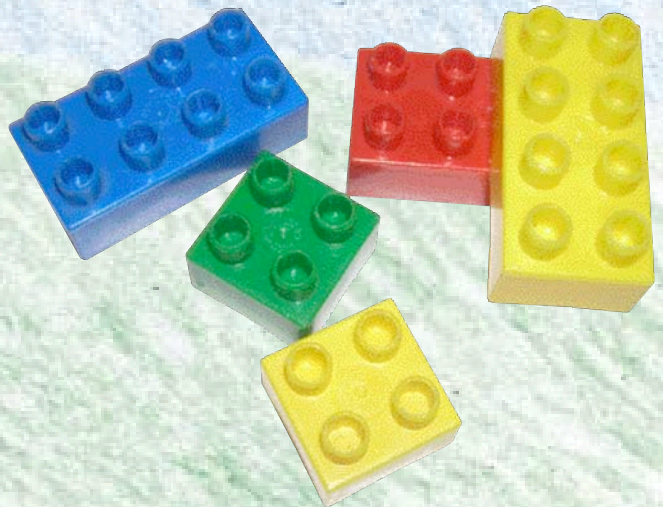


**A Kid Is  
So Special  
(KISS)**

# **PLAYING TOGETHER Handbook**



# Family Rituals And Routines

Every family needs routines and rituals; they help keep life organized and prevent things from getting too chaotic. Children, especially school-aged children, do better when they have predictable routines and consistent activities. This can be a challenge for kids who have lived with domestic violence – things may have been very strict or very disorganized.

It's important that routines and rituals are clear and organized enough to provide structure but flexible enough to allow children to have some choices and the ability to switch gears when plans change. Here are some ways parents can make routines and rituals more successful:

- ✿ **Focus on morning routines.** Mornings can be very stressful for families, with children getting ready for school while parents get ready for work or the day. Prepare what you need the night before, and teach your children how to get into a routine of planning for school – getting clothes ready, putting homework in the backpack, and so on. Charts and lists of what needs to be done during the morning are a good way of helping children keep track. And remember to say goodbye to your child each morning, with love and a hug. This helps you and your children to have a positive start to the day.
- ✿ **Meal time is important.** Eat together as a family as often as possible. Turn off the TV and phone and talk with your children. Kids can help to prepare meals and set the table, and this is a good time to talk with them about their day. Keep conversations as positive as you can and encourage everyone to participate.
- ✿ **End the day on a good note.** Children need a predictable way of going to sleep – going to bed at the same time every night, rituals (bath, story, goodnights) that happen every day and give them a calm way to fall asleep. Keep the TV off before going to bed; read or talk with your children instead. Kiss your child good night and remind him that you love him. Then, have some time for yourself to unwind and relax.
- ✿ **Remember to have fun with your child.** Sometimes parents get caught up in the hard work of parenting and forget to do some fun things with children. Make a family routine of fun things – fishing, taking a walk, playing games – so children know what to expect of their free time. Weekends are especially important times for family togetherness.
- ✿ **Traditions for special times are important to children.** Every family has its own foods, activities or ways to observe holidays and special days. It is especially important to observe these rituals when things are more chaotic than usual in your home.
- ✿ **What do you do with your family?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A ritual is a way  
your family does  
something or  
celebrates holidays.**

It might seem like creating routines for your family takes a lot of time and effort, but it will save you time and energy in the long run. Plus, you will enjoy your children more and have fewer problems with them if you have regular ways of showing them you care and that they can depend on you and your family for love and support.

# Helping Your Child “Switch Gears”

When your child is having fun playing, it can be hard for her to “switch gears” and do something else, especially if the something else is something less fun or interesting than playing. Sometimes kids have temper tantrums or angry outbursts when they have to “switch gears.” You can help your child by thinking ahead and planning what you want your child to do before you ask her to do it. Like most problems with children’s behavior, it’s a lot easier to prevent the misbehavior from happening than it is to correct it later on.

Give your child a warning that one activity is about to end and another to begin. Say something like “Five more minutes and then we are leaving the playground.” This works even if your child can’t tell time! Praising your child when she cooperates – “you are doing a good job getting ready for day care today” – can go a long way to getting kids to switch gears. You can also let your child see you getting ready for the next activity so she can copy what you do.

If your child has a balance of active play and quiet time, he is less likely to get overtired and cranky when you want him to come inside, go home from the park or other fun activities. Make sure to watch your child for signs that she has “had enough” of one activity and is ready to do something else.

**“You are doing a good job getting ready for day care today.”**

# The Many Kinds Of Mothers

There are all kinds of mothers in this world.

- ✿ Mothers who nurse a baby and mothers who warm the bottles.
- ✿ Mothers who show up at work stressed because their child was awake all night and mothers who work at home all day.
- ✿ Young mothers who are scared and don’t know how to change the diaper and mothers who are older and are scared because they don’t know their teenager’s whereabouts.
- ✿ Mothers who teach kids to cook and mothers who teach kids to order take out.
- ✿ Worried mothers whose children have gone astray and worried mothers whose children can’t be found.
- ✿ Mothers without partners in parenting and mothers with family around them.
- ✿ The mother in the audience cheering for her kid and the mother in the audience quietly smiling at her child’s performance.
- ✿ Mothers who bake cookies for the preschool class and mothers who volunteer in the school.
- ✿ Mothers who are strong and show it in a million different ways.
- ✿ Mothers who give birth and mothers who adopt.
- ✿ Grandmothers who step up to the plate when parents are struggling.

There are all kinds of mothers in this world. How would you describe what kind of mother you are?

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# Will You Be My Friend?

## How Children Make Friends

Children need friends. Friends are the first contacts your child has with the world outside your family. They help your child create a self-image and fit into the world. Between the ages of five and twelve, making friends is one of the most important things your child will do. At these ages, your child is able to communicate his/her feelings to other children, and has a better concept of time – past, present and future. Children begin to spend more time with friends as they start school and begin to rely on friends, rather than parents, for companionship.

Friends play many roles in your child’s life. They share secrets, they support each other in difficult times, they defend each other and they help your child answer the question “Who am I?”. At first, friends are made mostly by sharing activities – your child is friends with another child on his soccer team, and in the classroom for example. Next, children seek out friends based on shared values and rules and, later, they look for friends who understand them and will discuss important issues with them.

Some children need fewer friends than other children, and prefer to spend more time alone, with just one best friend, or with family members. That’s okay. Others have many friends and spend more time with people outside the family. That’s okay, too! The average school-aged child has five close friends, but this can vary from child to child and even with the same child over time. The only time you should be concerned about your child not having friends is if your child appears depressed or is being rejected by other children.

Peer influence (the way your child’s friends change his behavior) becomes more important as your child nears age 12. Children form their own little groups to exclude other children; often this group has a very strong leader and shares secrets within the group. The group decides how its members dress, what music to listen to and other ways to behave. This is a normal part of middle school years. At first, children almost always have friends of the same sex; later girls and boys spend time together as friends. In the teen years, they pair off together in romantic relationships.

Don’t be too concerned if your child has one “best” friend with whom he or she spends a lot of time. These friendships can last a lifetime and – if the best friend is a positive influence – can help your child find security and approval more easily than in a large group of children.

**Remember – your child’s ability to make and keep friends is an important part of developing self-esteem. This is an important skill that he will need for the rest of his life.**

**Who are your kids’ friends?**

**Use a word to describe them.**

**Friends are the first contacts your child has with the world outside your family.**

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# Mommy And Me

## Free And Easy Ways To Have Fun (And Teach) Your Kids

- \* Have a family slumber party.
  - \* Build a fort under the table where you eat.
  - \* Get out the family photos.
  - \* Play hopscotch.
  - \* Play games – board games, outdoor games, anything you enjoy.
  - \* Clean the house together. (Have a pick-up party.)
  - \* Fly kites.
  - \* Did it snow? Go sledding and make a snowman.
  - \* Set up a lemonade stand on a warm day.
  - \* Shoot hoops together. Play H.O.R.S.E.
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## Who Am I?

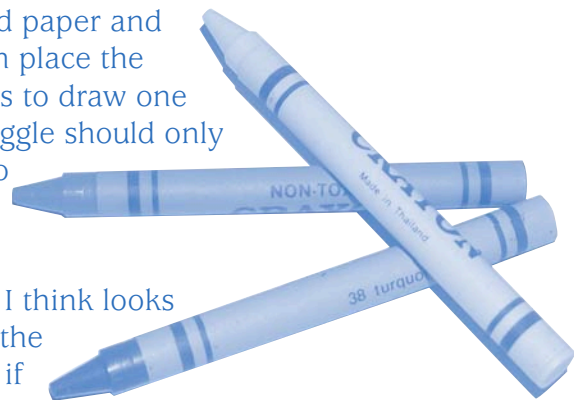
*This is an easy activity that you can do with your children, especially those between 6 and 10 years old.*

Gather old magazines (ask your friends or neighbors to give you any they don't want). Ask your children to cut – or tear – any pictures they like from the magazines. They shouldn't have to think about what they are picking, just look for whatever interests them, whatever they like. You do the same thing. Glue or tape the pictures to a large sheet of paper – one for each child and you. When you have the paper covered, talk about the pictures you and your children chose. Why did your child like the elephant photo? Is pizza your child's favorite food? It doesn't matter how the collage looks; the purpose is to learn more about your children and have a chance to talk about what they like. Don't make fun of anything they chose or criticize the way they cut, glued, etc. Just relax and have fun!

## Family Time: Squiggles

This game has one purpose – to have lots of fun! You only need paper and pencil (or other writing tool) for each person. Have each person place the pencil on the paper and, on the count of three, everyone begins to draw one continuous squiggly line all over the page. Say "stop." The squiggle should only take two or three seconds. Now, everyone pass their squiggle to another family member. Each person looks at his drawing for something familiar and adds details to the drawing.

For example, if the person next to me gives me a squiggle that I think looks like a dragon, I would add eyes, teeth, wings, and claws, using the already formed neck, head, and body of the squiggle. It's okay if other lines don't quite go with the picture. Be creative. When the time is up, have everyone share their picture with the group.



# How To Play With Your Child

(And Have Fun Yourself, Too!)

## Watch Your Child:

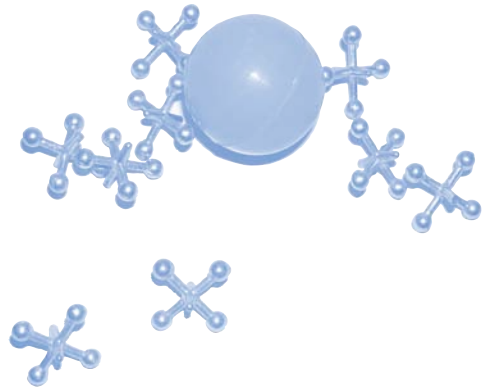
- \* What is your child doing?
- \* Which toys does she choose?
- \* What does she like, and not like, to play?
- \* Let your child know that it is okay to look silly or not know what to do.

## Encourage Your Child:

- \* Take directions from her.
- \* Let her make up the rules.
- \* Copy what your child does.
- \* Change one thing about the play and let your child notice.
- \* Ask how to do something.
- \* Let your child explain the rules to you.

## Teach Your Child:

- \* Give your child ideas about how to play.
- \* Show her how to use toys in different ways or teach her a new skill, like tying her shoes.
- \* Ask your child what she likes about this game.



# When There Is Hurting At Home

Young children, especially those under six years old, start to worry about their safety and about being hurt by violence. They are aware that adults are “fighting” and are beginning to understand danger. Some children this age will try to make the fighting stop by yelling at the adults.

- \* **What you can do:** Teach your child that “hands are not for hitting.” Show your child that hands are used for tickling, making shadow puppets, drawing, etc.

As children develop reasoning skills, they notice the difference between what they saw and what is described to other people afterward. They may worry about how sad and upset you are after the incident is over.

- \* **What you can do:** Reassure your child that you are okay and that you will be able to handle the situation. Don’t rely on your child for emotional support – seek out friends or professional help for that – and don’t express your anger at the person who hurt you in front of your child.

When children get into the school years, they begin to recognize the “unfairness” of violence; they may be confused about why a person would hurt someone whom they love. Some children will be sad or feel lost if the parents separate, and worry about what will happen to the family.

- \* **What you can do:** Give your child opportunities to play and have fun with her friends, and spend some “fun time” with her every day. Chores and homework don’t count as fun! Limit the amount of television your child watches, especially violent movies and programs.

# The Ripples Of My Life

Your goals affect other people. Every action, behavior, and decision that you make changes something else. Identify one of your “pebbles” and explore its effects on other areas of your life. It can be either a positive or negative “pebble.”

Something I've done recently:

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My WORK OR JOB was affected:

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OTHER:

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What it meant to my TIME/ENERGY:

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FAMILY changed because of my actions:

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My HEALTH was changed:

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# How Do You Feel?

Emotions can be hard to understand and can impact our behavior in lots of ways. Look at the faces below and think about a time that you have felt this way. What was happening? How did you behave when you felt this way? Ask your child the same questions and talk about what they say.



AGGRESSIVE



AGONIZED



ANGRY



ANXIOUS



APOLOGETIC



BASHFUL



BORED



CONCENTRATING



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



DETERMINED



DISSAPOINTED



ENRAGED



ENVOUS



EXHAUSTED



FRIGHTENED



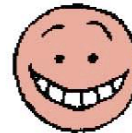
FRUSTRATED



GRIEVING



GUILTY



HAPPY



HURT



HORRIFIED



LONELY



MAD



MISCHIEVOUS



MISERABLE



NEGATIVE



OPTIMISTIC



REGRETFUL



RELIEVED



SAD



SHOCKED



SURPRISED



SUSPICIOUS



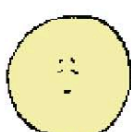
SYMPATHETIC



THOUGHTFUL



UNDECIDED



WITHDRAWN

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