

Childhood trauma Changing minds.™

DEFENDING CHILDHOOD Ad Council FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

ChangingMindsNOW.org

TALKING POINTS

The Issue

A Department of Justice [national survey](#) on children's exposure to violence reports that nearly 60 percent of children surveyed were exposed to violence, crime, or abuse within the past year, either directly (as victims) or indirectly (as witnesses) — many in their own homes.¹ Studies show, children who are repeatedly exposed to these traumatic events and toxic stress are prone to adverse behavioral and physiological outcomes that can disrupt their learning, health, and development.²

The Solution

The young brain, however, is malleable and adults can intervene to help a child's brain heal from the effects of exposure to violence. The presence of a caring, consistent adult is one of the biggest factors in a child's ability to build resilience against toxic stress. Adults can help children heal and build resiliency by helping to strengthen their adaptive skills and perceived control over their life. Through the Changing Minds five everyday gestures, teachers, coaches, parents or any other adults in the community can help to prevent or reverse the effects of childhood exposure to violence, increasing their chances for success.³

Ways To Take Action

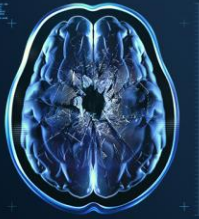
Supportive adults can help a child reverse the impact that trauma has on the brain by practicing everyday gestures to **celebrate, comfort, listen, collaborate, and inspire**. We hope the Changing Minds campaign will motivate teachers, coaches, school counselors, school nurses and other adults who work with children to take meaningful action in supporting those who may be affected by childhood trauma. Lend your support by sharing the Changing Minds [Website](#) and [Toolkit](#) with other professionals working with children who have experienced childhood trauma.

The Target Audience

Adults working directly with children (grades K-8):

- Teachers
- Coaches
- Volunteers
- School Social Workers
- Guidance Counselors
- School Nurses

NOTE: The groups are listed in no particular order and while they represent the primary audience, much of the campaign materials can be applied to those interacting with children of all ages. Parents and other caregivers are encouraged to reference *The Magic of Everyday Gestures: 8 Ways Parents and Caregivers can Support Children Healing From Trauma* brochure.



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About The Public Service Advertising (PSA) Campaign

MESSAGE: The campaign has an empowering message: ***Witnessing violence changes a kid's mind. But your everyday gestures can help them heal.***

GOAL: Our goal is to raise awareness about the impact of childhood exposure to violence and motivate adults who regularly interact with children to take meaningful action in helping them.

OBJECTIVE: The campaign is a direct marketing and digital-first campaign, with materials intended to drive our target audience to **ChangingMindsNOW.org** in order to learn how to help children who've witnessed violence and understand the science behind child traumatic stress.

PARTNERSHIP: Futures Without Violence and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in partnership with the Ad Council released the PSA campaign in October 2016. The direct-marketing materials will be distributed on an ongoing basis by the Ad Council and Futures Without Violence and will reach our target audience directly through partnerships with organizations and associations.

Witnessing Violence Affects Children

- Approximately 2 out of every 3 children in the US are exposed to violence, which can negatively impact their learning and development.⁴
- Brain science has shown that when children witness violence a stress response is activated in their brain. The more children witness violence, the more the brain forms neural connections in regions that involve fear, anxiety and impulsiveness.⁵
- Prolonged activation of a child's stress response system from exposure to traumatic stress can lead to toxic stress. Toxic stress can seep into a child's everyday life and impact their learning and development resulting in behavioral and psychological problems later in life.²

How Can Adults Who Work With Kids Help?

Traumatic events can have a lasting effect on a child's mind, but a caring, supportive adult can help "buffer" children from toxic stress.³ Through these 5 everyday gestures, any adult in a child's life can vastly increase their opportunity for success.

1. Celebrate them
2. Comfort them
3. Listen to them
4. Collaborate with them
5. Inspire them

Available Resources

Changing Minds provides caring adults with the tools to help reduce the impact of toxic stress on children. You can learn more about the issue and healing gestures through the campaign website: ChangingMindsNOW.org.



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Sponsoring Campaign Partners

Futures Without Violence, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Ad Council have teamed up to launch **Changing Minds**, the first national campaign to raise awareness about the impact of childhood exposure to violence. The Changing Minds campaign was developed pro bono by advertising agency Wunderman.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Shattuck, A., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2015). Children's Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: An Update. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- ² Toxic Stress. (n.d.) Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. Retrieved from: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>
- ³ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015). Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience, Working Paper No. 13, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>.
- ⁴ Listenbee, R., Torre, J., Boyle, G., Cooper, S., Deer, S., Durfee, D., Taguba, A. (2012). Report of the Attorney General's national task force on children exposed to violence. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf>.
- ⁵ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005/2014). Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain: Working Paper 3. Updated Edition. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>.