

# inspired

[to make healthy choices]

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## Building Youth Protective Factors

**Protective factors are the skills, connections and supports that buffer youth from risks and help them make healthy choices. Strong protective factors are the foundation of substance use prevention!**

### FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Consistent family routines strengthen connection, trust and communication. Regularly discussing health and wellness, encouraging youth to ask questions and setting clear but supportive boundaries allows them to know they can turn to you when needed.

- Set aside at least one tech-free family mealtime each week for open conversation.
- Attend local community events together like health fairs to gather resources and have fun.



### POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

After-school activities, sports and mentoring programs provide belonging, purpose and positive role models. These opportunities keep youth engaged in safe, meaningful ways while building life skills, teamwork and confidence.

- Encourage your child to try one new activity this season—clubs, sports or volunteer opportunities all count.
- Help your child identify a mentor or coach who can provide guidance and support.



### PEER & SCHOOL SUPPORT

Strong friendships and safe, inclusive school activities help young people feel valued and accepted. Positive peer groups and school connections act as a safeguard against peer pressure.

- Ask your child about who they spend time with at school and help them make peer connections.
- Get involved with anti-bullying initiatives that promote supportive, welcoming environments.



### MENTAL HEALTH & COPING SKILLS

Teaching youth healthy ways to manage stress—like mindfulness, journaling or talking with a trusted adult—builds resilience. When young people have strong coping skills, they are less likely to rely on substances to handle life's challenges. Make sure they know it is always OK to ask for help.

- Model healthy stress management techniques such as exercising or practicing deep breathing.
- Ensure your child is aware of resources like 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and Crisis Text Line.



**By fostering these protective factors, we can help youth make healthy choices and set them up for a bright, substance-free future.**

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