



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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June 17, 2009 – Dads-Focus on Protective Factors This Father’s Day

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The Prevention Boards of both Communities That Care (CTC) groups in Centre County operate on the premise that to develop healthy children, we need to minimize risk factors related to ATOD use (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs), violence, and antisocial behavior, while simultaneously maximizing protective factors – those things which connect perfection, or that they need to pile even more jobs on their “to-do” lists. I am suggesting that we think about how important it is to make direct connections with our children, in whatever ways we can big or small. These are the connections that build protective factors.

There are many ways to look at fathering, but one model I appreciate is The National Center for Fathering’s ICAN approach. “ICAN” stands for Involvement, Consistency, Awareness, and Nurturance - a comprehensive, yet simple way to look at these key roles of fathering. Involvement is about spending time with your child. Consistency means being predictable to your kids. Awareness deals with having a handle on your child’s friends, interests, and emotional needs. Nurturance is encouraging your kids and letting them know you love them.

One protective factor that can be developed with the ICAN approach is Family Attachment. Many fathers struggle with involvement with their children, but with a little conscious effort, this area can be greatly improved. Volunteer at your child’s school. Read a book together. Spend five minutes playing catch. Tuck them in at night. And while you’re spending this time with them, ask about their friends. Listen to them if they express concern or anxiety about something. Be sure to tell them you love them. Do this regularly. You’ve just also worked on consistency, awareness, and nurturance! By being involved in activities that they are interested in such as scouting, sports, music, or the outdoors, you can also help connect them to positive peers, groups, and adults.

Making a Meaningful Contribution to His/Her Family is another protective factor that parents can encourage, with a little thought. Ask the opinion of your children before making decisions that affect them, or engage them in family chores like cooking meals together. There are seven other protective factors, and all of them can be promoted or developed with this kind of thinking and behavior.

Most parents would agree that parenting is the hardest job in the world, bar none. Having three school-aged kids keeps my life so busy, I find myself barely keeping afloat at times as I speed from one activity to another. But if within the busy schedules of our lives we can develop a cocoon of protective factors, we can make a huge difference in our children’s futures, and in the community that is Centre County.

For more information about protective or risk factors, go to either one of this county's Communities That Care websites. To learn more about The National Center for Fathering, visit their website at <http://www.fathers.com/>.

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