



HEALING ACTIVITIES *guide:*

**BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS
WITH SURVIVORS OF DV**

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~Sami Altman–Hall

"This project is rooted in the strength of survivors, the love of community, and the belief that healing is possible, even in the aftermath of harm. I am grateful to the team at Futures Without Violence for holding this work with such care, clarity, and heart."

~ Emma Goldhoff

This guide is a resource from Promising Futures, a project of Futures Without Violence, in partnership with the Bridges to Better project.

Visit promising.futureswithoutviolence.org and search “protective factors” for more resources on the five research-backed Protective Factors and the Pathways to Healing framework.

Contact us: ChildrensTeam@futureswithoutviolence.org



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BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS WITH SURVIVORS OF DV

Protective factors are conditions and characteristics of individuals, interpersonal relationships, communities, and the larger society that **reduce the negative impacts of domestic violence, promote healthy development, and support the well-being of both adult and child survivors.** Adults who have experienced DV can actively build protective factors in their own lives and the lives of their children, and find support from other people and communities. In this resource, we provide advocates and group facilitators working with domestic violence (DV) survivors a range of exercises to help build and promote protective factors. The word “survivors” refers both to adult survivors of DV and to their children who have been exposed to it, witnessed it, or been harmed by it. This guide can be used in individual, group, or dyadic parent-child settings. **Please note that it is not intended for survivors who are in active crisis situations.**

The goal of this guide is to assist advocates and facilitators to support survivors by helping individuals, groups, and families **dive deeper into their healing journeys.** Protective factors are universal, although they show up differently for each survivor. For this reason, the exercises are **flexible and non-prescriptive.** Advocates and facilitators should adapt exercises according to specific survivor and community needs. Completing these or similar exercises in survivor-centered ways can foster a sense of confidence, connection, and choice – all of which are essential to mitigating the immediate and intergenerational impact of DV for both adults and children.



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social
Connections

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE GUIDE



- 1 For a solid foundation to begin using this guide, we suggest that you first read the entirety of this introduction, starting with “Building Protective Factors with Survivors of DV” and concluding with a review of the Protective Factors Infographic.
- 2 The “What are Protective Factors” section (see page 11) is for you, the facilitator, to learn more about protective factors and how to strengthen them in your work with survivors. The Infographic (page 13) is a handout for survivors that provides an easy introduction to the topic.
- 3 Consider adaptations you will make to this guide to fit your community of survivors. For example:
 - Some survivors may have a hard time naming and talking about emotions. Plan for how to talk about emotions in ways that will make sense. Instead of naming emotions, you might talk instead about how to take care of ourselves so that we can take care of others.
 - For those working in congregate settings where survivors are not living in their own home, think about how to adapt certain exercises to shared spaces. For example, Exercise 15: Cook a Family Recipe, can be adapted for each survivor to pick a day to make a meal for others in the shared space. Or, create a sign-up sheet for the kitchen so that survivors have uninterrupted access to the space.
- 4 Reflect on your goals for using this guide, and how you would know if you’re achieving your goals. For example:
 - Are you hoping to build trust across a group of survivors? What will you see or hear that would show you that trust among participants is developing over time?
 - Are you hoping that survivors walk away with new ways to manage their stress? How would that show up in how survivors interact, what they talk about, or how they describe their parenting?
 - Are you hoping that children will be able to share how they feel with their parents through developmentally friendly and fun activities? What will you see changing in children’s behaviors, or between children and parents, as a result?

- 5 Select exercises that align with your goals. For example:
 - If you're looking to build trust within a group, look for the activities that are great initial trust builders (see Exercise 1: Free Drawing Protective Factors and Exercise 2: Create a Protective Factors Playlist).
 - If you're hoping this guide offers survivors tools to manage their stress, pick one art activity, one mindfulness activity, and one writing activity to offer multiple ways to engage and see what works best.
 - If you're looking to give children tools to share their feelings, look for developmentally appropriate exercises that bolster emotion regulation skills (see Exercise 13: Leaves on the Stream Meditation).
- 6 Provide materials for participants. Each exercise includes materials that will be needed. You might also want to provide:
 - A journal for each participant,
 - Individual exercise pages for each session, or
 - Print out whole guides for each survivor to keep
- 7 Familiarize yourself with the structure of the exercises.
 - Exercises are categorized by type of activity and can be distinguished by color:
 - **Writing & Reflection:** reflection exercises to help go deeper
 - **Movement:** exercises that get you up and exploring
 - **Mindfulness:** calming exercises for relaxation
 - **Art & Music:** imaginative exercises to inspire creativity
 - The upper right-hand corner of each page has symbols that identify which protective factors the exercise is intended to strengthen. Symbols for the protective factors:



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- 8 Read through your chosen exercise before bringing it to survivors. Most exercises follow the structure outlined here:
 - **Purpose:** explains the goal of the exercise
 - **Suggested activity length:** provides guidance for time structure
 - **Materials:** what you will need to complete the exercise
 - **Notes for the facilitator:** things to consider before facilitating the exercise
 - **When using this activity with children:** ways to encourage survivors to use this at home, with their kids
 - **Instructions (for either participants or facilitators):** how to complete the exercise
 - **Reflection questions:** essential for integrating protective factors into action

9 Before beginning the exercises, introduce survivors to protective factors using the Protective Factors Infographic. This is a handout summarizing the protective factors, and is recommended for a deeper understanding of the activities included in this guide.

When ready to begin the exercises, we suggest starting with Exercise 1: Free Drawing

10 Protective Factors, Exercise 2: Create a Protective Factors Playlist, or Exercise 3: Protective Factors Photo Collage. These are great introductory exercises to begin building familiarity with the five protective factors.

After at least one introductory exercise, the rest of the exercises can be done in any

11 order. Consider choosing exercises that build on protective factors that may be more challenging for survivors.

After completing an exercise, facilitate a reflection to foster connection and allow

12 survivors to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment. Having an opportunity to reflect on what feelings, questions, and learnings came up throughout the process of the activity can also support healthy emotional regulation between survivors and with the facilitator.

Adapt the exercises as needed for the survivors you interact with. Everything in this

13 guide is a suggestion and is intended to be flexible!

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- Each survivor may have a different reaction to these exercises, and the emotions they bring up – and that's ok! Be prepared to pause, pivot, and adjust to center the needs of the survivor or the group.
- Take this information and transform it into a way that makes sense for your survivors. The goal is not for survivors to be able to recite each protective factor, but for survivors to build strengths in certain areas of their life. This requires survivors connecting with the protective factors in ways that make sense for them and their individual experiences.
- When survivors visualize what they want their future to look like, they might be more willing to ask family or community members for specific kinds of support to help get there. These five protective factors help both adult survivors and their children directly.
- When survivors build one protective factor, even in small ways, they might start to experience other benefits. For example:
 - If survivors create routines that help them and their children know what's coming next, then they might feel more in control.

TALKING POINTS

- Protective factors are things and people in your life that help you even when you're being hurt, or have been hurt in the past.
- Everyone benefits from protective factors, but what they look like in each person's life is unique.
- If you can grow or strengthen even one protective factor, it can result in automatic growth in another area.
- You can ask others, such as your advocate or your faith community, to help you and your children to get what you need.
- Think about these questions to help define what the protective factors mean to you:
 - When you hear safety and stability, what does that look like for you?
 - Everyone needs help sometimes. What connections do you already have? What connections do you want to make?
 - What does connecting with your child look like - what helps you connect with your child?
 - Survival is resilience. What makes you feel strong? What keeps you going?
 - What can you do to better care for yourself? How do you think this will help you develop stronger relationships?
- If you can do things to build one protective factor, even in small ways, you might start to experience other benefits. For example:
 - If you create routines that help you and your children know what's coming next, then you or they might feel more in control of your lives.



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WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS?

Everyone needs support to find strength sometimes. Protective factors are strengths that come from individuals, relationships with others, community, and the larger society that help people respond to challenges and find support to [heal and thrive](#). These strengths can be built at any age, and growth in one area can lead to growth in another. Research and survivors of DV themselves tell us that these five strengths help both them and their children:



NURTURING PARENT–CHILD INTERACTIONS → “CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD”

Facilitator messaging: *Showing love and care to your children heals both you and them.*

Every child has their own unique starting point or qualities they were born with, and when they are exposed to violence they may be impacted in different ways. The level and kinds of violence they see and hear also has an impact. Yet all children benefit [from adults showing interest in them](#), encouraging them to set and work toward goals, and helping them to name and deal with feelings. Simply being a safe, caring, and consistent person in their lives is the most important thing adults can do. Parents of children will also benefit from providing that care, as they grow to feel stronger and more confident in their own ability to be the parent they want to be.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS → “KNOWING YOURSELF AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS”

Facilitator messaging: *When you know and care for yourself, you can build stronger relationships.*

Experiencing or witnessing violence as a child or as an adult can interfere with an individual’s ability to manage their own feelings and to get along with other people. It can also make it harder to ask for help and to resolve conflicts calmly. When adult and child survivors of DV learn skills like deep breathing and grounding strategies, they can deal with their own feelings and other people in healthy ways. For this reason, [social emotional learning](#) is needed, especially for kids, to help manage feelings, have empathy for others, and engage with others in productive ways.



SAFER AND MORE STABLE CONDITIONS → “SAFETY AND STABILITY”

Facilitator messaging: *Safety and stability reduce stress and increases choice.*

Increasing the degree of safety and stability survivors and their children experience reduces stress, fear, and other kinds of harm. More safety and stability also helps survivors and their children develop the space and opportunity to make intentional choices. Protective factors also make it easier for survivors to be the parent they want to be. They're the one who knows what they and their children need most. Sometimes what people need the most is concrete resources like food, housing, child care, or a protective order- domestic violence advocates can help survivors take steps to get access to those things if they need help. Survivors might also want help with things like making sure their child can stay in a school they love. Other things they can do on their own, like establishing simple daily routines so they and their child knows what to expect.



RESILIENCE AND GROWTH MINDSET → “SURVIVAL IS RESILIENCE”

Facilitator messaging: *You've survived hard things and can create your own future.*

No one's life is always easy. [Resilience is the ability to bounce back](#) when things are hard. [A growth mindset](#) is an individual's belief that they can change themselves and their circumstances with effort and a commitment to keep learning. Resilience and a growth mindset can be nurtured and developed within individuals and in their relationships with other people. Surviving DV is resilience. Taking action to create a life without abuse, or to achieve a personal goal are signs of a growth mindset. Many survivors are already on the path, and being on it with their kids strengthens the progress that each of them can make toward their vision of the future.



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS → “EVERYONE NEEDS HELP SOMETIMES”

Facilitator messaging: *It takes a village to thrive- we all need to feel belonging and connection to others.*

Everyone needs people in their lives who care, help when things get hard, and show them that they matter. Those people might be friends, relatives, neighbors, social workers, teachers, coaches, co-workers, spiritual leaders, or almost anyone! It might be hard for someone to trust others if they've felt isolated, so connecting with others might feel like work. [But it might not be as hard as some may think.](#) A lot of healing and helping happens when people connect with others. Some survivors see people and agencies as most helpful when they share their culture and views of the world. Other survivors talk about their belief in a higher power as what helps them the most.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS INFOGRAPHIC

Protective factors are strengths that come from us, our relationships with others, our community, and the larger society that help us respond to challenges and support us to heal and thrive.



EVERYONE NEEDS HELP SOMETIMES

It takes a village to thrive- we all need to feel belonging and connection to others.

- What connections do you already have? What connections do you want to make?



CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

Showing love and care to your children heals both you and them.

- What does connecting with your child look like?
- What helps you connect with your child?



SURVIVAL IS RESILIENCE

You've survived hard things and can create your own future.

- What makes you feel strong?
- What keeps you going?



KNOWING YOURSELF AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

When you know and care for yourself, you can build stronger relationships.

- What can you do to better care for yourself?
- How do you think this will help you develop stronger relationships?



SAFETY AND STABILITY

Safety and stability reduce stress and increases choice.

- When you hear safety and stability, what does that look like for you?



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FREE DRAWING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

This exercise is designed to introduce each protective factor to participants, and to make space for each person to connect with each protective factor in ways that personally resonate with them. This is also a great way to identify points of growth and further areas to explore, especially if certain protective factors are harder to come up with than others.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 25 MINS – 1 HOUR

5 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for drawing | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal

[Protective Factors Infographic](#) handout for each participant

Items to draw with, like markers, colored pencils, crayons, or a tablet or computer

Relaxing music (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- Print out the “Protective Factors Infographic” sheet for each participant, or have the sheet visible for participants to read throughout the session.
- There are many guided versions of this activity online that can be helpful to watch before guiding a group on your own.
- Make this exercise your own by preceding it with a guided mindfulness exercise or by playing relaxing music in the background while drawing.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 5–18 years old)
- Adapt the language in ways that make sense for your child:
 - Substitute protective factors with simpler words like “safe,” “loved and cared for,” “confident and powerful,” and “a good friend or sibling.”
 - Ask kids to draw what makes them feel each of these things.



TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Protective factors are things and people in your life that help you even when you're being hurt, or have been hurt in the past.
- Everyone benefits from protective factors, but what they look like in each person's life is unique.
- Think about these questions to help define what the protective factors mean to you:
 - When you hear safety and stability, what does that look like for you?
 - Everyone needs help sometimes. What connections do you already have?
 - What does connecting with your child look like - what do you like to do together?
 - Survival is resilience. When you hear this, what feelings come up for you?
 - How can knowing and caring for yourself help you to develop stronger relationships?
- If you can do things to build one protective factor, even in small ways, you might start to experience other benefits. For example:
 - If you create routines that help you and your children know what's coming next, then you or they might feel more in control of your lives.
- If you intentionally think about and visualize what you want your future to look like, you might be more willing to ask your family members for specific kinds of support to help you get there. These five protective factors help **both** you and your children directly - not just you, or just them.

HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Using the "Protective Factors Infographic," ask a participant to read one of the protective factors.
- 2 Ask each participant to draw whatever comes to mind after hearing the description - ask them to draw with no judgment, no intense thinking, and no erasing.
- 3 Repeat these steps for each of the five protective factors.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel while drawing?
- Did any thoughts come up for you?
- What protective factors were easiest to draw? Which factors were the hardest?
- Thinking about moving forward, which protective factor are you most excited to expand on?

CREATE A PROTECTIVE FACTORS PLAYLIST

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

This exercise is designed to further introduce protective factors to participants, and to inspire individual connections to each factor. Group facilitators can use this playlist to put on at the beginning or end of future group sessions. Parents can complete this exercise with their children as a fun activity to do together and play it during family routines (See Exercise 10: Routine Building for ideas on how to create new routines).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

5 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for activity | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

[Protective Factors Infographic](#) handout for each participant

Music streaming platform account, like Spotify (free with ads), Apple Music, or YouTube (free with ads)

Notes for the facilitator

- Print out the “Protective Factors Infographic” sheet for each participant, or have the sheet visible for participants to read throughout the session.
- Choose your music streaming platform, and create an account beforehand (if needed). Some common platforms that allow playlist creations are Spotify (free with ads), Apple Music, and YouTube (free with ads).
- While creating the playlist in a group, act as the moderator (the person who adds the songs as they’re suggested) to streamline the process.
- Consider getting started on the playlist in advance of the group, with a few song examples ready in the playlist.
- This could also be a take home assignment, to give participants more time to think of songs they like that are applicable to them.



When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 5–18 years old)
- Choose your music streaming platform, and create an account beforehand (if needed). Some common platforms that allow playlist creations are Spotify (free with ads), Apple Music, and YouTube (free with ads).
- To complete this activity at home, have kids think about times when things feel hard, when they want to feel brave, and when they want to have fun and experience joy.
- Have kids choose their favorite songs and name them, like “cheer up song”, “dancing song”, “calming song”, etc.
- Then, brainstorm when you can listen to these songs together (on drives to school, during morning/afternoon routines, etc.).

TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Protective factors are things and people in your life that help you even when you’re being hurt, or have been hurt in the past.
- Everyone benefits from protective factors, but what they look like in each person’s life is unique.
- Think about these questions to help define what the protective factors mean to you:
 - When you hear safety and stability, what does that look like for you?
 - Everyone needs help sometimes. What connections do you already have?
 - What does connecting with your child look like - what do you like to do together?
 - Survival is resilience. When you hear this, what feelings come up for you?
 - How can knowing and caring for yourself help you to develop stronger relationships?
- If you can do things to build one protective factor, even in small ways, you might start to experience other benefits. For example:
 - If you create routines that help you and your children know what’s coming next, then you or they might feel more in control of your lives.
- If you intentionally think about and visualize what you want your future to look like, you might be more willing to ask your family members for specific kinds of support to help you get there. These five protective factors help **both** you and your children directly - not just you, or just them.



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Using the “Protective Factors Infographic” sheet, read through the protective factors.
- 2 Potential facilitation questions:
 - When do you listen to music?
 - Why do you listen to music?
 - What is the importance of music to you? To your culture?
- 3 Ask participants to name songs that remind them of the following:
 - Safety and stability reduce stress and increases choice.
 - It takes a village to thrive- we all need to feel belonging and connection to others.
 - Showing love and care to your children heals both you and them.
 - You’ve survived hard things and can create your own future.
 - When you know and care for yourself, you can build stronger relationships.
- 4 Don’t rush the exercise, and have fun with it! You can have each person create their own playlist or even create a collaborative one!

Questions for kids and families:

- What song makes you feel happy or excited?
- What song do you like to listen to when you feel sad?
- What song do you like to listen to when you want to dance or move around?
- What song helps you calm your body down and feel relaxed?
- What song do you like to listen to when you feel proud of yourself?
- If you were to pick a song that represents our family, Which song would you pick and why?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose this specific song?
- What feelings does each song bring up for you?
- How do you think this playlist can help you?
- How can you create space to listen to this playlist?



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PROTECTIVE FACTORS PHOTO COLLAGE

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Activity

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

This exercise is intended to identify tangible symbols or reminders of strengths and how they show up differently for each survivor. It can also build community among a group of survivors and expand each person's ideas around what protective factors are. This exercise also gives survivors an opportunity to reflect on how these strengths show up uniquely in their own lives, and how it looks for others in the group.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

15 minutes for instructions | 30 minutes for drawing | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Camera

Something to write with (pen and paper or electronic method)

Projector or printer

Notes for the facilitator

- Although this is intended as a group activity, feel free to modify this for an individual.
- Reminder of consent: ensure participants get consent from people they want to take pictures of if that is applicable to them. If participants don't have cameras, provide disposable cameras.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 10–18 years old)
- This can also be modified for younger children to draw things in their lives that symbolize the different protective factors. See Exercise 1: Free Drawing Protective Factors for an example of this.



TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Protective factors are things and people in your life that help you even when you're being hurt, or have been hurt in the past.
- Everyone benefits from protective factors, but what they look like in each person's life is unique.
- Think about these questions to help define what the protective factors mean to you:
 - When you hear safety and stability, what does that look like for you?
 - Everyone needs help sometimes. What connections do you already have?
 - What does connecting with your child look like - what do you like to do together?
 - Survival is resilience. When you hear this, what feelings come up for you?
 - How can knowing and caring for yourself help you to develop stronger relationships?
- If you can do things to build one protective factor, even in small ways, you might start to experience other benefits. For example:
 - If you create routines that help you and your children know what's coming next, then you or they might feel more in control of your lives.
- If you intentionally think about and visualize what you want your future to look like, you might be more willing to ask your family members for specific kinds of support to help you get there. These five protective factors help **both** you and your children directly - not just you, or just them.

HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Ask participants to take a photo of something in their life that represents each protective factor (one picture per protective factor).
 - 2 For each photo, ask them to respond to the following prompts:
 - What is the picture of?
 - Which protective factor does this image represent to you?
 - How does this photo capture the idea of the protective factor in your life?
 - 3 Then, ask participants to send their pictures and descriptions to the group facilitator.
 - 4 Compile all photos into a collage, grouping them together by protective factor in a slide deck.
 - 5 Ask survivors to share their reflections on why they chose the subject in their photos, and how it represents a strength in their life.
 - 6 If possible, print the slide deck as images for the survivors to take home their group collages.
- Note:** Participants who wish to include images of people in their lives should obtain consent from that person.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel while taking photos?
- How did it feel to share your pictures and the meaning behind them?
- What resonated with you from other participant's photos?

"I AM" POEM

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Writing Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset

PURPOSE

Using a series of prompts, the "I am" poem can spark deep reflection by connecting to their past, present, and future self. This is an opportunity to think about how their unique experiences have shaped their identities, and give insight into each survivors' sense of self. Participants can share their poems out loud in a powerful declaration of self.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for writing | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Templates (printed or electronic)

[LAUSD](#) "I am from": focus is on family, childhood, ancestry, home (includes examples)

[Amber Lea Gray](#) "I am": focus is on senses, wonder, dreams, hope (includes example)

Notes for the facilitator

- It is helpful to have these examples ready (or share your own, if you'd like!).

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 5-18 years old)
- Parents can print out, write down, or open a blank word document with the "I am" poem template for their child(ren). Depending on the reading and writing level, parents can read the prompts to their child, and fill in the blank with their responses. Read their poem to them at the end!
- For older children, parents can share the poem template with their child and give them space to work on it individually, or help them to collaborate and write it together.



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Choose one template and share it with the participant(s).
- 2 Share with participants that their poem does not have to rhyme or make sense to anyone except themselves. The most important part is that they are honest with themselves and write from a place of truth.
- 3 Have participants take an hour to do as much as they can. Survivors can also take the template home and return to it during the next session.
- 4 Debrief with reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What was it like to write this poem?
- How do you feel about your poem?
- What did you learn about yourself during the process of writing this poem?
- How did it feel to hear other participant's poems?

WRITING PROMPTS

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Writing Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



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Social
Connections

PURPOSE

Journaling can be a powerful tool for self-expression, reflection, and mental clarity. Over time, journaling can be used as a way to track progress, note changes in behavior or thought patterns, and work towards goals. The writing prompts below relate to the protective factors encouraging survivors to reflect on their experiences and emotions, and think about their relationship with themselves and others.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 15 MINUTES – 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 30 minutes for writing | 20 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper, journal, or access to a computer

Pencil or pen

Relaxing music (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- Consider placing this exercise at the beginning or end of sessions to open or close with short journaling activities.
- You can also encourage survivors to answer these prompts on their own at home.
- Encourage sharing with the group, but do not make it mandatory.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 6–18 years old)
- For younger kids, an adult may have to write down their responses.
- Kid friendly questions:
 - Where is somewhere you feel safe?



- What do you like to do when things feel hard?
- What makes you feel strong? Brave?
- What makes you feel joy?
- Who is someone you look up to? Why?

WRITING PROMPTS



Write about a specific anxiety, or something that makes you feel worried. Write about what it is, how it feels, where that feeling is coming from, and what it means to you. Then, shred it with your hands and throw it away.



Think of yourself as a battery. What charges or drains your energy?



Write about a time you felt proud of yourself.



Who are your role models?



If you could choose a movie, book, or song title to match what you're feeling or experiencing right now, what would it be?



Write about your relationship with a caregiver. Who were they, how did they make you feel? How has that relationship influenced who you are now?



Reflect on a time you experienced growth. What did you learn about yourself and how has it affected you?



Think of a time when you learned something about your parent/child that surprised you. How did that affect the way you viewed them or interacted with them?



What represents safety to you and why? It could be a person, place, or idea. Maybe it's a color or a smell or a shape, something more abstract. What makes it feel safe and secure?



Practicing gratitude: Who are the people in your life that provide support? How do they positively influence your life?



Write a letter to your past self at your child's age.



Write a letter to your future self at your parent's age.



Write about a time you communicated your feelings. How did this impact your relationships?



What do you need in order to feel safe to share your thoughts, feelings, and emotions with others?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did it feel to write your story down?
- How does it feel to share what you wrote out loud?
- If in a group, did anything someone else wrote or shared resonate with you?



Promising Futures



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SPEND TIME WITH YOUR INNER CRITIC

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset

PURPOSE

After experiencing violence, brains can become primed to hyperfocus on danger and consequences. This means that even when someone is no longer in danger, the brain may still be operating from a place of fear and hypervigilance. People who survive traumatic experiences may internalize guilt or shame about what happened. We may hear a critical voice in our head saying that we are not worthy or deserving of good things, and even further, we might start to believe that voice. As a practice in self advocacy and shifting harmful narratives we hold about ourselves, this activity asks participants to identify their inner critic and respond to it; what do we want to say back to that voice?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for crafting | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Crafting materials (magazines, newspapers, drawings)

Paper, glue, scissors

Items to draw with (markers, colored pencils, crayons, pastels)

Notes for the facilitator

- This exercise requires vulnerability and would be best placed after trust has been built with participants.
- Make it your own! Combine this with an affirmations exercise such as Exercise 9: Create Your Own Affirmations.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 15–18 years old)



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Ask survivors to reflect on a word or phrase they often associate with their inner critic, and write it down in large letters on a piece of paper.

Examples: “Bad parent/sibling/partner,” “never do anything right,” “always choose the wrong partner,” “never stick up for yourself,” etc.
- 2 Then, using the art supplies provided, participants will cover up that word with images and other words/phrases reflecting their strengths and capabilities, or aspirations, essentially “disproving” what was originally written down.
- 3 Eventually, what they wrote down will no longer be visible, and they will have a new image filled with positive words, visuals, and affirmations about their own strengths and capabilities. Debrief with reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you notice about how you felt at the beginning of this activity?
- Why did you chose that word or phrase to associate with your inner critic?
- How did it feel to cover up the word or phrase?
- How did you feel at the end of this exercise?

COPING CARDS

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Mindfulness Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

We all experience a range of emotions. This activity will help survivors identify their own personal coping skills, or ways to regulate their emotions. Survivors can use these cards to identify coping skills for different settings and emotions. Cards can be a helpful reminder to use effective coping strategies when feeling sad, anxious, angry, or more. They can help us remember our safe people and safe places that we can go to for support and connection.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 45 MINUTES

10 minutes for instructions | 20 minutes for drawing | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal

Items to write with (pens, pencils, markers)

[Coping card template](#) (optional)

Stickers (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- This is not for immediate safety planning with survivors.
- Get creative! Encourage survivors to decorate their cards, and keep in a place that is easily accessible.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 10–18 years old)



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Ask participants to think about how they recognize what emotions are coming up.
- 2 Now, ask participants to brainstorm what happens to their body when feeling frustrated or mad. “Does anyone’s heart race? Is it hard to see clearly?”
- 3 Ask each participant to share with the group something they notice in their body when those emotions come up: “Think about what you might notice in your body when you feel a big sense of relief. Maybe your shoulders release, maybe you take a deep breath?”
- 4 Give each participant a printed template for the [coping card](#), and ask them to fill it out and include a helpful affirmation. Or, participants can fill the card out later, in a safe place, and with a safe person.
- 5 Keep things short and sweet – “When we’re in states of panic or anxiety, it can be helpful to have a single word or phrase to remind us of the strategies we want to use to calm ourselves down.”
- 6 Give participants time to decorate the card with stickers, drawings, or whatever comes to mind!

Note: If participants do not want to carry around a physical card, encourage them to take a photo of their completed card and save it to their “favorites” folder on their phone so they have easy access to it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Did anything feel particularly difficult or easy?
- What did you notice in your body as you were doing this exercise?
- What do you notice in your body after this exercise?

DRAW YOUR EMOTIONS CREATURE

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social and
Emotional
Abilities

PURPOSE

Emotion regulation is an important skill to ensure that our behaviors are aligned with what we want for our lives. Engaging in behaviors aligned with our values is essential for resilience and growth mindsets. This exercise is designed to help survivors identify feelings and strengthen healthy relationships between their emotions and what it means for them to be resilient. Additionally, this exercise can offer survivors the opportunity to practice healthy emotion regulation in a safe space and gain inspiration from others.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 20 minutes for drawing | 30 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal

Items to draw with, like markers, colored pencils, crayons, or a tablet or computer

[Emotions wheel](#) or [Kids Emotion Wheel](#) (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- This exercise requires vulnerability and would be best used after trust has been built.
- If survivors are struggling to connect with their emotions and what they may look like when they are externalized, it could be helpful to begin with a guided mindfulness exercise.
- Get creative! Try this exercise with different emotions: anxiety, joy, sadness, anger, contentment, etc.
- There are no wrong creatures. Encourage survivors to draw whatever comes to mind.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 5–18 years old)



- Instead of asking younger kids to draw the words “anxious” or “confident,” ask them to draw what they think of when they hear the word “sad.” Then ask them to draw what they think of when they hear the word “strong.”
- Discuss with them what they drew and why.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1 Choose two emotions. Use an emotions wheel to help identify emotions, if needed.
- 2 Draw both in the form of two different creatures, and describe their relationship.

Example format:

- Confidence looks like ____.
- Anxiety looks like ____.
- Anxiety says “____” to confidence.
- Confidence says “____” to anxiety.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel drawing each emotion?
- What was it like to picture the two creatures interacting?
- How can regulating your emotions help you become the parent you want to be?
- If you could talk to these creatures, what would you say?

CREATE YOUR OWN AFFIRMATIONS

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Mindfulness Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

Sharing affirmations out loud with others, or repeating them to yourself regularly can provide survivors with new ideas, build connections with other peers, and add power to the words they wrote. This exercise is designed to increase individualized connection to each protective factor through self expression, especially to ones that may benefit from further growth. These affirmations can be used to replace harmful thoughts and to provide support during difficult sessions or situations.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 35 minutes for brainstorming | 15 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

[Protective Factors Infographic](#) handout for each participant

Paper, journal, or notecards

Items to write with, like pencils, pens, crayons, or a tablet or computer

Notes for the facilitator

- Print out the “Protective Factors Infographic” sheet for each survivor, or have the sheet visible for them to read throughout the session.
- Encourage survivors to keep these affirmations on them in a way that feels doable: on a piece of paper that they carry, a sticky note in a visible place, in their phone notes, etc.
 - If able, facilitators can provide survivors with small cards to keep with them
- Affirmations may be particularly useful for survivors when paired with other mindfulness exercises, such as the Exercise 13: Leaves on the Stream Meditation. Facilitators can encourage survivors to use the Leaves on the Stream Meditation when they are feeling particularly stressed, and then use the created affirmations to replace the thoughts and feelings that float away on the stream.



When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 6–18 years old)
- Substitute each individual protective factor for simpler words, such as safe, loved and cared for, confident and powerful, and a good friend or sibling.
- Ask kids to come up with things they can say to help them feel each of these things. Try to add movement with the affirmation to connect the affirmation to their mind and body.
- Example: When I want to feel confident, I will stand tall with my hands on my hips and say: “I am strong!”

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1 Using the “Protective Factors Infographic” sheet, read through the protective factors.
- 2 Create affirmations that apply to each protective factor. You can even create affirmations outside of each protective factor – just write down affirmations that feel important for what you need. (Swearing is encouraged if appropriate!)

Example format:

- “I am ____.”
 - Example: I am stronger than my anxiety.
- “Even though ____, I can/am ____.”
 - Example: Even though things are tough right now, I am strong and resilient.

Example affirmations:

- I grow from my mistakes.
- I am safe.
- I am deserving of kindness and compassion from others.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel while writing?
- Did any thoughts come up for you?
- What protective factors were easiest to create an affirmation for?
- Which factors were the most uncomfortable?

BUILDING ROUTINES

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Movement Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions

PURPOSE

Routines help reduce stress, and increase a sense of control. They are especially important for children, as family routines can increase resilience in times of crisis, and strengthen nurturing adult-child interactions. Two common examples are morning and bedtime routines, though routines can be implemented at any time throughout the day. This exercise is built to help survivors develop and implement regular routines that fit their lifestyles. Reflecting on potential challenges and ways to move past them can increase routine implementation and adherence.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 45 MINUTES

5 minutes for instructions | 30 minutes for brainstorming | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal (optional)

Items to write with, like pencils, pens, or a tablet or computer (optional)

Notes for the facilitator

- This exercise is intended to be a brainstorming session to develop lasting routines that can be implemented in survivors' daily lives.
- Some survivors may have very busy schedules that won't allow for long routines, and that's okay! Remind them that even short routines like washing your face before bed or having a cup of coffee in the morning can be a routine.
- Facilitators should encourage survivors to do what is helpful to remember ideas for routines- whether that's jotting things down on a sticky note or in a journal, keeping a notes app on their phone, or adding to a shared online document.
- If in a group, encourage open dialogue and brainstorming between survivors.



- If working individually with a survivor, be prepared to offer examples of routines.
- Overall, help survivors come up with routines that feel sustainable for their lifestyles and helpful for their goals.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 2-18 years old)
- You can start building routines with your kids from an early age- make sure to include them in the process in ways that make sense!
- Leaves on a Stream meditation requires some sitting and listening skills that may be difficult for younger kids.
- Starting from around age 4, start brainstorming routines with them. You can do this by asking what things they noticed need to get done in the morning and nighttime (i.e. brush teeth, get dressed/ put on pjs, eat breakfast, etc.).
- Then make a "Morning Chart" or "Nighttime Chart" by either drawing those tasks or printing out pictures of them (i.e. a toothbrush, a t-shirt, a picture of what they typically like to eat for breakfast, cozy pjs, nightlight, etc.). Kids can decide what images to use based on what works for them!
- Tape the charts on their bedroom wall or somewhere else that is visible.
- Make them fun! Examples:
 - Pretend to be an animal as you brush your teeth.
 - Have a pick up from a school dance.
 - Sing a song in the morning together as they wake up.

(Instructions begin on next page)



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Provide information on the importance and benefits of daily routines.
- 2 Offer examples of helpful routines, especially ones that vary in length.
- 3 Brainstorm ideas for routines. Potential facilitation questions:
 - What are your current routines?
 - At what point in your day would a new routine be most helpful (right after school, in the mornings, etc.)?
 - How much time can you give to yourself for a new routine?
 - What are some ideas for new routines?

Examples of routines:

- Individual morning routine:
 - Drink coffee while listening to music
- After school family routine:
 - Short movement/mindfulness activity (e.g., yoga, walk, park playtime)
 - Family dinner
 - Clean up together
- Family bedtime routine:
 - Turn off screens 30 min before bed
 - Make [brushing teeth](#) into a game! Ask children to show their teeth and make a face like a giraffe while brushing.
 - Read a small book or chapter together
 - Turn on a nightlight and go to bed

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What are some potential challenges that may come up when trying to implement a new routine? How can you overcome these challenges?
- How can you engage other family members in similar routines?
- How do you think this routine will help you and your family?



Promising Futures



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BUILDING A HOME VISION BOARD

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions

PURPOSE

A vision board offers a visual roadmap of your values, goals, and future directions. It is a form of expression meant to inspire excitement about the future. For this specific vision board, naming what feels important for a stable home environment can help create concrete steps towards making that vision reality. Doing this activity with your children involves them in this creative and imaginative process, and encourages positive parent-child bonding.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR & 30 MINUTES

10 minutes for instructions | 1 hour for collaging | 20 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Free online vision board makers ([Canva](#), [Venngage](#), [Fotor](#))

Or, Physical collage materials (magazines, newspapers, drawings)

If doing physical collages, you'll also need paper, glue, scissors, and items to draw with (markers, colored pencils, crayons, pastels)

Notes for the facilitator

- Make sure you gather enough materials beforehand for all survivors, or support survivors in making an account for one of the free online resources.
- Be prepared for the vulnerability that this exercise requires, and make sure your group or survivor is in the right headspace and ready for this exercise.
- If you have a limited amount of time, having enough images and words already cut out to choose from could decrease the time required to about an hour. This may limit survivors' ability to be fully creative.
- This can be a good connector to other exercises, including Exercise 14: I Spy Walk, Exercise 15: Cook a Family Recipe, and Exercise 12: Communication Agreements. These exercises can be included in the goals that survivors will brainstorm.



When using this activity with children

- Consider age (recommended range: 6–18 years old)
- This is a great exercise to do together with your kids: you can make one together, or each co-create your own vision board and see how they compare.
- Make sure you gather enough materials beforehand, or create an account on one of the free online resources.
- Explain the purpose of this exercise in language your kids can understand.
- Brainstorm a place where you can keep this vision board visible (fridge, hung up on the wall, saved as photo, etc.) after you complete it together.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

1 Before creating the vision board, write down and name what feels important for a safe and stable home. This can be single words, or short phrases.

Examples: secure, joyful, relaxing, belonging, time spent together, etc.

2 Next, create measurable and achievable goals that match the words or sentences you came up with.

Examples:

- Joyful → I make a meal with my kids once a week.
- Relaxing → When stressed, I take a mindfulness walk.

3 Then, use newspapers, magazines, drawings, or virtual vision boards to collect images or inspiring words that speak to you and the goals you set.

4 Once you've collected your images, arrange them on your board in a way that feels and looks good to you.

Note: There is no right way to organize your vision board. Just have fun, and be creative!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is it like looking at your completed vision board?
- How do you want to bring your vision board to reality?
- If you created a vision board with someone else, compare vision boards or reflect on the process of creating one together. Was anything particularly surprising?

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Writing Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Safer and
More Stable
Conditions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities

PURPOSE

Communication between parents and children can be a challenge, especially during times of high stress or conflict. This activity provides space for parents to reflect on times when they have successfully communicated with their kids in positive ways, and share those strategies with each other.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 20 minutes for writing | 30 minutes for group reflection

MATERIALS

Paper or a journal

Items to write with, like pencils or pens

Notes for the facilitator

- Think about ways to normalize the challenges that may arise when parenting under stressful circumstances.
- Particularly for facilitators that don't have children, framing is especially important.
- Stay away from instructing parents on how to parent.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 6–18 years old)
- Remember that changing the way we communicate and interact with each other takes time and consistency. We're not always going to get it right, and that's ok.



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Begin with individual reflection. Ask the parents to do the following:

Think about how you communicate with your child. How does that usually go for you? What makes it hard? What makes it easier? The circumstances will be different for each person.

- 2 Follow with group sharing:

Share a story about a time when you felt you were really successful communicating with your child. What were the circumstances? How did you make that happen?

- 3 After parents have shared, ask the group what circumstances and strategies they heard from other parents that helped them communicate with their children.
- 4 Write those down somewhere that everyone can see them together. Use this list to facilitate the reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What was a strategy you heard from another parent that resonated?
- What might be challenging about these strategies?
- What might they gain from incorporating these strategies?
- How did it feel to have this conversation with other parents versus (judge, child welfare worker, etc.)?
- Would it be helpful to talk about these strategies next time?

LEAVES ON THE STREAM MEDITATION

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Mindfulness Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

Letting go of overwhelming thoughts and feelings is essential to figuring out how to move forward. This process of letting go gives us more energy to instead strengthen our connections to ourselves, to others, and to our spirituality. These connections provide further opportunity for strength and healing.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 15 MINUTES

5 minutes for introduction | 5 minutes for meditation | 5 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Comfortable place to sit and relax

Headphones or music (optional)

Guided online meditation (optional): [Leaves on a Stream Meditation](#) or [3-minute Leaves on a Stream Meditation](#)

Notes for the facilitator

- Not everyone responds well to deep breathing and meditation
 - A mindfulness walk is a great alternative that still includes mindfulness (see Exercise 14: Mindfulness Walk).
- There are many guided versions of this activity online that can be helpful to watch before guiding a group on your own.
 - [Leaves on a Stream Meditation](#)
 - [3 minute Leaves on a Stream Meditation](#)
- You can try this exercise at the beginning of a session, after discussing a difficult topic, or when survivors seem to be overwhelmed.
- This meditation is grounded in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). You can read more about this meditation [here](#) and more about ACT [here](#).



When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 6–18 years old)
- Kids of all ages can benefit from mindfulness techniques.
- Leaves on a Stream meditation requires some sitting and listening skills that may be difficult for younger kids.
- The important thing to remember is not the details of the exercise itself, but the goal of regulating our emotions and connecting with ourselves.
- Here are some other younger kid-friendly meditations to try if your child doesn't like Leaves on a Stream:
 - [Melting Exercise](#)
 - [Dragon Breathing](#)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1 Take deep, calming breaths.
- 2 When ready, keep breathing deeply and imagine yourself in front of a stream watching the water flow.
- 3 Each time you notice a thought, feeling, or sensation, imagine placing it on a leaf and letting it float down the stream.
Note: Do this regardless of whether the thoughts, feelings, or sensations are positive or negative, pleasurable or painful.
- 4 If you notice your attention drifting, gently bring yourself back to the stream.
- 5 Acknowledge the interruption, place it on a leaf, and watch it float away.
- 6 After your thoughts and feelings start to slow, allow the image of the stream to dissolve.
- 7 Slowly bring your attention back to your body.
- 8 Wiggle your fingers and toes, stretching slowly and bringing yourself back to where you are.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you feel after doing the exercise?
- Did anything feel particularly difficult or easy?
- What did you notice in your body as you were doing this exercise?
- What do you notice in your body after this exercise?

MINDFULNESS WALK

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Writing Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities

PURPOSE

When stressed, identifying and naming the things around us can have a calming effect and allow space for increased emotional regulation. Pair this with a walk, and you have a relaxing mindfulness activity that you can do individually or in a group. For kids, this imaginative and physical activity can support healthy brain development and foster positive adult-child relationships.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 30 MINUTES

5 minutes for instructions | 20 minutes for walking | 5 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Just yourself, and a willingness to be mindful

Notes for the facilitator

- Facilitators can share this exercise with survivors as a coping skill to write down and remember for when they need it. Or, facilitators can even take survivors on a mindfulness walk, especially if a session feels particularly challenging.
- If adapting for individual use, encourage survivors to name objects while out on a walk or (if a walk is not possible) in the current space they find themselves in.
- This exercise can be paired with [box breathing](#), or other breathing techniques.
- If participants can't go on a walk, this exercise can still be helpful to try inside.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 2–18 years old)
- Parents can move through the 5 senses or play “I Spy” while out on a walk with kids. If playing “I spy,” one person would guess what the other person sees.



- Parents can also play “I Spy” with a twist, where you both choose to be one animal and take turns saying what you see as that animal.
- Get into character! If you choose a bird, flap your wings. If you choose a snake, wiggle around!

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1 If you're able to go outside, go for a walk. Or, find a space inside where you can do some thinking on your own.
- 2 Name five things you can see.
- 3 Name four things you can touch.
- 4 Name three things you can hear.
- 5 Name two things you can smell.
- 6 Name one thing you can taste.
- 7 Repeat as needed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel before you started this activity?
- Did you see anything that brought you joy?
- How did you feel after?

COOK A FAMILY RECIPE

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Movement Activity

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social
Connections

PURPOSE

Cooking is a great way to foster deeper connections to yourself and others. Making a meal at home can help you feel healthier, boost your energy, and improve your sleep and resilience to stress. Additionally, cooking together with your kids can foster stronger bonds by creating shared experiences and positive memories.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for cooking | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Favorite recipe or meaningful family recipe

Cooking ingredients

Cooking utensils

Make a recipe book (optional): [Google Docs](#) or [Canva](#) (free), or a [custom recipe book](#) (paid)

Notes for the facilitator

- This exercise would be best to share with survivors to take home and complete on their own time.
- If in a group setting with a shared kitchen space, ask the group how the kitchen is shared. Brainstorm ways the group could agree on how they might take turns with their kids.
- Encourage survivors to choose meaningful recipes that have positive memories associated with them, or favorite recipes that they enjoy making.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 4–18 years old)
- Adapt how kids participate [depending on their age range](#).



- Share memories of you cooking the dish with your loved ones when you were a kid, or tell them why this recipe is important to you.
- If available to you, you can save these recipes as you make them and turn them into a family recipe book.
 - Have kids help write down the recipes on a piece of paper as you make it together, and keep them together with a paperclip, a binder, or in a notebook.
 - Include pictures as you all make the dish.
 - Can make your own free online version with [Google Docs](#) or [Canva](#).
 - Or buy your own physical [custom recipe book](#).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1 Think about your favorite recipe, or a recipe that is meaningful to you.
- 2 Set aside intentional time to enjoy the process of cooking and eating.
- 3 Follow recipe instructions while listening to music or put on your Protective Factors Playlist (see Exercise 2: Create a Protective Factors Playlist).
- 4 If you want to build your own recipe book, write down instructions and take pictures as you go along.
- 5 Have fun and enjoy some good food!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose this recipe?
- What came up for you as you were cooking and eating?
- What does this recipe mean to you? Who does it make you think of?
- How did it taste? Would you want to make it again?

Try this activity virtually!

You can also do this cooking activity as a group virtually. Consider using the same date and time of your usual group so scheduling isn't cumbersome for survivors. To encourage nurturing parent-child bonds, have parents choose the recipe with their children (see the "When Using this Activity with Children" section). In preparation, be sure to ask survivors:

- Do you think it will be safe to do this activity at home and online? *Create a safety plan.*
- Do you have the needed technology to participate (smart device with camera and mic, WiFi connectivity)? *Offer other options if they do not.*
- What ingredients are needed? *Purchase and have ingredients delivered to their home.*
- What else do you need to prepare?

PARENT TO PARENT – SHARING WISDOM

Group Reflection Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Nurturing
Parent-Child
Interactions



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset

PURPOSE

Crowdsourcing ideas in a group with other parents can generate connections and bring about innovative, creative ideas. Parents can share ways they connect with their children, ask questions to each other about how to handle tough situations, and help each other brainstorm and problem solve solutions.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

5 minutes for instructions | 45 minutes for discussion | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

None needed - Conversation based

Notes for the facilitator

- Before opening up the floor to participants for ideas and suggestions, try to frame the conversation around a specific topic. These could include: addressing a specific protective factor, choosing 1-2 parents to present a challenge they're experiencing with their child (like a mini case consultation), identifying low/no cost activities, how to talk to your child about their feelings, etc.
- It's important to create a safe environment for parents to share challenges they are facing with their child. Participants may feel hesitant or uncomfortable sharing if they think they will be judged by other parents or the facilitator. While sharing potential solutions, parents should keep in mind that what might work best for them may not work for everyone.
- This activity is not intended to critique parents or the choices they have made, but rather to offer support and suggestions.
- When asking questions, be sure to use a strengths-based framework; stay away from deficit-based approaches.



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Have the group decide on a topic. You can either choose from the list below or the group can come up with their own.
- 2 Ask someone in the group to share a specific example of a challenge they have experienced with their child related to this topic that they would like support with.
- 3 Next, group members can ask questions for more information, or share what they have done in similar situations.
- 4 Optional: Parents can have small group or 1:1 conversations if that feels more comfortable than opening up to the entire group.

POTENTIAL TOPICS

Free or low cost activities to do with your kids

E.g., "I want to spend more quality time with my kids but everything costs money!"

Activities to do with your kids in under an hour

E.g., "When we only have an hour, I don't know what to do except turn on the TV..."

Ancestral/Cultural knowledge

E.g., "The way my parents raised me was so different from how I'm raising my kids."

Meals to cook together

E.g., "One of my kids is a picky eater, but the other kids are tired of eating the same thing all the time. I can't make separate meals for them everyday."

Work-Life Balance

E.g., "I feel so guilty that I am at work all day and I don't get to see my kids."

Tantrums

E.g., "My kid cries and throws a fit before bed time almost every day."

School

E.g., "I got a call from the school, and they told me that my kid has been acting out. I feel like it's all my fault and the teachers are judging me."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did it feel to share and brainstorm with other parents?
- What comments, questions, or suggestions stood out to you from the other parents?



Promising Futures



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