



Develop a Family Plan for Emotional and Physical Safety

Everyone gets angry, fearful, or anxious sometimes. Sometimes, these feelings can be so strong they can be overwhelming.

When a person is under great stress, shocked, or frightened by something or when a person experiences fear, anxiety, anger, or hurt, the primal brain takes over. The brain shifts into survival mode making it hard to think, to problem-solve, and to make good decisions. In this state of mind, adults may say or do things that can injure a child (or worse) and undermine trusting relationships.

Planning ahead can help you keep your child physically and emotionally safe. Here are some parts of a plan to consider:



Know the signs someone is losing control.

Signs can include a tensing of face or body, a change in the sound of one's voice, pacing, or quieting and growing still.



Create a cool-down spot.

"I will go to the cozy red chair in the living room. When I am there I will...(take 10 deep breaths). I will return to my family when...(my body feels calm and I can think about how glad I am I sat in my chair)."



Choose a place(s) to go when you and your children have to get out of the house.

The house of a family member, friend, or neighbor or your place of worship are options.



Be sure contact numbers are easy to access.

Put contact numbers on your phone or on a card in your bag, and include numbers for family members, a neighbor, doctor, police, and ambulance services.

If there are intense and stormy emotions in your home most days, you need to get some outside emotional support. Getting this help is a big step in keeping your child safe and healthy. If you have doubts about finding help for yourself, understand that getting help is in the best interest of your child. Your home visitor will be able to give you the names of places that can support you.



SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your infant, toddler, or two!

When a young child is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. It can even lead to death. His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.