

# An Activity Book For African American Families: Helping Children Cope with Crisis



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institutes of Health

Dear Friends:

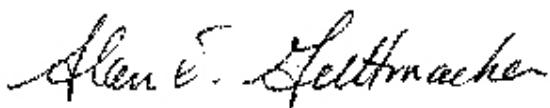
The Activity Book for African American Families was developed by the National Black Child Development Institute and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, in collaboration with other organizations serving the African American community. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, demonstrated the ongoing need to provide materials for parents to help their children cope with extraordinary crises, such as a terrorist attack. These crises receive extensive media coverage, and while adults may understand what they see and hear and can place things in context, children often cannot. Helping families face everyday hardships, such as crime and poverty, can also enhance the strength and togetherness that is necessary during times of major crisis.

We brought together leaders of national African American organizations as well as health professionals to identify information and strategies that would be meaningful to families coping with crisis. We also consulted parents about their concerns and received input on tools they would find useful. We have been impressed by the responses that affirmed the need for this Activity Book.

This collaboration arises from a commitment to share the best knowledge that we have with the American people. It represents the kind of public-private partnership that uses the strengths of all partners to improve the lives of our children. We would like to express our appreciation to the many people who contributed to this effort.

We also thank you for joining this partnership. We believe that your connections to the children in your life will be enriched by the activities in this book.

Sincerely,



**Alan E. Guttmacher, M.D.**  
Director  
*Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of  
Child Health and Human Development



**Evelyn Moore**  
President  
National Black Child Development Institute

# **An Activity Book For African American Families: Helping Children Cope with Crisis**

September 2003

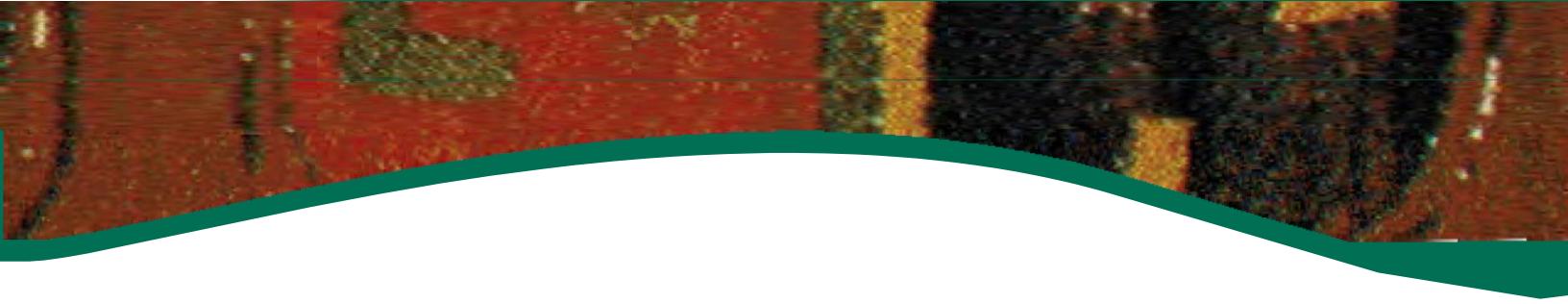
**Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
National Black Child Development Institute, Inc.**

In collaboration with the  
**Academy for Educational Development**

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*\*The first activity in each section is most likely to work well with the youngest children. If children find the poem is too long or confusing, the parent may skip reading the poem aloud.*



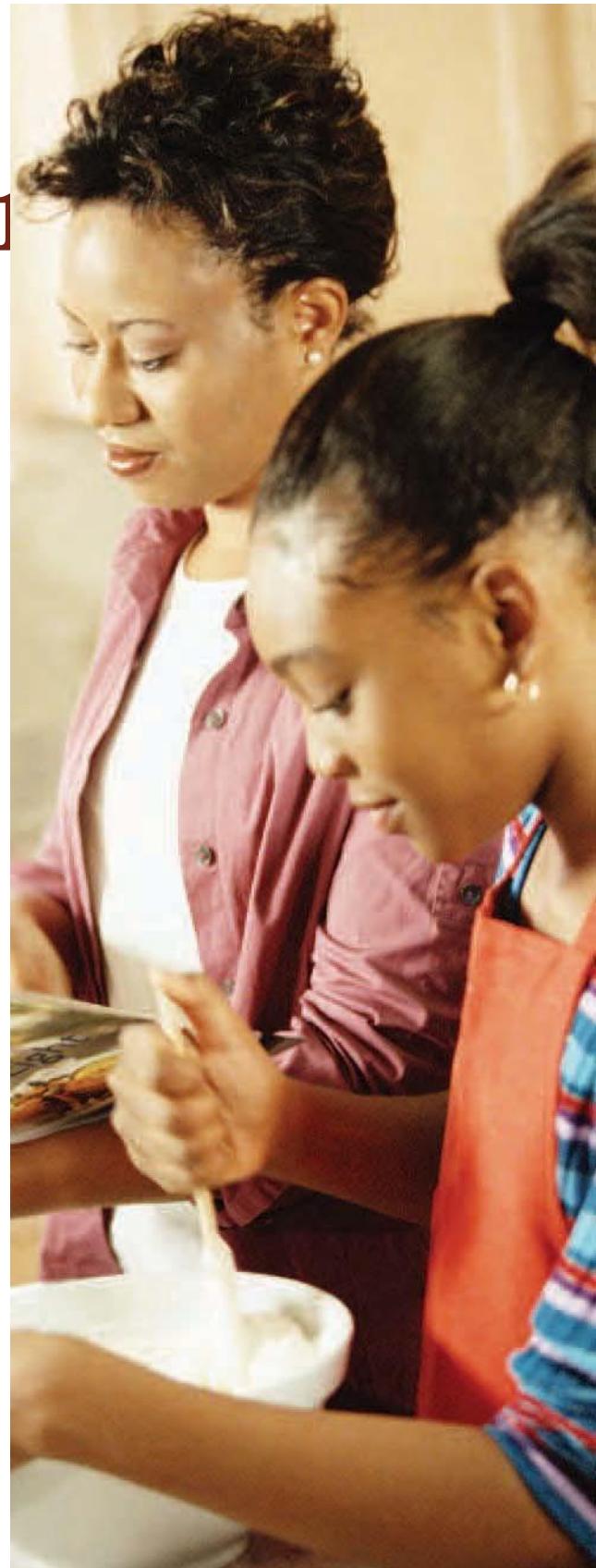
# Introduction

## Why do I need this activity book?

Every day, we see images of stress, hardship, and violence. These images come into our homes in many ways: through television, newspapers, radio reports, and magazines. What we see are more than just pictures of things that happen to other people—we feel and see the effects all around us. We see news updates on fighting and conflict; we go through increased security at buildings and airports; we feel the tensions directed at certain religious communities and ethnic groups; we hear about or experience job losses. African American communities are faced with violence, insecurity, and unemployment every day. Events around the world only add to these everyday stresses. All of these things have a great impact on our lives.

They have an even greater impact on our children.

Even if our children don't say it, they are affected by the world around them. They may be afraid that something "bad" will





happen without warning. They may fear for our safety as we go to work, or go to the store. They may not want to be away from us, or to be by themselves. Most importantly, they may never tell us that they are scared or confused.

When our children have a cut or a bruise, we know that we can respond with a bandage or an ice pack. But, if our children are scared or angry or insecure, it's harder to know what to do. We may not be able to make everything better.

Many of us are looking for ways to help our children cope with the fears and uncertainties that are a natural part of our world and its many crisis situations. The ***Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)*** and the ***National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)*** are working together with families, professional organizations, and leaders of national African American organizations to provide families in African American communities with the information and resources they need to comfort their children. This activity guide is part of that collaboration.

**In addition to the NICHD and NBCDI,  
the following groups are also involved  
in this collaboration:**

100 Black Men of America, Inc.  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Psychiatric Association  
Congress of National Black Churches, Inc.  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Jack and Jill of America, Inc.  
National Association of Black Social Workers  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.  
National Medical Association

## What are the ways I can help my child cope with crisis?

This guidebook is designed to help you and your family find different ways to help your children cope with crisis. These methods, which work well with children ages 12 and under, include the following:

- Inspire hope in your child.**
- Be still and listen to your child.**
- Support, comfort, and love your child.**
- Give your child information that is age-appropriate.**
- Help your child feel safe.**
- Make a plan with your child for emergencies.**
- Help your child feel good about himself.**
- Pay attention to what your child watches on TV.**
- Share your faith with your child.**
- Identify signs of stress in your child.**

By putting these ideas into practice, the activities in this booklet can help you to communicate with your child and to strengthen your family, so that children know they are safe.

## What kinds of activities are included in the booklet?

The book's activities are designed to help you talk with your child about emotions—to find ways to express thoughts and feelings that might be hard to say out loud. By talking about these things, you and your family can begin to deal with feelings in positive, constructive ways. The activities also highlight important values, such as family, honesty, and spirituality, that can strengthen your child from within.



Many of the activities try to tap into your child's creativity—drawing, coloring, singing, gardening. These types of tasks encourage children to let others know what's going on inside them in a safe, controlled way. Other activities encourage your child to use what's inside to understand something—like reading a poem or a story, or listening to a song.

As you do these activities, remember that the main goal is to get your child to communicate with you. When you finish an activity, you'll have something you can touch or see, but that's not what is most important. Talking and listening are the real goals of these activities.

Most of all, the activities give you the chance to be with your child and to learn about your child. And, you may learn *from* your child in the process.

# How do I use this book?

## What is involved in each activity?

Each section includes the following parts:

- ✓ **Section heading**—Lists one thing you can do to help your child. Information about some general ways to include these things in your day appears underneath the heading.
- ✓ **Why are these activities important?**  
Explains the goals and purposes of the activities within the section.
- ✓ **Affirmation**—Is drawn from African and African American quotations and proverbs. There is no right or wrong interpretation of the meaning. But, these sayings can give you something to think about while doing the activity.
- ✓ **Activity**—Focuses on a poem, an art project, a song or music, or a craft. These activities can help children express feelings that may be hard to say out loud. If your child doesn't like these activities, use another activity your child does like to reach the same goals. Each activity includes:
  - ◆ **What you need**—Is a list of things you can use to do the activity. These items are only suggested materials; you can still do the activity without these exact items. The activities use things supplied in this book, or things that people have in their homes already, so you don't have to buy new things.





- ◆ **Description**—Provides some background on the activity. If, when you're reading this description, you think of an activity that would be better for your child, then go ahead and use it.
- ◆ **Steps for doing the activity**—Describes each step for completing an activity with your child. Do only those steps you feel are right for your child.

✓ **Things to Remember**—Includes important things to keep in mind while doing the activities.

✓ **Note to Parents**—Offers some important facts or information that you can use during the activity or to get more information about a certain topic.

✓ **Did you know?**—Provides facts and additional information about a topic included in an activity or description.

## How do I do these activities?

You can do the activities in a family group with children of different ages; or you can do them during quiet time with just you and your child. Within each section:

- ✓ The activities that appear first are best for younger children and include things that most children can do and enjoy.
- ✓ The later activities are better for more mature children, including those who can read and write easily, and those who are comfortable being creative.

As you do the activities, try not to disapprove of or be negative about how well your child completes each task. Sometimes, when parents make comments, children turn off and tune out. There is no best way to do these activities. Let your child take the lead and guide you through the activity.

## Are these activities right for my child?

These activities are appropriate for both boys and girls. Your child's interests should determine your approach to the activities.

Children have different talents, interests, and gifts, and these qualities can change based on a child's age. For this reason, the activities are designed so that you can easily change them to fit your child's age, interests, and talents. You can also use these activities as a starting point for ideas from your child or your family. Please adapt the activities for children with special needs. Do what works best with your children and your family.

## Is my child too old or too young for these activities?

This book doesn't give strict guidelines for the activities because, no matter what their age, children have many different gifts, talents, and interests. But, as you plan to do each activity with your child, you may want to think about how your child is changing and developing. The information below describes some general qualities\* of children at different ages. You may notice some of your child's qualities in these lists.

### **Young school-aged children (ages 5 to 7):**

- Enjoy arts and crafts
- Can draw and use scissors with effort (keep the time short)
- Like the support of adults
- Can be shy and worry
- Hold bold ideas and fantasies
- May not have words or labels for feelings

## REMEMBER

The text in this book takes turns using he/his, she/hers, and other male-female pronouns. Even if the text says he, you can still do the activity with your daughter; or, even if the text says to help your child do something herself, you can still have your son do the activity.

\*Adapted from:  
*Playground Politics: Understanding the Emotional Life of Your School-Age Child*, Stanley Greenspan, M.D., Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. 1993. And *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen*, David Elkind, Allyn and Bacon, 1974.



## Middle school-aged children (ages 8 to 10):

- ✓ Enjoy a variety of arts and crafts
- ✓ Are more interested in the process than the results
- ✓ Are beginning to use words for emotions
- ✓ Can organize ideas about emotions

## Older school-aged children (ages 11 to 12):

- ✓ Have adult-like abilities in arts and crafts
- ✓ Have words for emotions
- ✓ Use sarcasm in their communication
- ✓ Understand and empathize with the feelings of others

Many children, including those with special needs, may have qualities that are listed in all three age groups. Or, they may have features that aren't listed. Do what works best for your child's developmental stage.

## What should I do during the activities?

For these activities to be most helpful, you need to be still and listen to your child. Make sure your child has your complete attention. When doing these activities, stop doing chores, talking on the phone, or watching television. You need to be an *active* listener.

When your child is talking, you can be an active listener\* by:

- ✓ Sitting on a chair or on the floor to be close to your child's height
- ✓ Relaxing your face and body
- ✓ Not tapping fingers or frowning
- ✓ Responding with a nod or by saying "Mm Hmm"
- ✓ Making eye contact
- ✓ Waiting for your child to finish—not interrupting
- ✓ Asking questions that can't be answered with just a yes or no
- ✓ Saying back to the child part of his or her point

\* Adapted from:  
*Different and Wonderful: Raising Black Children in a Race-Conscious Society*, Darlene Hopson, Ph.D. and Derek Hopson, Ph.D. Prentice Hall Press 1990.

By creating healthy ways for your child to talk about feelings and to express what's inside, you may find out things that trouble you. The ***Just for Parents*** section at the back of this book offers some ways to help your child and where to go for help when you think your child's feelings are more than you can handle alone.

## **Some things to remember while doing these activities:**

### **✓ Take time to plan each activity before you do it.**

Make sure to set aside time to do the activity with your child. You may decide to not answer the phone or to keep the TV off while doing the activities.

### **✓ Make it fun!** These activities aren't meant to be homework. They are a way to get to know your child. So don't force the activity on your child.

### **✓ Choose arts and crafts or activities that your child likes.**

### **✓ Pay attention to your child's reactions and comments during the activities.** Your child may give you hints about other activities that would be more enjoyable.

### **✓ Talk to your child about the activity when you are finished.** These activities are supposed to increase communication between you and your child. So talk to your child about how the activity made him feel, or what she liked about an activity. Use the activity as a way to get to know your child.

### **✓ Take care to be positive in your comments.** Use these activities as a way to start being more positive in what you say to your child.

### **✓ Let your child tell you about the finished product and share it with others.** Help your child take pride in what she has accomplished.

### **✓ Praise your child's efforts, even if it doesn't come out exactly like you think it should.** And even if it doesn't turn out like he wanted it to.

### **✓ Doing the activity together is what makes it special.**





# Inspire Hope in Your Child.

**W**hat you do or say makes a difference to your child. If times are bad and you can say or do something positive, your child will learn that he can do and feel that same way. If you look at the good or hopeful side of things, your child will learn to do it, too.

## Why are these activities important?

Parents' actions shape their children's reactions to crises and problems. These activities will help your child to:

- Talk about his feelings**
- Describe fears he has about today and about the future**
- Know that you believe good things will happen in the future**
- Be more hopeful**



**AFFIRMATION**  
**Anticipate the good so that you may carry it off.**

~ *South African Proverb*

## What you need

✓ Poem on page 13

## REMEMBER

In tough times, your child looks to you for hope and encouragement.

## Activity 1: Hope

This activity uses poetry as a way to start talking with your child about hope. It can be easier to talk about the ideas in a poem, than it is to say what you feel in your own heart. Reading this poem can help your child find words to talk about his feelings. This activity shows that talking about feelings is a good thing.

1. Read the poem on page 13 with your child.
2. Talk about your hopeful, happy, or good feelings. How do you cheer yourself up when things are hard? Tell your child how you deal with tough times. You can use these questions to get things started:
  - ✓ What is this poem about?
  - ✓ How does it make you feel?
  - ✓ What do you look forward to every day? Every week?
  - ✓ What makes you feel that you are important?
  - ✓ When you feel sad or upset, what helps you feel better?
3. Listen to your child's answers. Try to remember the things that make your child feel hopeful. Try to do one or two of these things during the week. For example:
  - ✓ If your child says he feels important when you come to his basketball game, make sure you're at the next game.
  - ✓ If your child likes going to the store with you, go to the store with him a few extra times during the week.
  - ✓ If attention from you makes your child feel special, put a note in his lunch box so he knows you're thinking of him during the day.

# HOPE

*By Paula Young Shelton\**

*Hope ... when all is lost*

*Hope ... at any cost*

*Hope ... to hold on tight*

*Hope ... to get through the night*

*Hope ... when you are down*

*Hope ... is freedom's sound*

*Hope ... to keep you going*

*Hope ... in the All-Knowing*

*Hope ... is believing*

*Hope ... is conceiving*

*Hope ... is achieving*

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*\*Paula Young Shelton is a teacher and member of the National Black Child Development Institute. She has taught children in the United States and Africa.*



## What you need

- Construction paper
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Magazines, newspaper

## Activity 2: My vision for the future

This activity uses art to create a picture of the future. In hard times, many children give up any hope for a bright future. Older children, most of all, may begin to think that they don't matter. With some help from you, they may begin to see a brighter future.

- 1.** Get two large pieces of construction paper—one for you and one for your child.
- 2.** Use crayons to draw or cut out pictures to show how you think your child's future will look. Have him show how he sees his own future.
- 3.** Show the pictures to each other. Use these questions to start talking about the future:
  - Do you and your child see good things happening?
  - How can you make the good things better?



### NOTE TO PARENTS

If your child's picture is very sad or violent, go to the ***Just for Parents*** section of this book to find out where to get help for your child.



# Be Still and Listen to Your Child.

**T**urn off the TV or radio. Don't answer the phone. Give your child all of your attention. Take a quiet moment to talk to your child. Ask your child questions about her day, who she saw, what she did in school. Listen closely to her answers.

When your child talks, let her know you're listening by asking questions about what she is saying. Or repeat something she said to be sure you heard it right. If your child doesn't like to talk, just play and spend time doing something she likes to do.

Try not to "correct" her feelings or words, even if you don't agree with her. Wait. Try to understand first. Ask your child to say more about events that make her feel sad, scared, angry, or hurt. Try to find out why she feels the way she does. Let her know that these feelings are OK to have.



## AFFIRMATION

**When the heart overflows, it comes out through the mouth.**

~Ethiopian Proverb



## Why are these activities important?

Quiet time to talk and listen to your child can get you into the habit of coming together, just you and your child. Good habits can be hard to break. These activities will help your child to:

- Know it's OK to talk about feelings and emotions**
- Name and describe her feelings**
- Get used to talking to you, so that when there is a problem, she will feel at ease telling you about it**

## Activity 1: All I need is love

This activity uses poetry as a way to talk to your child about her emotional needs. The poem describes positive and loving ways of parenting. It tells adults to think about what they do and say through the eyes of a child. The poem gives children the OK to think about what they need, and to tell their parents about those needs.

1. Read the poem on page 19 with your child.
2. Use these ideas to start talking to your child about the poem:
  - ✓ Ask your child what she thinks about the poem, and how it makes her feel. Tell your child which parts of the poem you thought were interesting or important.
  - ✓ Talk to your child about what living things need to grow and succeed. For example, most plants need water, soil/dirt, and sunlight to grow. Or, if your family has a pet, talk about the things your pet needs, like food, water, exercise, petting, and playing.
  - ✓ Ask your child to tell you what she needs to help her grow and succeed. Ask her to think about ways you can help meet these needs.
3. Go to an apple orchard, garden, petting zoo, or even a pet store with your child. Point out how the plants and animals in these places get what they need to grow.

**OR**

Help your child to plant a flower or plant in a pot. Make a checklist of things you and your child can do to help the plant grow. Keep the checklist where your child can see it. When your child does something on the list, like watering the plant, put a sticker or draw a smiley face on the list.

### What you need

- ✓ Poem on page 19
- ✓ Seeds, soil, and container for a plant (optional)

## REMEMBER

This activity is not about material “things” that your child may want. Instead, it’s trying to help your child feel at ease with her need for love and affection.

4. Write a short story together about your activity and put it a special place.
  - ✓ If your child is younger, let her tell you the story while you write it down.
  - ✓ For an older child, let her write the story down, or use a computer to record the story.

# WHAT I NEED

*By Paula Young Shelton*

*I need to have you hold me and let me know you care.  
I need to be let go to explore all that I dare.*

*I need you to set limits and always to be fair.  
I need you to be patient as I wander everywhere.*

*I need to make mistakes sometimes,  
under your watchful eye.  
I need a safe environment for the  
new things I will try.*

*I need to learn by doing. My learning looks like play.  
I need to know I can trust you  
and that you mean what you say.*

*I need to be corrected in a voice that's firm but low.  
I need to hear some other words besides just,  
"No! No! No!"*

*I need you to be consistent, so I always know  
what to expect.  
I need you to listen to me, 'cause even little ones  
need respect.*

*I need lots of attention. So don't get too upset.  
I need to ask lots of questions.  
There's so much I don't know yet.*

*But more than all of the above.  
What I really need is love. No  
matter what I do or say.  
I need to know you love me anyway.*



## What you need

- Writing and construction paper
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Tape recorder, videocamera

## REMEMBER

Your child will be more aware of what she is doing and will be better able to get her feelings across if you talk to her while she's doing an activity.

## Activity 2: Feelings

It's not easy to talk about how you feel. Many people find it easier to sing, rap, draw, or write about their feelings because they don't have to really tell someone what's going on inside. Acting feelings out can also make it easier to let others know how you feel. This activity gives children lots of safe, healthy, and creative ways to share their hopes, fears, and feelings.

1. Ask your child to pick out her favorite song. Listen to the song with your child. Talk about why she likes the song and how she feels when she listens to it.

**OR**

If your child likes drawing or painting, have her draw, color, or paint while listening to her favorite song to show how the music makes her feel.

2. Help your child to make up her own rap, song, or poem that puts how she feels into words. Help your child write down the words and put the new song or poem in a special place.

**OR**

If your child likes to act or play better than making something, watch her while she sings and performs her favorite song. Tape record or videotape her singing, if she wants you to. (You may want to save the tape as an item for a special treasure box activity described later in this book.)

### **NOTE TO PARENTS**

If your child says or draws things that bother you, try to understand, first. Take time to think about how you feel before saying anything to your child. If you need to, ask a trusted friend, a spiritual advisor, or a counselor for advice or guidance on what to say or do. Then, you may want to talk to your child about what's bothering you.



# Support, Comfort, and Love Your Child.

**A** hand on the shoulder, pat on the head, or a kind word can help soothe and support your child. Tell your child you love him and that you will be there for him always. Remind him of other people who love him and care about him, like relatives, friends, and other people around him.

## Why are these activities important?

We can all use a few extra hugs these days. These activities will help your child to:

- Know that you're OK**
- Feel loved when you're not there with him**
- Know that he can find you if he needs you**
- Understand that there are people all around him who care**
- Recognize people in his support network or community**
- Know who to trust outside of his immediate family**



### AFFIRMATION

**Cross the river in a crowd and  
the crocodile won't eat you.**

~ *Madagascar Proverb*

## What you need

- Poem on page 24
- Construction paper
- Crayon or pencil

## Activity 1: It takes a village

This activity is a way for your child to think about the people in his life who give him love and support. Many families have people who help and support them as their families grow. Sometimes, these people are called an extended family or a “village.”

Reading this poem together will help your child know that, even when Mom or Dad is away, there are still plenty of loving adults to care for him. You can also use this activity to name a trusted adult that your child can go to when you’re not there.

- 1.** Read the poem on page 24 with your child.
- 2.** Ask your child what he thinks about the poem, and how it makes him feel. Talk about the ideas in the poem.
- 3.** Ask your child who is in his village. Talk about people who were in your village when you were growing up, and who is in your village now. Tell your child stories about your childhood and the people you turned to.
- 4.** Have your child recall times when he asked someone else for help. Or, use these questions to help him talk about his village:
  - Who would you go to if you wanted a hug?
  - Who are your favorite playmates (or best friends)?
  - If you were scared, who would help you feel safe?
  - Who cooks your favorite foods?
  - If you wanted someone to read you a story, who would you ask?

- If you just won first prize in a contest or race, who would you tell?
- Who are the people that love you and care about you?

5. Write down some of his answers on pages 25-26. Go over the list together. Add pictures of your child and the people on the list, if you want to. Save the list to use with other activities in this book.





# IN MY VILLAGE

By Paula Young Shelton

*When I'm afraid  
Of the dark at night  
My granddaddy's big hands  
Hold me tight*

*When I am sad  
And feeling gray  
My auntie's smile  
Brightens up my day*

*When I am lonely  
With no one to care  
My friend is there  
With funny stories to share*

*When I'm worried And  
don't know what to do  
My mama's comforting words  
Help to see me through*

*I can call my daddy  
When I'm in a mess*

*If I need to talk  
My teacher is the best*

*My brother is the one  
When I want to have fun*

*And when I need someone to care  
My sister is always there*

*Our village is a special thing  
Made of family, friends and preachers,  
Neighbors, shopkeepers and teachers.*

*The village protects us, keeps us safe Molds  
us, shapes us, shows us the way.  
Helps us to make it through each and every day.*

## Activity 1: It takes a village

Who would you go to if you wanted a hug?

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Who are your favorite playmates (or best friends)?

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If you were scared, who would help you feel safe?

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Who cooks your favorite foods?

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If you wanted someone to read you a story, who would you ask?

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If you just won first prize in a contest or race, who would you tell?

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Who are the people that love you and care about you?

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## Activity 2: Family treasure box

In this activity, you and your child will make a family treasure box to hold precious memories. School-aged children are often concrete in their thinking—they need to touch or see something to understand it.

This activity gives your child a place to collect things he can touch and see that mark special times or experiences. Your child can also keep presents or items from special people in his treasure box. So, no matter what is going on around him, the family treasure box lets your child see and touch things from the good times and good people in his life.

1. Lay out the box and the other materials you have for the activity. Let your child pick paper, newspaper comics, fabric scraps, or other materials to cover the outside of the box. Help your child cut the paper and glue or tape it to the box.
2. Let him draw on the box with markers or crayons, add stickers to the box, glue shells, buttons, or beads on the box, or decorate it in some other way. Encourage your child to be creative. Let him design the box to show who he is and what he likes.
3. Help your child find things to keep in the box. These items should remind him of special people, places, moments, and events in his life. He can also include things that make him feel good and loved. For example, he may want to keep these objects in the box:
  - ✓ Pictures of his family or loved ones
  - ✓ A piece of a baby blanket
  - ✓ A favorite book that mom used to read to him

### What you need

- ✓ Shoebox or other small box
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Crayons or markers
- ✓ Wrapping paper, tissue paper and/or construction paper or fabric scraps
- ✓ Shells, buttons, and/or beads
- ✓ Popsicle sticks or strips of cardboard









- ✓ Ticket stubs from the game he and dad went to together
- ✓ A program from his brother's graduation ✓
- A hair ribbon from his sister
- ✓ A birthday card from an aunt
- ✓ A recipe for cookies or cornbread that his grandma makes
- ✓ Trading cards or notes from a best friend
- ✓ A prayer, poem, or verse
- ✓ A favorite CD or videotape cover
- ✓ Seashells from a trip to the beach

**4.** From time to time, take out the family treasure box and look at the things in it with your child. You may want to do this activity more often when your child is feeling scared or sad.

- ✓ Talk about where each object came from. Ask your child to talk about his memories or feelings about each item and the special people or events the items remind him of.
- ✓ Remind him that all of these people are in his heart and love him, no matter where they are. These people wish the best for him and will be there for him, always.

## Activity 3: All about me

### What you need

- Videocamera or tape recorder

Children need to know that people love and care about them. You show this love everyday, but it's good for your child to hear you talk out loud and honestly about the special love you have for him. In this activity, you will create a special memory for your child using a video camera or tape recorder. By recording your memory, your child will be able to hear your voice or see your face, even when you aren't there, so he knows he is loved.

1. Tell a story about a special memory you have of your child. Have your child record you as you tell it. You may want to talk about:

  - The day your child was born
  - Your child's first trip to the zoo, the movies, or a museum
  - A special family dinner or birthday
  - Your child's favorite book or lullaby
  - The funniest memory of your child
2. Ask family members, grandparents, and other loved ones to tell their special story or favorite memory. Record these memories with your child. If your child is shy about hearing others talk about him, you may want to ask others to record their memories of your child.
3. Listen to the stories with your child. Encourage him to keep the stories in his heart. When he gets scared or worried, listening to the stories may help him feel better.







# Give Your Child Information that is Age-Appropriate.

Everyday, families in our communities face unemployment, traffic accidents, and crime. These events can be very scary and upsetting for children. Even though such events may be common, these “everyday crises” are very stressful. Don’t let your child watch repeated images of these situations or other violent or sad events on TV. Give an event some context—that is, explain what you know about the situation in your own words and from your point of view. Remember to be calm and talk at the child’s level. Tell your child only as much as you think she can really understand. Short answers may be better.

Try to answer your child’s questions truthfully, but in words she knows and understands. It’s OK to say, “I don’t know.”



**AFFIRMATION**  
**No matter how long  
the night, the day is  
sure to come.**

~ Congo Proverb



If you need some help figuring out what to say to your child, or how to talk to her about a crisis in words she can understand, ask a health care provider, school counselor, or mental health professional, or check out the ***Just for Parents*** section of this book for other resources. This section also gives some tips on how to help your child handle a major crisis.

## Why are these activities important?

It's hard for adults to deal with some of the things they see on TV and in magazines and newspapers, especially things that are painful or violent. It's even harder for children to understand what they're seeing. These activities will help your child to:

- Understand a recent crisis or event**
- Learn how the crisis changes the world around her**
- Talk about the crisis in her own words**
- Hope for the future**
- Feel helpful**
- Know how you feel about what's happened**
- Model her actions and reactions after your actions**

## Activity 1: I'm just a kid

### What you need

Poem on page 34

This activity reminds your child that it's OK just to be a child. It gives you a way to tell your child that you don't expect her to act like an adult, or to handle things that adults do.

In hard times, many children think that the event is their fault—that it happened because of something they did wrong or because of something they didn't do. Your child may want to save you and your family from danger or harm. But, she can't keep things from happening to her family. Her main job is just growing up. The poem tells her that she's not supposed to take care of everybody; she just has to be herself.

1. Read the poem on page 34 with your child.
2. Use these questions to talk about the poem:
  - What does she think about the poem, and how does it make her feel?
  - What does she like best about being a kid?
  - What would she like to be or do in the future?
3. Remind your child (and yourself) that being “just a kid” is hard enough. Tell her she should leave the other worries and tasks to adults.





# I'M JUST A KID

By Betty J. Ford\*

*I'm just a kid you know I  
can have fun everyday  
I can enjoy myself and play  
Without a care in the world.*

*I'm just a kid you know  
I can enjoy hot dogs, puppy dogs,  
peanut butter and butterflies.  
I can learn anything and everything I  
am taught - good and bad.  
I can experience new adventures  
And ask lots of questions  
Over and over again.*

*I'm just a kid you see  
I can pretend to be  
A pirate, a teacher,  
A baker or even a preacher.  
But one day pretending will be over And  
I will become what I have learned So  
teach me well and remember*

## I AM THE FUTURE

*With the potential to be leader  
Of this Nation one day.*

*But right now - I'm just a kid!*

---

\*Betty J. Ford is a musician, poet, member of NBCDI and Secretary of her local NAACP Chapter. This poem was inspired by children in an after-school program where she was a volunteer teacher helping children to memorize and recite poetry.



## Activity 2: A picture is worth a thousand words

Through this activity, your child can learn that, even in every day events, she can still do things to help, no matter how young or old she is. Knowing that she is not helpless can give your child hope during troubled times. Talk to your child about the kinds of things children can do to help others. Make sure to point out the things that are better for adults to do.

1. Take a large piece of construction paper or tear out the blank sheet provided on pages 37-38 and fold it in half.
2. Cut out pictures or articles from the newspaper or magazines that show hard times that happen to people every day. You may want to include topics like homelessness, pollution, unemployment, military personnel being away from their families, or crime in the community.
3. Explain what is happening in each picture in words that your child can understand. Use words she knows to describe the event.
4. Let your child pick one picture to glue on the bottom inside half of the folded paper.
5. Ask your child how she thinks she can help the people in that situation. Some ways to help include:
  - ✓ Volunteer as a family to clean up part of your street or a local park
  - ✓ Collect nickels to send to a local shelter
  - ✓ Send a can of food, toothbrush, or other item to a local food kitchen

### What you need

- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ Construction paper or posterboard

### REMEMBER

You can help your child come up with the different ways she can help by **brainstorming**—writing down all the words that come to mind about a certain topic. Brainstorm helpful actions with your child and write down all the words you think of to describe these actions. Then, have your child use one or more of those words in making her picture of the future.



- Write letters or cards to military personnel with good wishes or messages to cheer people up
- Have a car wash or bake sale to raise money for a local charity
- Pray together

**6.** Ask your child to think about how a good future might look. For example:

- People finding jobs
- Everyone getting enough to eat
- Families being together

**7.** Fold the construction paper down to cover the picture. Have your child draw a new picture on the paper to show how things might change in the future, or when the crisis is over.

**8.** Ask your child to tell you about her picture. Let her tell you why she sees the future that way. Open up the paper to look at the actual event, and then close the paper to show your child's picture of a better world.



#### NOTE TO PARENTS

Some older children may pick out pictures or images that are very violent or graphic. These images could be scary for younger children who are also doing the activity. You may want to do this activity with one child at a time, so that you can talk about topics that each child thinks are important, using words and pictures that are appropriate for his or her age.



## Activity 2: A picture is worth a thousand words



## Activity 3: What do my parents think?

This is a good activity for **older** children. Your thoughts and feelings can make a difference in what your child thinks and feels. Even though many children say they don't want help from their parents, they really do need your help and guidance. If your child knows what you believe in, she'll know her reactions and feelings are OK. For example, if your child hears you talking about an event, like a war or a new law, she'll feel better about forming her own opinions about the event. Your child will learn how you think and feel about important things by listening to you talk, which can help her to make her own opinions.

1. Look over newspapers and magazines with your child that report on an everyday event or topic that can cause stress, such as unemployment, homelessness, or hunger, or visit Web sites that post these kinds of reports. You can also go to the public library to get these items.
2. Talk about what's shown in the pictures. Tell your child what you know about the event, and how you feel about it.
3. Read parts of the articles out loud and explain them in words your child can understand. Ask your child to repeat what happened so you can find out how much she understood.
4. Ask your child what she thinks should happen next. Suggest some positive outcomes to the events. Have your child think of some positive outcomes. Write down these outcomes and keep them in a special place.

### What you need

Newspapers or magazines



#### NOTE TO PARENTS

Sharing your values and beliefs helps your child learn about the world around her. Respecting the values and opinions of others is also important. Make sure your child knows that even if someone feels differently than you do about something, they still have the right to their opinions and beliefs. You may want to point out why you disagree or how your beliefs are different. But, be sure that your child knows that having an opinion is OK, even if it's a different opinion.

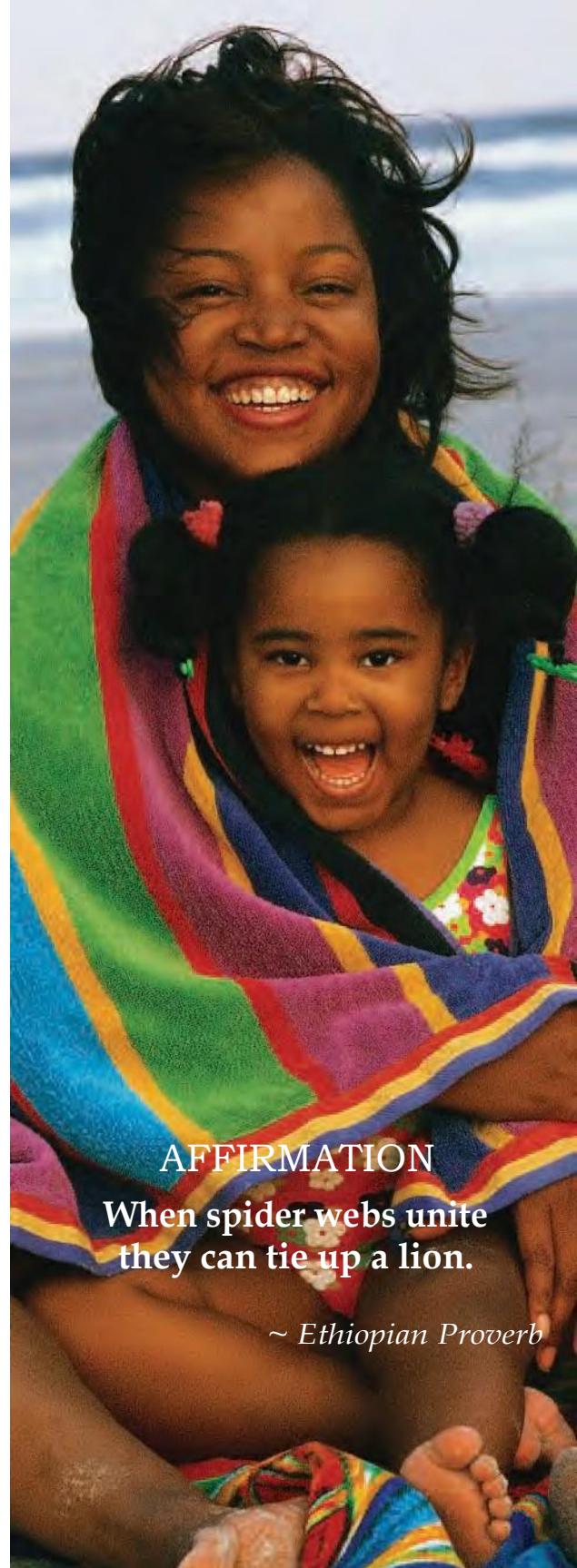




# Help Your Child Feel Safe.

Tell your child that you will always take care of him and protect him, even in times of crisis. Remind him that he is loved even when you aren't there with him. Point out to your child that his village—his friends, family members, and others who love him—is also there for him, so he is never without someone who cares for him.

Name the people who can help him in times of need: friends, family, neighbors, religious leaders, teachers, and others. Make sure your child knows how to get in touch with you, or someone he trusts, at all times. Help him learn important phone numbers or put those numbers in a place where he can find them easily.



## AFFIRMATION

When spider webs unite  
they can tie up a lion.

~ *Ethiopian Proverb*



## Why are these activities important?

No matter what happens, your child needs to know you'll take care of him. These activities will help your child to:

- Feel safe**
- Know he is never alone**
- See his connections to the people around him**
- Learn ways to be safe in emergencies**
- Understand that you will always take care of him**
- See that he is precious and wonderful to you**

## Activity 1: Celebration

### What you need

Poem on page 44

To you, your child is precious. But he may not always know you feel this way about him. This activity lets you tell your child that, no matter what, he is special to you. Knowing he can count on you and your love can make your child feel safe. The activity makes the connection between how you feel about your child, and what you do to keep him safe.

The activity also lets you explain the proud history of African Americans as a people who have triumphed over many hardships. By keeping their loved ones in their hearts, no matter where they were, African Americans were never alone.

- 1.** Read the poem on page 44 with your child. You may need to explain that ancestors are our grandparents' parents and their parents. We are the descendants of our grandparents and their parents.
- 2.** Ask your child what he thinks about the poem, and how it makes him feel.
- 3.** Talk about the history of African Americans. Explain to your child that he comes from a rich history of strong, smart, creative people. No matter where he goes, or what he does, he should keep that pride and strength with him. Tell your child that he'll never be alone because you're always with him in his heart.
- 4.** Tell your child about times when you worked with friends or family members to get through a hard time. Explain to your child how it makes you feel to know you're never alone.





# IN CELEBRATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD

By SP Shepard\*

*little ones  
do you know  
that you are the descendants of  
the Kings and Queens of Africa*

*little ones  
do you know  
that your ancestors were  
musicians and artists  
farmers and herdsmen  
scientists, healers, and scholars  
architects and builders*

*little ones  
do you know  
that in this new land  
you are still  
a wonder to behold*

*little ones  
do you know  
that you are more  
precious to us  
than gold*

*little ones  
grow, grow, grow*

*in love  
in peace  
in wisdom  
little ones know  
  
that you are loved*

---

*\*SP Shepard is a parent volunteer in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)  
and editor of the Kid's Page of the PTA newsletter. She also edits the school's  
Anthology of Poetry featuring the work of elementary school students.*

## Activity 2: Ties that bind

This activity shows your child how he is connected to the people who care about him. By naming people in his support system, and saying how those people help him, your child will learn that he's safe. This activity can be a fun way to include your entire family in this special time with your child.

1. Sit in a circle on the floor with the others doing this activity.
2. Point out that everyone in the circle needs the others for support. Talk about ways to help each other feel supported.
3. Hold the ball of string and give a reason you need another person in the circle. While still holding on to the end of the string, roll the rest of the ball of string to that person.
4. Have the person who just received the ball of string name a reason that he or she needs someone else in the circle. Then he or she should roll the ball of string on to that person, while still holding on to a section of the string. Continue until everyone is holding a part of the string. You may want to keep going even after everyone has a piece of the string, picking a different person each time. In the end, you'll have a big web of string that connects each person in the circle.
5. Discuss the importance of this web for working together and helping one another.

### What you need

Ballofstring or  
yarn

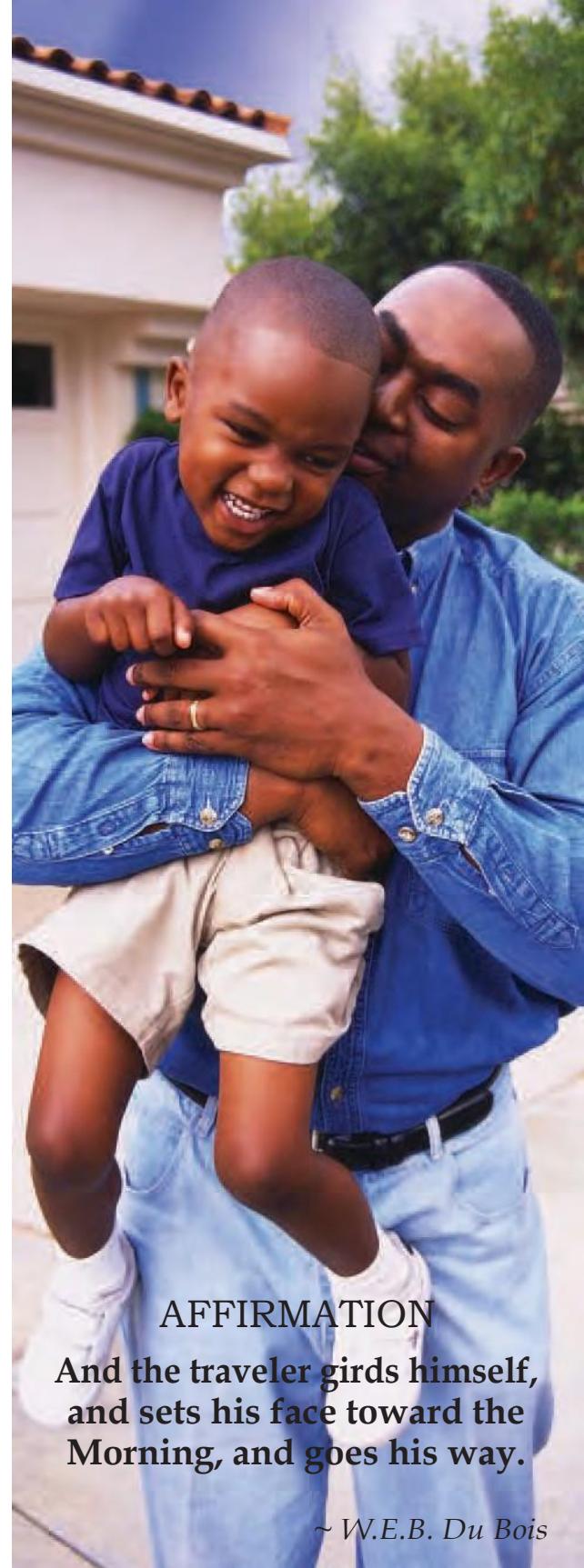




# Make Plans with Your Child for Emergencies.

**H**elp your child know what to do in an emergency. Make a written plan together that lists emergency information for your child. This information may include your work phone number, your cell phone number, or the phone number of someone who cares for your child after school.

Pick out safe places to meet your child during an emergency. Choose one safe meeting place close to home or near your child's school. Make sure your child can find these places.



## AFFIRMATION

*And the traveler girds himself,  
and sets his face toward the  
Morning, and goes his way.*

*~ W.E.B. Du Bois*



## Why are these activities important?

Planning for an emergency can help get your child ready for any situation.

These activities will help your child to:

- Be prepared**
- Feel safe, even when you're not there**
- Know that you're prepared for an emergency**
- Identify safe meeting places**
- Know how to find you if something happens**
- Know that you're coming for her**
- Take the feeling of safety wherever she goes**

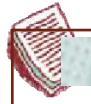
## Activity 1: Never give up

In this activity, you can reassure your child that she'll never be alone, not now or in the future. She'll be a strong adult some day, standing up against life's "storms" or everyday crisis on her own. But her family and her village will always be there to support and guide her.

1. Read the poem on page 50.
2. Ask your child what she thinks the poem means or what it is saying.
3. Use these questions to start talking about the poem:
  - ✓ What are the "storms" or tough times that you and your child have been through lately? How did you get through these storms?
  - ✓ What has she learned from these experiences? What should she do during such storms?
  - ✓ How can your family get ready for other kinds of crises?

### What you need

✓ Poem on page 50



Sometimes things happen that make a child feel afraid, like thunder on a dark night. Emotions can rumble inside, like thunder and lightning rumble outside. A flashlight can make a child feel more secure in a storm. If the lights go out, she knows the flashlight is there. In the same way an emergency plan can provide a sense of security. Everyone knows what to do. In a storm, a boat needs a heavy anchor to keep it from blowing away. People need anchors too, plans, rituals, hugs—things, practices and people that help us feel safe and secure.



# RESILIENCY 2

*By SP Shepard*

*the sky grows dark  
lightening flashes  
thunder roars*

*Papa and I wonder  
about the tree*

*the tree cannot hold  
Papa's hand  
or sit in his lap*

*Papa says that one day  
I'll be as the tree*

*able to stand alone  
even during  
the wind and the rain*



## Activity 2: Safety plan

Having a plan in place for dealing with emergencies can reduce your child's fears and can help her feel safe. Writing the plan down lets her "see" that she'll be safe. A Family Safety Card will help your child learn and remember important information, like her home phone number, address, your cell phone or work number, and other facts.

1. Cut out the Family Safety Card supplied on pages 53-54. Or, you can use a computer or other paper to make the card.
2. Fill out the card. If your child is younger, have her spell out the names and read out the numbers as you write them down. If your child is older, have her write the information on the card herself.
3. Help your child learn and practice saying her address and important numbers. Choose a familiar song and fit in the address or numbers. For example, you can use the tune to *A Tisket, A Tasket* to help your child learn her address:

*Amira Johnson is my name  
1220 Main Street's my address  
I live in My Town, USA  
I know my name and address*

4. Name five "safe" people outside your family that your child can show her card to. Go to the **Note to Parents** on the next page for more information.
5. Put the Family Safety Card in a special pocket inside your child's book bag or jacket. If you want to, use a safety pin to keep the card from falling out.

### What you need

- Construction paper or large index card
- Markers or pens



6. Practice going through your plan for a pretend emergency. Point out things that your child does well.

**For younger children**—Practice dialing 911, or the emergency number for your area, and describing an emergency to an operator using a play telephone or cell phone. Let your child push the buttons and ask for help.



#### NOTE TO PARENTS

Make sure your child knows not to show her Family Safety Card to just anybody. She should only share it with her “safe” people—those people who can help her stay safe and can get in touch with you if there is an emergency. For example, it’s OK for her to show the Family Safety Card to her teacher, to a trusted neighbor, to her babysitter, to her principal, and to a police person. Explain that she shouldn’t show her Family Safety Card to any one else because they may not help her stay safe. For more information on talking to your child about “safe” people, visit the website for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at <http://www.missingkids.com> or call them at 1-800-THE-LOST.

## Activity 2: Safety plan

FAMILY SAFETY CARD	
<b>First Name:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Last Name:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Nickname:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Parent/Guardian Name:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Street Address:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Home Telephone:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Mother's Work Phone:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Father's Work Phone:</b>	<hr/>
<b>Cell Phone Number:</b>	<hr/>

## FAMILY SAFETY CARD

**Family Meeting Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secret Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Person to Trust:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Safety Helpers:**

**Fireman, Police, Teacher, and Principal**

# Help Your Child Feel Good about Himself.

Tell your child that he did a good job and that you're proud of him, even if he thinks he didn't do such a good job. Remind him that he's good, smart, strong, and handsome. Point out the things he does well, like schoolwork, helping around the house, being nice to others, playing sports, singing, drawing, or making people laugh. Focus on the good things as much as possible. Smile, laugh, and play with your child.



AFFIRMATION  
I love myself  
when I am laughing.

~ Zora Neale Hurston



## Why are these activities important?

Feeling good about himself can give your child the strength to get through everyday life and times of trouble.

These activities will help your child to:

- Feel good about who he is**
- Focus on positive traits and abilities**
- Trust himself by knowing his own abilities**
- Know that you are behind him**
- Make good decisions when you aren't there**
- Handle the stress that life can bring**



## Activity 1: That's me

### What you need

✓ Poem on page 61

This activity helps your child learn that his skin color is special and beautiful. Children of color are often made to feel that their skin color is a negative or “bad” thing. The images they see in the media can make the negative feelings worse.

In this activity, you can help your child feel good about how he looks. You can teach him to love his skin color because it is his, and because it is beautiful. You can also use this activity to remind your child that there are good things about him that have nothing to do with how he looks.

1. Read the poem on page 61 with your child.
2. Ask your child what he thinks about the poem, and how it makes him feel.
3. Pick parts of the poem that you think describe him. Or, find other positive words to tell him how beautiful he is, both inside and out.
4. Ask him to say or write some positive things about himself. These questions can help him find positive things:
  - ✓ What do you like to do?
  - ✓ What are you good at?
  - ✓ What do you like best about yourself?
  - ✓ What do you think other people like about you?
5. Write down your child’s answers on page 59. If your child says something negative, help him turn it into something positive.



6. If your child is shy about talking about himself, find a picture of a friend, relative, or celebrity that your child looks up to. Have your child list the things he likes or admires about that person. Point out all the things in the list that apply to your child.



#### NOTE TO PARENTS

Many older children are embarrassed to think or say good things about themselves. Some children think it makes them seem stuck-up. To help them feel more at ease, you may want to practice saying positive things with them out loud. Once they get used to hearing positive things about themselves and saying these things in their own words, they may not be as shy to think good things.

## Activity 1: That's me

What do you like to do?

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---

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---

What are you good at?

---

---

---

---

What do you like best about yourself?

---

---

---

---

What do you think other people like about you?

---

---

---

---



# THAT'S ME

By Jeanay LaRue-Robinson\*

*Golden sunshine  
Deepest tan  
Richest chocolate  
Smoothest sand*

*Midnight velvet  
Coffee and cream  
Buttercup blossoms  
Walnut dream*

*Pinkest peaches  
Cantaloupe beige  
Kiwi brown  
Spiciest sage*

*Beautiful rainbow  
Can't you see  
Color unlimited  
That's me!*

---

\*Jeanay Larue Robinson is a middle school guidance counselor. She organized and runs a self esteem group for teens and coordinates "A Vision for my Future," a career team for middle school students.



## What you need

- Mirror
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers

## Activity 2: Beautiful me!

This activity gives children a way to talk about their skin color and their physical features, and to learn to love these traits. Children need to know it's OK for them to feel good about themselves, their skin color, and their features. Through this activity, you can help your child see himself in a positive light.

- 1.** Ask your child to look in the mirror.
- 2.** Have him describe what he sees, in detail. Or, if your child is shy, describe what you see when you look at him. Point at the parts of your child's face while you're talking about them, so he sees them in the mirror.
- 3.** Ask your child to pick out a sheet of paper, a crayon, or a marker from your supplies that is closest to his skin color. As your child is looking at himself, say positive things about his skin color, such as:
  - I bet you can't find a color that's as beautiful as your deep chocolate skin.
  - That light brown crayon is almost as pretty as your sandy brown skin.
- 4.** Cut out a large circle or oval shape from the paper your child chose to make a face. If your child is able to, let him draw a large circle and then cut it out. Or, have your child draw a large circle on a piece of paper with the crayon or marker he picked.
- 5.** Ask your child to pick a color of paper, crayon, or marker that matches the color of his eyes. Cut out two small circles in that color. Let him glue the eyes onto the face. Or, have him draw the eyes on the face.



6. Ask your child to pick out a color of paper, crayon, or marker to match his nose. Cut out a small circle. Let your child glue the nose onto the face. Or have him draw the nose onto the face.
7. Ask your child to pick out a color of paper, crayon, or marker that is closest to the color of his ears. Cut out two small ovals. Let him glue them to the side of the face. Or have him draw the ears on the face.
8. Ask your child to pick out a color of yarn, paper, crayon, or marker that is closest to the color of his hair. Cut pieces of yarn the length of his hair. Let him glue the hair onto the top of the circle face. Or, let your child draw the hair. If you're using paper for the hair, cut the paper into strips and bend or curl to match your child's hair. You may want to curl the yarn, or braid it to match your child's hairstyle. You can also use pieces of yarn or paper, or a crayon to make eyebrows and eyelashes.
9. Show your child's creation in a place where everyone can see it.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Kenneth Clark was a noted psychologist who conducted a famous experiment with dolls. He took dolls that were just alike except one was brown and one was white. He asked African American children to pick the "nice" doll. Most chose the white dolls. He asked the children to hand him the "bad" doll. Most chose the brown doll. This experiment was used to show how segregation and discrimination had damaged the self-esteem of black children. It was referred to in the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education* case that declared that school segregation was a violation of the U.S. Constitution.



## REMEMBER

You can set a positive example by telling your child one good thing about himself every day. If you can, talk about this good quality in front of other members of the family, so they will get into the habit, too.

## Activity 3: Tell me something good

It's easy to get into the habit of only talking to your child about things he does "wrong." He needs your help to fix his mistakes, bad choices, or poor actions. But, children also need to know when they've done good things.

This activity can help you get in the habit of saying positive things to your child, and of pointing out the things that don't need to be fixed. Telling your child when he's done something good or "right" lets him know that you think he's a good person. It also makes him more likely to do that good thing again. You can do this activity anytime and with lots of people, like when you're eating dinner, when you're driving to the store, or when you're getting your child ready for bed.

1. Think of a word that describes something good about your child.
2. Tell him, "I'm thinking of something good about you that starts with the letter..." and then fill in the first letter of that word. (This activity is similar to the "I spy" game.) For younger children, give examples and come up with words together.
3. Have your child guess a positive word that begins with that letter. Let him keep guessing until he says the word you were thinking of.
4. Take turns choosing and guessing words that describe good things about one another.
5. Give everyone a turn to say something good about another person, and to hear something good about themselves.
6. Encourage family members to try to say something positive to each other every day.



## Activity 4: Image building

This is a good activity for **older** children. The things we see on TV and in magazines have an effect on all of us. In this activity, you can use that effect to help your child feel good about himself. A child who feels good about himself is more likely to see himself in a positive light. He may trust his feelings more easily. He may feel more confident making his own choices.

To help him build a positive image of himself, this activity centers on positive images of African Americans—ones that show African Americans as the strong, smart, beautiful people that they are.

It may be helpful to start this activity during Christmas, Kwanzaa, Black History Month, or birthday celebrations. TV and magazines show more positive images of African Americans during these times, so it'll be easier for you to find good images for the activity. And, because these holidays show how diverse African Americans are as a people, you can teach your child to value the rich differences within his culture. Point out the outer *and* inner good, whenever you can.

**1.** Look through magazines or newspapers with your child, or sit with him as he looks on the Internet. You may want to look through magazines or on Web sites that feature African Americans. Help your child cut out or print pictures of African Americans doing good things or acting in positive ways. Have your child make a scrapbook, collage, or presentation of the positive images he finds.

OR

Have your child draw a picture of a person acting in a positive way.

### What you need

- Popular magazines
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, and paper
- Newspapers



- 2.** Ask him why he picked each picture. Help your child come up with one word that describes a positive thing about each picture. If your child is younger, you can write the words below the pictures so they're easy to remember.
- 3.** Ask him which positive words or traits he sees in himself. Ask him why he thinks those things are important. Tell your child why you think positive traits are important.



### NOTE TO PARENTS

Low self-esteem puts children at risk\* for problems, like doing drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, getting in trouble, and other things. If your child sees himself in a negative light, he may be less able to say "no" to others, or to stand up for himself. If your child picks out or draws images that make you think he has a poor self-image, you may want to ask a counselor, spiritual advisor, or health care provider about how to help him feel better about himself. Go to the ***Just for Parents*** section of this book for more details.

\*Adapted from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Nuttal, P. (1991). "Self-esteem and children". (*Family Day Care Facts* series). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts.



# Pay Attention to What Your Child Watches on TV.

**K**now what your child is watching on TV. You should know about the shows she sees, but also about the news programs and commercials she watches, too. Make sure TV shows are right for your child's age. Encourage your child to watch shows made for children, including shows on public television stations.

Often, in crisis situations, the TV news will show disturbing or violent images again and again. Keep your child from watching these images over and over.

Teach your child that she shouldn't turn on the TV unless you say it's OK. Watch TV



## AFFIRMATION

**What the child says,  
he has heard at home.**

*~ Nigerian Proverb*



with her to help her learn about what she sees. Explain things in words your child knows. Talk back to the TV and to the people shown on TV shows. For instance, if someone on a TV show does something you think is wrong, say so. Let your child hear you talk to the TV, and encourage her to do the same.

## Why are these activities important?

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Children need guidance from you about what they see on TV. These activities will help your child to:

- Find words to describe what she sees and the world around her**
- Understand what she sees, including what is real and what is pretend**
- Connect what she sees with her life and the lives of those around her**
- Make choices about TV viewing that keep your values and beliefs in mind**
- Ask questions about what she sees**
- Get comfort from you when she sees scary or painful things on TV**



### DID YOU KNOW?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity\*, in 1999, 13 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years and 14 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years in the United States were overweight. One of the major causes of obesity, the Report explains, is lack of physical activity. The Report says that television and computer and video games only add to children's inactive lifestyles. To help increase physical activity, the Report recommends that you reduce the amount of time you and your family spend doing things like watching TV or playing video games. It also suggests limiting TV time to less than two hours a day.

\*The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General; Rockville, MD: 2001.



## Activity 1: Just being you is the right thing

This activity will help your child feel important and valuable, no matter what other people say to her or about her. Children at every age can feel pressure from their friends and people their age to “fit in” and do what everyone else is doing to “be cool.” This kind of pressure can make children feel that they aren’t good enough as they are. The media can also pressure children, by making things that aren’t real or aren’t healthy look cool. This activity lets you remind your child that she is special and precious just the way she is.

1. Read the poem on page 70 with your child.
2. Ask your child what she thinks about the poem, and how it makes her feel.
3. Ask your child to think of someone she looks up to. This person can be a TV or movie star, a rapper, a sports figure, or a relative.
4. Make a list of that person’s good qualities using worksheet on page 71. For example, does the person tell kids not to smoke cigarettes? If yes, then you can write that on the list.
5. Look over the list of good qualities with your child. Tell your child which traits you see in her. If you want to, write other good things about your child on the list.

### What you need

Poem on page 70



# JUST BEING YOU IS THE RIGHT THING

By Sherri Council\*

*You don't have to be a star  
and receive media attention,  
you don't have to record a song  
that creates a lot of tension,  
you don't have to be a politician  
putting on airs of pretension.*

*You don't have to be rough  
to show that you are tough,  
you don't have to go along with the crowd  
and you don't have to be loud.*

*You don't have to hang with the group,  
afraid of being left out of the loop.  
You don't have to be a king or queen  
Because just being you is the right thing.*

---

*\*Sherri Council is a poet, author and volunteer  
with literacy programs to benefit disadvantaged youth.  
She also established the Poetic Tributes to Youth Program  
at her church.*

## Activity 1: Just being you is the right thing

Who does your child look up to?

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What are this person's good qualities?

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In the list above, circle the traits you see in your child. Write other good things about your child below.

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## Activity 2: What's wrong with this picture?

Because children spend so much time watching TV, it's easy for them to get the wrong idea about what they're seeing. This activity lets you give them the right ideas about things. By watching TV with your child, you can see what the shows are saying and doing. If you don't like the show's messages, you can tell your child why they're not OK. With your help, your child will know whether what she's watching is real or made up. She'll also know that things in real life don't always happen the way they do on TV.

1. Sit down with your child and watch her favorite TV show from start to finish with her.
2. As you watch, really listen to the show, and to the commercials.
3. Point out the things on TV that aren't real. Turn the volume down or off so your child can listen to you. For example, you could say:
  - ✓ In real life, we know our dolls can't dance by themselves. Those dolls can dance because they're cartoons, and cartoons aren't in the real world like us.
  - ✓ It takes a real astronaut to drive a spaceship. Can you picture astronauts Dr. Mae Jemison or Commander Fredrick Gregory in the driver's seat? (See the *Did you Know?* on the next page for more details.)
  - ✓ When people fight or hurt each other on TV, it's not like real life. In real life, that person would be in the hospital. That other person would be arrested by police and might go to jail.

### What you need

✓ Television program

## REMEMBER

During a major crisis, or right after it happens, most TV news programs talk only about that event. They may show the same pictures over and over. Don't let your child watch these images. Turn off the TV, or watch something on channels or networks that have shows just for children or shows about learning.

4. If your child is younger, ask her to say out loud the things she sees that are make believe, like:
  - Super powers
  - Monsters or other creatures
  - Animals, trees, or objects that talk
  - Magic potions or spells
  - Toys that are "alive" or move on their own
  - Cartoon people who fall off a cliff or are hit by a safe and live
5. Talk out loud to the TV. If you see someone on TV doing something you don't want your child to do, say so, and say why. Let your child talk to the TV, too.
6. When the show is over, or when a commercial is on, ask your child what she liked about the show.
7. Ask what her favorite part of the show you just watched was. Talk about what happened on the show.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to enter space on a flight of the shuttle Endeavor in 1992. Dr. Jemison is a medical doctor who worked as a medical officer in the Peace Corps in West Africa.

Colonel Fredrick Gregory is an African American who was the spacecraft commander or pilot on several shuttle missions. As a NASA astronaut he logged 455 hours in space. Before becoming an astronaut, Colonel Gregory was an Air Force test pilot, helicopter pilot, and fighter pilot. Colonel Gregory is a senior administrator with NASA, the U.S. space agency.



# Share Your Faith with Your Child.

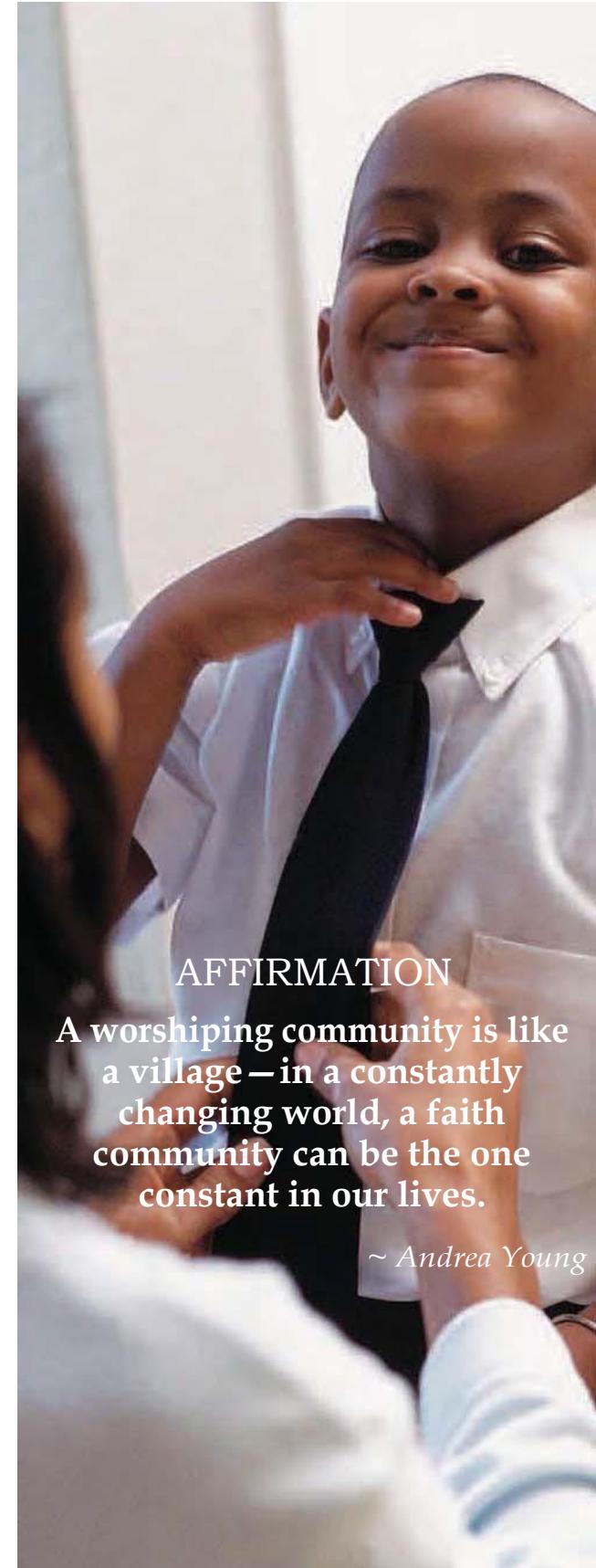
**S**hare a prayer, a hymn, a saying, or a verse from Scripture or sacred writings with your child. Tell your child what you think it means and how it makes you feel when you hear it. Ask your child what he thinks the prayer means.

Living your faith everyday lets your child know it's something he can count on.

## Why are these activities important?

Your child needs to know how your faith makes a difference in your life. These activities will allow your child to:

- Find comfort and strength in your faith**
- Celebrate faith in different ways**
- Learn how your faith helps you get through hard times**
- Find ways to help others through faith**
- Build faith and faith practices into his everyday life**



### AFFIRMATION

**A worshiping community is like a village – in a constantly changing world, a faith community can be the one constant in our lives.**

~ Andrea Young

## What you need

Spiritual on page 77

## Activity 1: This little light of mine

Spirituals are an important part of African American heritage. These songs helped African captives live through and escape slavery. Some songs had messages that told slaves how to use the Underground Railroad to get to freedom. Later, the songs were used during the Civil Rights Movement to inspire demonstrators at events like the 1963 March on Washington.

Spirituals and gospel music express emotions that people had in times of crisis and their faith that they could overcome the crisis. Share this song or a favorite song or poem or scripture that gives you strength in times of trouble.



### NOTE TO PARENTS

As you do these activities, you'll see the words "prayer," "faith," and "religion" used a lot. But these words can mean different things to different people. You can talk about any kind of belief or value in these activities, even if you don't think of it as religious. You can share sayings, beliefs, traditions, and spirituality of any kind with your child. It doesn't matter what you call it, it's the sharing that's the important part.

#### 1. Sing or read the spiritual on page 77 with your child.

OR

If you have a prayer, saying, song, poem, or passage that gives you strength in times of trouble, write it down and read it with your child.

#### 2. Ask your child what he thinks about the spiritual, and how it makes him feel.

#### 3. Tell your child where you heard the song for the first time, or what the situation was when you first heard the song. Explain how it makes you feel when you hear it. Tell your child about times when hearing the song made you feel strong or calm or better when you needed it.

#### 4. Teach your child the words to the song and practice singing it together.

#### 5. Ask your child if there is a song, saying, or poem that helps him to feel stronger. Ask him to tell you why it helps him.

#### 6. Practice saying or singing that song together.



# THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

*African American Spiritual\**

*This little light of mine  
I'm gonna let it shine  
This little light of mine  
I'm gonna let it shine  
This little light of mine  
I'm gonna let it shine  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

*Everywhere I go  
I'm gonna let it shine  
Everywhere I go  
I'm gonna let it shine  
Everywhere I go  
I'm gonna let it shine  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

---

*\*The spirituals originated during the time of slavery.  
This Little Light of Mine became one of the themes  
of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.*



## What you need

- Empty tissue box
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paper
- Colored pens or crayons
- Fabric scraps
- Fabric tape
- Ribbon

## Activity 2:

# I say a little prayer for you

Prayer and faith give many families strength and security. This activity will help make prayers real for your child by turning them into something he can see and touch.

1. Cover an empty box with paper, fabric, or newspaper. Glue or tape the covering to the box.
2. Using the worksheet on page 79, cut paper into long strips about an inch wide.
3. Give your child a few strips of paper and something to write with.
4. Ask your child to write the name of someone or something he would like to pray for, or something he would like to give thanks for. If your child is younger, have him tell you so you can write it down, or have him draw a picture instead.
5. Roll up or fold each strip of paper and let your child drop it into the box.
6. At prayer time, let your child pick out a paper strip and read it as part of your prayers. Or set aside a special time each day to pick out a paper strip from the box and use it as a prayer.
7. Keep adding prayer strips to the box whenever you need to, like when someone is sick, when someone is away from home, or when something good happens.



## Activity 2: I say a little prayer for you



Activity 2: I say a little prayer for you

SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR CHILD

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS



## Activity 3: Felt wall hanging

Many faiths have symbols that stand for important beliefs and religious practices. These symbols can give you and your child peace and comfort because they show an important part of your faith. In this activity, your child can learn about these symbols and what they mean. It also makes these faith symbols real by turning them into something to touch and see.

1. Cut out the shapes of important symbols from your faith in different colors of fabric or paper. You may want to make crosses, stars, praying hands, crescents, tablets, and/or holy books.
2. Talk with your child about why each symbol is important in your faith. Tell your child what each symbol means to you.
3. Ask your child what he thinks the symbols are and what they mean to him.
4. Ask your child how the symbols make him feel and which ones make him feel safe or calm.
5. Get a large piece of black felt or poster board and lay it down.
6. Ask your child to pick the symbols that make him feel good, safe, and happy. Glue or tape the symbols onto the felt or paper.
7. Let your child draw or cut out other things to include on the wall hanging. Let him be creative. Help him cut out things, if needed.

### What you need

- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored pens
- Fabric or paper scraps
- Fabric tape



**8. Hang the banner in a special place where everyone can see it.**

#### IF YOUR CHILD IS OLDER, HE MIGHT LIKE TO:

- Draw and color fabric squares
- Sew the fabric together before or instead of using glue
- String shapes along pieces of string, twine, or ribbon
- Make shapes on the computer and print them out
- Make electronic greeting cards, screen savers, or other electronic files with symbols and shapes on the computer



# Just for Parents

## Identify signs of stress in your child.

The activities in this book are designed to encourage communication and help you to make your child feel safe in challenging times. Even when parents are protective, caring, and sensitive, children may need extra help to cope with a crisis. Different children have different needs. Children with the same experience may respond in different ways. Pay attention to changes in the way your child looks or behaves. There are times when changes in behavior mean your child needs extra help from a health care professional.

Create healthy ways for your child to express emotions, such as the activities described in this book. Let your child see you using healthy ways to express emotions.





The following changes or behaviors may be signs of a problem:

- Clinging behavior
- Fears that won't go away
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Difficulty paying attention
- Jumpy, edgy
- Behavior problems in school
- Headaches, stomachaches, or dizziness for no known reason
- Sad or less active
- Always talking about or acting out a disaster
- Irritability
- Changes in eating behavior
- Decrease in academic performance

Children may show one of these behaviors, or many of them; they may do them just a little, or all the time. It's important that you talk to a health care provider, teacher, school counselor, or mental health professional if you see any of these behaviors. These people can help figure out whether your child's reactions are nothing to worry about, or if your child needs some special attention or care.

## Prevent problems before they arise.

Prevention is more than just saying "no" or "stop." Prevention has two parts: 1) Spotting trouble before it becomes a problem; and 2) Knowing how to work through a problem once it happens. To learn more, look at each one a little closer.

## Spotting Trouble

Consider these ways to spot trouble before it turns into a full-blown problem:

**Be active in your child's life.** This is important for all parents, even if your child only lives with you part of the time. By knowing how your child usually thinks, feels, and acts, you can see when things start to change. Some changes are part of your child's growing up, but others could be signs of trouble.

**Set limits that everyone can live with and follow up with them consistently.** Put limits only on things that are most important to you. Make sure you and your child can "see" a limit clearly. If your child goes beyond the limit, deal with her in the same way when the situation is the same. If you decide to punish her, use the most effective methods, like restriction or time-outs. You could also make your child make up for or fix the result of her actions. Make sure the punishment fits your child's "crime." As your child learns how limits work and what happens when she goes over the limit, she'll trust you to be fair.

**Create healthy ways for your child to express emotions.** Many children act out when they don't know how to handle their emotions. Feelings can be so strong that normal ways of letting them out don't work. Or, because feelings like anger or sadness are sometimes seen as "bad," your child may not want to be angry or sad in front of others. Help your child learn that it's OK to say or show how she feels in healthy, positive ways, like the activities outlined in this book. Do these things yourself to deal with your own feelings. When the strong feelings have passed or are less powerful, talk to your child about how she feels and why she feels that way. Make sure your child knows that *all* her feelings are part of who she is, even the "bad" ones. Once your child knows her range of feelings, she can start to learn how to handle them.



## Where can I go for parenting help?

- ◆ Other parents
- ◆ Family members and relatives
- ◆ Friends
- ◆ Pediatricians and health care providers
- ◆ Schoolnursesand counselors
- ◆ Socialworkers and agencies
- ◆ Psychologists and psychiatrists
- ◆ Pastors, priests, imams, and ministers
- ◆ Community groups
- ◆ Support and self-help groups

## Knowing How to Work Through a Problem When It Happens

Different problems need different solutions. To solve tough problems, you may need more complex methods. Keep these things in mind when trying to work through a problem:

- Know that you are not alone.** Talk to other parents, trusted friends, or relatives. Some of them might be dealing with similar situations, or they may have already worked through these situations. They may have ideas on how to solve a problem in a way you haven't thought of. Or, they just might share your feelings.
- Admit when a problem is bigger than you can handle alone or requires special expertise.** No one expects you to solve every problem your family has by yourself. Some problems are just too big to handle alone, not because you're a "bad" parent, but just because it's a tough problem. Be realistic about what you can and can't do by yourself.
- Get help.** Sometimes, you just won't know how to help your child. Other times, you just won't be able to help. That's OK because someone else may know how to help. Use all the resources you have to solve a problem, including getting help when you need it. Remember that it's not important how a problem is solved, just that it is.

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The above text was adapted from *Adventures in Parenting: How Responding, Preventing, Monitoring, Mentoring, and Modeling can help you be a successful parent*, NICHD, NIH Pub. No. 00-0482. For more information on Adventures in Parenting, contact the NICHD Information Resource Center at 1-800-370-2943.

## What can I do to help my child during a major crisis?

Most of the activities in this book focus on building skills to cope with an “everyday crisis”—that is, a situation that many families face every day that can be hard or stressful. These everyday coping skills can also be helpful during a big crisis, such as the events of September 11, 2001, the war in Iraq, or famine and conflict in Africa. By working together to handle an everyday crisis, you and your child will set up good patterns for dealing with bigger, more extreme events.

During a big crisis, you may want to change some of the activities in the book to focus on the major event. For instance, you could do *Activity 2: A picture is worth a thousand words* (Page 35) using an image from a big crisis, instead of one from an everyday crisis. In this case, be sure to use an image that isn’t too violent or too scary for your child’s age.

If you have questions about how to change activities to deal with a big crisis, or you want to know more about helping your child handle these situations, talk to a health care provider, teacher, school counselor, or mental health professional. Or contact one of the additional resources listed in the *Where can I get more information?* section of this book, on page 88.





## Where can I get more information?

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For more information about helping your child cope with crisis, or for other health-related information and resources, you can contact the following organizations.

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**—Offers fact sheets and informational materials about the mental health and behavior of children and teens. Visit the Academy's Web site at <http://www.aacap.org> or call **202-966-7300** for more information.

**American Psychiatric Association**—Offers informational materials and other resources for families about mental health topics through its Mental Health Resource Center. Visit the Association's Web site at <http://www.psych.org> or call **703-907-7300** for more information.

**National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)**—Offers informational materials and community-related resources for parents and families. Visit the NBCDI Web site at <http://www.nbcdi.org> or call **202-833-2220** for more information.

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)**—Offers information and free materials for parents and families, as well as for health care professionals, about topics related to the health of children, adults, families, and communities. Visit the NICHD Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov> or call **1-800-370-2943** for more information.

 **National Institute Mental Health (NIMH)**—Offers information and materials for parents, families, and health care professionals about mental health topics. Visit the NIMH Web site at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov> or call **1-866-615-NIMH (6464)** for more information.

 **National Medical Association (NMA)**—Helps individuals locate African American physicians and other health care providers throughout the United States. Visit the NMA Web site at <http://www.nmanet.org> or call **1-888-662-7497** for more information.

The **NICHD Information Resource Center** provides additional copies of this booklet, of *A Guide for African American Parents: Helping Children Cope with Crisis* brochure, and other materials. To order more free copies, contact us at:

**Phone:** **1-800-370-2943**

**Internet:** <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications>

**Mail:** P.O. Box 3006, Rockville, MD 20847

**E-mail:** [NICHDInformationResourceCenter@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NICHDInformationResourceCenter@mail.nih.gov)

**Fax:** **1-866-760-5947**



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- ◆ Ms. Stacy Scott, President, In Black Print
- ◆ Mr. Bill Simms, President, 100 Black Men of America
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