

We Love Each Other

GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

Strong early bonds with caregivers build healthy brains. Nurturing and attachment with caring adults in early life is associated with better grades, healthier behaviors, stronger friendships, and an increased ability to cope with stress later in life.

Nurturing is important at all ages. Parents nurture their children as they grow by making time to listen to them, being involved and interested in their child's school and other activities, staying aware of their interests and friends, and being willing to advocate for their children and youth when necessary.

Trauma and stress can interfere with parents' ability to nurture their children. Daily or acute stressors, such as financial stress, family or community violence, past traumas, or caring for a child with special needs, can make taking time to focus on nurturing more challenging for some parents. They may need extra reassurance that showing their children love and affection makes a difference.

It is important to explore and acknowledge differences in how families show affection.

Key Points to Cover With Families

Showing love for your children matters a lot!

- **Ask:** *What gets in the way of nurturing?*
- Prompt for acute and/or daily stressors and challenging child behaviors. Talk about how children's ability to show affection can also affect parenting.
- **Ask:** *Did you know that the love you show for your children actually grows their brains and makes them smarter? Little things every day add up.*

Families show affection in different ways. A variety of factors—including how our own parents showed affection to us or didn't—can affect how we nurture our children.

- **Set the tone:** *I'm interested in learning how love and affection are expressed in your family.*
- Go through the list and ask parents to circle or check the ways they like to show affection to their children.
- Encourage parents to add other ways that aren't on the list.

Some days are easier than others.

- **Ask:** *What gets in the way of nurturing?* (Prompt for acute and/or daily stressors and challenging child behaviors.)
- **Ask:** *What do you do to care for yourself so that these things don't get in the way of showing the love you feel for your child?*

Children need nurturing every day.

- Encourage parents to write one thing on the calendar they could do each day to show their children how much they are loved.

More resources on [nurturing and attachment](#) can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

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CONVERSATION GUIDE

How I show my children love:

- Listen to their stories
- Say "I love you"
- Sing songs to them
- Snuggle, hug, or connect in other ways
- Make a meal or snack together
- Take walks or play outside together
- Do arts and crafts
- Play a game
- Talk about feelings
- Laugh about something silly
- Get to know their friends
- Ask them about their day
- Praise them and/or celebrate good news together
- Tell them what life was like when I was a kid
- Attend school or cultural events together
- Thank them for helping out
- Read together
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How I will show my children love this week:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday