



Strengthening Child and Youth Healing After Violence

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There are three levels of advocacy: individual, community, and institutional. Individual advocacy is all of the activities that help an individual survivor and her children. Community advocacy involves changing the community's culture to one that does not tolerate abuse and is educated on power and control. Institutional advocacy addresses problematic practices in the systems that survivors have to navigate. Consistency and predictability are advantageous in healing so that children know what to expect. Both the mother and Advocate can listen to children talk about traumatic experiences to process through difficult emotions. Their mother can help them practice healthy coping skills at home and do them with the children as a bonding activity. They can participate in traditional activities in the community together to build skills and social connections. She can help them feel physically and mentally safe with simple things like letting them sleep with a nightlight, letting them cry when they need to, and showing them safety precautions taken around the house. Emotions are normal, so let children and youth know that. When they can put a name on the emotion, it encourages them to express that emotion in appropriate ways. Grief is a particularly powerful emotion that can lead to harmful behaviors if not expressed. Let them grieve for the past, present, and future. For instance, a child may grieve for the loss of a pet from a batterer's violence in the past, the loss of living with both parents if they separate, and the loss of a potential future that could have been. It can be difficult to see positives while healing, so find and show them their strengths, and praise their survival through trauma.



Bond with Non-offending Parent

The protection and healing process of children is linked to their mother's safety in Domestic Violence situations. Children benefit from stable living situations and staying with their mothers. At the same time, mothers benefit from staying with their children. Children are greatly helped when their parents are being helped and supported.

In *The Batterer as Parent* (Bancroft, 2012), improving the outcome for children involves Tribal Advocates and mothers working together to help children heal by giving, teaching, and modeling:

- basic needs,
- safety/protection,
- appropriate decision making,
- active parenting,
- instrumental support,
- availability,
- sensitivity,
- affirmation,
- time,
- support,
- encouragement,
- affection,
- trust,
- respect,
- boundaries,
- structure,
- limits,
- predictability,
- bonding with non-offending mother,
- freedom from responsibility for adults,
- safe contact with the battering father if possible,
- bond with siblings.



We all have sacred places within ourselves and wherever we might be.

Mona Polacca
Hopi/Tewa/Havasupai



Resiliency is the ability to recover or “bounce back” from difficulties. Resiliency factors contribute to the ways that Native children and youth learn to protect themselves.

Because it is essential in recovery, building resiliency skills is very valuable for survival and healing. Some resiliency skills may be innate inside of children and youth, such as a personality that can escape self-blame or that can build strong peer relationships. Some skills can be learned and practiced, such as talents, interests, and creativity. Connecting to traditional activities and strengthening their tribal identity improves resiliency on many levels. Culture is profoundly beneficial in recovery. Helping children and youth learn and use these protective skills helps them not only during a crisis, but for their whole

lives. They may have capabilities or talents, a sense of belonging in school or the community, a great sense of humor, independence, or initiative and drive. Build relationships with children and youth so that advocacy can include fostering these skills, and so that you can strengthen one resiliency skill that is particularly helpful, which is trustworthy adults.