



# Prevention Mindset Institute: *Embracing Prevention Across Systems*

## **Creating a Family Support Movement: Lessons from Mental Health**

The PMI 3-2-1 newsletter shares three ideas, two quotes, and one question to ponder. This issue focuses on learning lessons from the mental health movement to create a stronger family support movement. How do we normalize help seeking for all families? Thank you to Theresa Costello, CEO of Action 4 Child Protection, for editing this Spring 2023 issue.

Future issues that focus on topics relevant to shifting to a prevention mindset will be shared periodically. FRIENDS and our PMI partners rotate editing each edition.

The format, 3-2-1, is based on James Clear's newsletter that shares ideas related to developing effective habits, drawing from his book, [Atomic Habits](#).



### **Three Ideas:**

- 1. We have a fundamental problem in prevention because our society at large has characterized "asking for help" as a negative.** In the child welfare arena, we would like to see more families reach out to community resources and supports as they see needs in their families, but many don't because they are afraid to show weakness or need and fear that coming forward might expose them to the threat of referral to the child protective services system.
- 2. Help is not a form of weakness.** We must somehow influence our systems and ourselves to see that asking for help is in fact an empowering act. Everyone goes through stages in life, we have a need for change, it is natural and good. And we often cannot make those changes alone, so it is a good and normal thing to seek help.
- 3. The mental health movement offers us some hope.** Thanks to many efforts at different levels and from different audiences (athletes, celebrities, entertainers) ending the stigma of talking about and seeking help for mental health is happening. There are efforts to build technology to make it easier to seek help. Mental health wellness is being framed as everyone's business. There are many parallels to families in need of supports and resources to prevent child abuse and individuals in need of mental health resources. The stigma is similar, the need to raise awareness and emphasize the importance of seeking help is similar.

Just as we have begun to prioritize prevention of mental health disorders by promoting healthy habits such as exercise, sleep, and healthy eating; reducing exposure to toxic stressors; and fostering supportive relationships, we can prioritize child abuse prevention by promoting home visiting programs, diversion programs for at-risk families; and parent support groups, to name just a few.

Just as we are seeing an expansion in access to mental health care and we are seeing increasing efforts to reduce barriers such as cost, transportation, and limited availability of services, we can invest in the expansion of resources and services to provide basic supports to families to meet basic needs; to increase access to health care and adequate housing as a couple of examples.

And finally, just as the mental health community is addressing systemic issues because mental health disorders are often linked to broader societal issues such as poverty, racism, and discrimination; this is equally true in family support/child abuse prevention. Addressing these issues through policy and advocacy can help to create a more equitable society and reduce the stresses on families, which helps to build strong families.



## Quotes:

*"Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but stigma and bias shame us all."*

~Bill Clinton

*"Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children."*

~Sitting Bull



## One Question:

**How do we create a family support movement that shifts the narrative from "shame" to everyone needs help now and then; from reporting families as neglecting to supporting families who are lacking basic needs; and from stigmatizing families to advocating for families?**