

A Parent's Guide to Showing Affection to Your Toddler

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One of the most important gifts that you can give to your child is a healthy sense of self-esteem. This significant inner security comes with feelings of being unconditionally loved, safe, and complete.

Your child, very likely, has the ability to develop healthy self-esteem if the environmental conditions are supportive. Your contribution in creating these conditions is connected to your ability to show affection to your child.

Being able to connect and forge a bond with your child isn't relevant only in infancy. Toddlers need such connection too. They can't thrive without it. Good parent-child relationships don't just happen, they are consciously made and maintained.

Here are some qualities that characterize a positive connection between a parent and a child:

- Sense of safety
- Unconditional acceptance
- Unconditional love
- Ability to adapt
- Kindness
- Compassion
- Empathy

There's no single solution to how to get this relationship right, yet there are a few powerful activities you can share with them that will communicate affection.

If you take your time to offer your child a space of safety and love, your relationship will keep improving and getting stronger.

Consider these ideas:

1. Create tiny rituals. To create an environment of trust and respect, you can develop simple daily rituals and engage in them with your child.

- Rituals are best mastered if they're connected to an existing habit. For example: going to the park after lunch, morning hug after waking up, hug and run before playschool, or daddy/mommy dance when one of the parents returns from work. The options are unlimited.
- These tiny traditions shouldn't be complex and definitely should not cost you much.
- **Simple and easy experiences that don't require a lot of planning usually make the best and most sustainable rituals.**

2. Give lots of cuddles and hugs. Notice what your child is doing throughout the day and occasionally encourage or reward their actions with warm, loving hugs.

- By cuddling and hugging them after a certain behavior, you support the formation of the neurological pathways that will reinforce this behavior.
- On the other hand, when your child is upset or shows intense fear, frustration, anger, or another negative emotion, this highly charged emotional expression might stress you out. The most common automatic

response is to control and suppress your child's current sentiments.

- However, instead of following your initial instinct and causing additional emotional pain to your already-suffering toddler, it's much better to take a moment or two to calm down, accept your child's state, and offer a hug.
- **Being able to provide comfort to your child in such an uncomfortable time is the best way to show affection and care.**

3. Inspire curiosity. Besides being crucial for learning and intellectual development, curiosity plays an important role in creating close social connections.

- **Stimulating your child's curiosity also leads to more imagination, playfulness, creativity, and sets them up for a more satisfying future.**
- The best way to inspire this sacred sense of wonder in your child is to be curious yourself. Be a role-model and show your interest in various activities, ideas, and cultures.
- Additionally, if your child has started to talk, you can ask questions, question answers, practice and encourage active listening, pay attention to details, and more.
- Spending time cultivating curiosity with your child shows that you care.

4. Carefully set limits. One aspect of parenting that is most in need of affection is the process of teaching discipline. Defining boundaries, setting limits, introducing responsibilities - all of these can be taught and introduced in a

dignified, loving manner.

- What kids look for when they learn about discipline from you as their parent is your own level of ability for responsibility. Children seek to see if you're "walking the walk."
- **Having your toddler's respect matters more than your strict assertion of the rules.** If your little one feels that you're dependable, reliable, consistent, and disciplined yourself, then you can be clear but gentle when you set limits, and your word will be obeyed.

Early childhood is a precious, luxurious period for you and your child. The more you cherish the moments of affection with your toddler, the stronger the bond between you becomes. All your child needs is your love.