



- **Give unconditional love.** Children need to know that your love does not depend on their accomplishments.
- **Nurture children's confidence and self-esteem.** Encourage them and set realistic goals. Be honest about your mistakes and avoid sarcasm.
- **Encourage play.** Play time is as important to a child's development as food. It helps children be creative, develop problem-solving skills and self-control, and get along with others.
- **Enroll children in an after school activity, especially if they are otherwise home alone after school.**
- **Provide a safe and secure environment.** Fear can be very real for a child. Be loving, patient and reassuring, not critical.
- **Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary.** Be firm, but kind and realistic. The goal is not to control the child, but to help him or her learn self-control.
- **Check in on children after school has ended if they're home alone.** It helps children to know that although you are not there physically, you are thinking about them.
- **Communicate.** Make time each day to listen to your children and find out about their day.
- **Get help.** If you have concerns about your child's mental health, talk with your child's teacher, doctor, or another adult who may have information about their behavior. Seek professional help. Early identification and treatment can help children with mental health problems reach their full potential.

--National Mental Health Association