

Welcome the interruption

When the interruption brings about support

In many areas, the Bible stresses the importance of community (Acts 2:42-47, ESV). When we are part of community, we often times feel stronger and safer—especially when the community is healthy. In fact, many times we have seen that communities with a common mission develop a depth which allows for growth and impact. As we enter into week three of welcoming this interruption, we focus in on the Cleveland branch who has taken initiative to create a community of mommas—Mama’s Motivation Mondays.

How it started

This idea was inspired by the concept of the importance of recognizing that each family is unique and has unique strengths. By building on strengths, and encouraging growth, we build families that are strong, resulting in children who are safe and protected by the strength of the family.

Research has identified several specific "protective factors" (Center for Social Policy) that are considered the elements of strong families. These include parental resilience, nurturing, attachment, knowledge of parenting, child development, social connections, social emotional competence, and concrete support in times of need.

It is the goal there at the Cleveland branch to create a way for caregivers to grow in all these areas to strengthen their family community, to then strengthen the community as a whole.

Building off of the already existing

Safe Families Cleveland Director, Alana Dennis, wrote an in-person discussion-based program addressing the protective factors titled “Caringhood” back in summer of 2019. It was a great success.

Plans were underway to have "Caringhood" run again in the summer of 2020, but as the COVID-19 crisis continued to develop, a virtual adaptation of the program was created. It allowed a way to virtually support the community and encourage them. So, for the month of April, every Monday in a virtual format, caregivers join the Cleveland branch to focus on strengthening their families during this time.

The virtual group is directed weekly by several core "motivations" that are in line with the protective factor to discuss for the week. These motivations, or affirmations, are intended to lend to a culture of mutual encouragement between moms, encouraging all moms to find their voice and share their strengths.

The weekly motivations include: **you are strong** (parental resilience/knowledge of parenting and child development), **you are loved and able to give love** (nurturing and attachment), **you can ask for help** (social connections and social emotional competence), and **we are all in this**

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together (concrete support in times of need). By asserting these to be true, we build a community around authenticity and strength, allowing growth and nurturing.

The heart of the group is for moms to have the space to remember that they are doing their very best. The encouragement through these tough and uncertain times has made a world of difference in their families.

Reaching out

Alana Dennis says that so far mothers who have been helped through Safe Families in the past, Safe Families volunteers, and moms they have had the pleasure of meeting, have attend one the past Mondays. Due to the virtual nature of the meeting, it has allowed for the invitation to be extended to the rest of the chapters all over the country. Along with Cleveland, St. Louis has joined, and Colorado has been invited, as well.

The Cleveland chapter is excited to be expanding its reach into three neighboring counties of the Cleveland-metro area. The volunteer base has almost doubled in the past year, and the chapter is working to connect more and more families together by any means available.