

# Building Conscious Connections with Children

Relationships are the foundation in which love, trust and connection are formed. Babies are born with the internal drive to relate and connect with others, and children need to continuously develop these skills to form strong and healthy relationships throughout their lives.

While connecting and bonding with your child may feel second nature, it may prove to be challenging because of our busy lives. This can have an impact on our desire and willingness to spend time connecting with children - especially since this isn't something that is widely talked about. By building intentional connections with children, parents are able to focus on specific attachment activities to create a conscious connection with their child.

## Things to think about:

In general, children respond better to positive messages. Focusing on your child's strengths can help build a strong connection with them while also reducing unwanted or challenging behaviors. Using phrases that acknowledge what they are doing can help them to feel noticed by a parent. For example: "You put your plate in the sink, you should feel so proud!" Highlighting a child's strengths out loud, can also help build confidence and self-esteem...it's a win-win!

## There are four critical elements to connection

### 1. Eye contact

Getting down on your child's level helps to connect to the fullest extent. Engaging in any activity while making eye contact goes beyond just paying attention to them and connects you in a physical way.

- Let your child do your makeup or pretend to with soft brushes
- Sing a song together
- Play patty-cake

### 2. Touch

Kind touch creates a hormone that is essential to neural functioning and learning. Some examples of connection with touch include:

- Massaging your child's hands with lotion or massaging while singing a song together
- Brushing or doing your child's hair

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*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

- Piggy back rides
- Guiding their fingers to paint
- Pushing them on a swing

### 3. Mindful presence

When a parent's mind and body are in the same place, they are able to focus on their child and the beauty that comes with the interaction. While many people have busy lives and schedules, leaning into this mindful time with your child can reap many positive benefits to your relationship with them and in turn, their relationship with others.

Points to keep in mind:

- Child led play: Let them choose what you will play together to foster their creativity so you can glimpse into their imaginative world.
- Having phones and screens on can be distracting and might have a negative impact on the play.
- Leaning into the senses can help you become more mindful - what do you see? What do you smell or hear?

### 4. Playfulness

Being playful with your child helps to increase their attention span and boosts social development. While rules and structure are important, try to reduce this during play as it can minimize opportunities for creativity. Giving children choices for play can help them feel more in control, which is a great opportunity to optimize the individuality of a child.

Some examples include:

- Child led play
- Swinging next to them on a swing
- Going down the slide with them
- Laughing at a joke together
- Cooking or baking
- Dancing
- Having a water fight outside
- Playing a game: Keep in mind that play should not be a competition and should be enjoyable for all parties

**If you follow your child's lead, they will guide the way.**

**For parenting tips and resources, check out Nationwide Children's Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) at [NationwideChildrens.org/TripleP](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/TripleP).**

