

Be a Friend/Be a Hero

There's a  
Hero in You

You are  
Brave

You are  
a Role  
Model

2021 Newsletter

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## Parent Cafes

While being a parent can be the most rewarding job in the world, it can also be the most difficult. Parent Cafes are a wonderful tool for parents, or any family member, to use. The Parent Café program is a nationally recognized, evidence base, peer-to-peer learning process to keep families strong and children safe. The premise of a Café is that, while we all struggle at times, each parent is an expert in regards to what is best for their own family. The Cafes offer a physically and emotionally safe space to openly share both positive and negative experiences. Participants will discover their strengths and learn about evidence-based Protective Factors. Many participants leave the Café feeling inspired, refreshed, and excited to put into practice all they have learned.

### Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics or strengths of individuals and families that reduce risks while promoting well-being and healthy development. These attributes can help parents and families successfully navigate difficult situations. Parent Cafes focus on five key protective factors that can help parents and caregivers (1) Build *Resilience*, (2) build *Relationships*, (3) find needed *Support*, (4) gain *Knowledge*, and (5) develop *Communication* skills. *Resilience*, specifically parental resilience, is the ability of parents or caregivers to manage stress and to function well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma. All of the protective factors are inter-related but this protective factor is unique in that it is achieved by developing the other four factors. *Relationships*, or *positive social connections*, provide emotional, informational, and spiritual support. We have all heard the term "it takes a village" and this particular protective factor speaks to that ideology. Along with a support system of family and friends, it is equally important to have access to concrete *support* and services that address a family's needs. Having this resource goes a long way to minimizing stress caused by challenges. Many times, if not most times, parenting is all about learning as you go. Our children don't come with instruction manuals. Having *knowledge* of parenting and child development allows the caregiver to know what to expect developmentally for their child and can ease concerns surrounding physical, cognitive, language, and social/emotional development. Communicating with our children can be very difficult at times but as parents and caregivers it is crucial that we role model appropriate and effective forms of *communication*. Positive interactions we have with our children help them develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain healthy relationships.

### Fun and Easy

We have gone over a lot of information in this newsletter. But fear not! Not only are Parent Cafes a fun and easy way to learn about how to put protective factors to use, participants make the social connections, gain the knowledge, and learn about available support systems which all help caregivers develop the resilience that is so important. Cafes set the tone from the beginning that everyone is equal, everyone is learning, and everyone should feel comfortable sharing as much or as little as they desire. Participants rotate among different tables of four to six people and exchange thoughts, ideas, concerns, struggles, and experiences with one another. For more information about Parent Cafes in our area, visit the St. Joseph County Cares [website](#) or you can contact Becky Zakowski with St. Joseph County Cares at [Rebecca.zakowski@oaklawn.org](mailto:Rebecca.zakowski@oaklawn.org). Every parent wants what is best for their child and for their child to have a loving, safe, and fun childhood. We all need a little help once and awhile and that is okay. Remember, it really does take a village so let's take this parenting journey together!