitness/health group with your friends or co-workers
140. Hang out at the town dump and chat with your neighbors as you sort your trash at the Recycling Center
141. Take a pottery class with your children or parent(s)
142. See if your neighbor needs anything when you run to the store
143. Ask to see a friend’s family photos
144. Join groups (e.g., arts, sports, religion) likely to lead to making new friends that bridge across race/ethnicity, social class or other social cleavages
145. Attend or start a free summer music series at a local park
146. __________________________
147. __________________________
148. __________________________
149. __________________________
150. __________________________

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