



## **General Instruction on the Use of Building Protective Factors**

As important as it is for youth to be aware of protective and risk factors in their lives, it is equally important to expand on this awareness by helping the youth to further build the breadth and depth of protective factors in their life. As important as this can be with any youth, it is particularly important with youth that appear to be developing patterns of problem behavior. This tool is designed to support any given youth in targeting protective factors that they wish to expand as well as identifying action steps to take this same end.

Here is a general outline of how to engage the youth in using this tool:

- Target a private time with the youth and orient them to the tool. During this orientation initially emphasize with the youth that they are not compelled to share or document any information that they prefer to not divulge.
- Have the youth read independently, or read aloud with the youth, the examples provided in each of the three columns on the document. After this initial read, take a few minutes to talk about the examples, and provide a few additional examples that are generic in nature. Further, normalize this discussion by emphasizing that protective factors are important to each and every one of us, not just this particular youth. Address questions as they arise and check for understanding periodically throughout this conversation.
- Following this orientation to these examples, proceed to orient the youth the task at hand-- that being to target protective factors that they would like to expand in their life. Again, reiterate that they are not compelled to divulge any particular information that they would prefer not to share throughout this process while concurrently emphasizing that engagement in this process should prove helpful to them moving forward as a result of being able to constructively influence their future. Guide the youth through this reflective process with the understanding that the youth should not feel compelled to divulge or share information that they would not prefer to share or document. Guide the youth to work in a linear manner by 1) targeting the protective factor they desire to further build, 2) talking about how further building this protective factor will be helpful to them, and 3) the actions that need to be taken to further build this protective factor. Related to this third column (actions to be taken), please be aware that the actions required may be limited to the youth themselves, or actions may also be required by others to position the youth to build the targeted protective factor. Encourage, and provide positive reinforcement for their honesty and effort throughout the process across all phases, with emphasis on this more personal self-reflective phase.
- Upon completion of this final page, thank the youth for their engagement, at whatever level they were comfortable engaging in the process.
- The use of this instructional tool can occur in one instructional setting, or be spread out over multiple instructional blocks of time as needed. Once the process is complete provide encourage for effort and positive reinforcement for implementation of the action steps identified that require action on the part of the youth on an ongoing basis.

*Special Note: Please keep in mind your mandated reporter requirements throughout your interactions with the youth as they may divulge information, based on the degree of established trust, that may compel mandated reporting on your part.*