

How to Develop Strong Child-Parent Relationships

Just like with any relationship, building a positive relationship between parent and child is one that requires work and effort to make it strong and successful. Parenting is a tough job; maintaining close relationships and open communications helps to ensure parents and their children stay connected through all ages of their upbringing.

Here are 10 simple tips for enhancing the bond between parent and child.

1. Show That You Care

Tell your child you love them every day -- no matter their age. Even on trying days or after a parent-child disagreement, when you don't exactly "like your child" at that moment, it is more important than ever to express your love. A simple "I love you" goes a long way toward developing and then strengthening a relationship.

2. Teach Your Faith

Teach your child about your faith and beliefs. Tell them what you believe and why. Allow time for your child to ask questions and answer them honestly. Reinforce those teachings often by being a role model for them.

3. Establish A Special Name Or Code Word

Create a special name for your child that is positive and special or a secret code word that you can use between each other. Use the name as a simple reinforcement

of your love. The code word can be established to have special meaning between your child and you that only you two understand. Their code word can even be used to extract a child from an uncomfortable situation (such as a sleepover that is not going well) without causing undue embarrassment to the child.

4. Develop And Maintain A Special Bedtime Ritual

For younger children, reading a favorite bedtime book or telling stories is a ritual that will be remembered most likely throughout their life. Older children should not be neglected either. Once children start reading, have them read a page, chapter, or short book to you. Even most teenagers still enjoy the ritual of being told goodnight in a special way by a parent -- even if they don't act like it!

5. Let Your Children Help You

Parents sometimes inadvertently miss out on opportunities to forge closer relationships by not allowing their child to help them with various tasks and chores. Unloading groceries after going to the store is a good example of something that children of most ages can and should assist with. Choosing which shoes look better with your dress lets a child know you value their opinion. Of course, if you ask, be prepared to accept and live with the choice made!

6. Play With Your Children

The key is to really play with your children. Play with dolls, ball, make believe, checkers, sing songs, or whatever is fun and interesting. It doesn't matter what you play, just enjoy each other! Let kids see your silly side. Older kids enjoy cards, chess, computer games, while younger ones will have fun playing about anything...as long as it involves you!

7. Eat Meals As A Family

“Frequent family meals are associated with a lower risk of smoking, drinking and using marijuana; with a lower incidence of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts; and with better grades in 11 to 18 year olds”.(Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 2004.) By spending more quality time with your kids over dinner, you will quickly be alerted to any changes in your child, but you also develop a better relationship with your kids. Wouldn't you want your child to come to you with their problems instead of turning to drinking, drugs, or considering taking their life?

8. Seek Out 1-On-1 Opportunities

Some parents have special nights or “standing dates” with their children to create that one-on-one opportunity. Whether it is a walk around the neighborhood, a special trip to a playground, or just a movie night with just the two of you, it is important to celebrate each child individually. Great ideas also include getting out into nature or volunteering. These can become valuable moments to help your child also develop an appreciation for the planet and humanity. Although it is more of a challenge the more children in a family, it is really achievable! Think creatively and the opportunities created will be ones that you remember in the future.

9. Respect Their Choices

You don't have to like their mismatched shirt and shorts or love how a child has placed pictures in their room. However, it is important to respect those choices. Children reach out for independence at a young age, and parents can help to foster those decision-making skills by being supportive and even looking the other way on occasion. After all, it really is okay if a child goes to daycare with a striped green shirt and pink shorts.

10. Make Them A Priority In Your Life

Your children need to know that you believe they are a priority in your life. Children can observe excessive stress and notice when they feel you are not paying them attention. Sometimes, part of being a parent is not worrying about the small stuff and enjoying your children. They grow up so fast, and every day is special. Take advantage of your precious time together while you have it!

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