

# Caring for Your Child- May 7<sup>th</sup> is Children's Mental Health Day

(NAPS)-There is no one right way to raise a child. Parenting styles vary. But it is important that all caregivers communicate clear and consistent expectations for each child.

In today's world, some parents are so busy and stressed that nurturing children may sometimes take a back seat to problems that seem more important. However, here are a few suggestions that can help parents provide for children's physical safety and emotional well-being.

- Do your best to provide a safe home and community for your child, as well as nutritious meals, regular health check-ups, immunizations, and exercise.
- Be aware of stages in child development so you don't expect too much or too little from your child.
- Encourage your child to express his or her feelings; respect those feelings. Let your child know that everyone experiences pain, fear, anger, and anxiety. Try to learn the source of these feelings. Help your child express anger positively, without resorting to violence.
- Promote mutual respect and trust. Keep your voice level down even when you don't agree. Keep communication channels open.
- Listen to your child. Use words and examples your child can understand. Encourage questions. Express your willingness to talk about any subject.
- Provide comfort and assurance. Be honest. Focus on the positives.
- Look at your own problem-solving and coping skills. Are you setting a good example? Seek help if you are overwhelmed by your child's feelings or behaviors or if you are unable to control your own frustration or anger.
- Encourage your child's talents and accept limitations. Set goals based on the child's abilities and interests, not someone else's expectations. Celebrate accomplishments.
- Don't compare your child's abilities to those of other children; appreciate the uniqueness of your child.
- Spend time regularly with your child.
- Foster your child's independence and self-worth. Help your child deal with life's ups and downs. Show confidence in your child's ability to handle problems and tackle new experiences.
- Discipline constructively, fairly, and consistently. (Discipline is a form of teaching, not physical punishment.) All children and families are different; learn what is effective for your child. Show approval for positive behaviors. Help your child learn from his or her mistakes.
- Love unconditionally. Teach the value of apologies, cooperation, patience, forgiveness, and consideration for others.
- Do not expect to be perfect; parenting is a difficult job.