

Maintaining a Loving Relationship with Your Child

Tip -- The better your overall relationship with your child, the more influence you will have in his or her life and the easier it will be to teach new skills.

Maintaining a positive relationship with your child is more than just feeling love -- it's about expressing that love in various ways beneficial to the child. "Never take it for granted that your child knows how much you love him," advises Jan Faull, author of *Mommy! I Have to Go Potty!* (2nd ed.), "You must demonstrate that love with words and actions every day."



When your relationship with your child is healthy and thriving, he will accept your influence more readily and will respond more positively to new tasks and demands, such as going to preschool, potty training, or learning to ride a bike. If you're heading into challenging times, like a divorce or a move, then a loving relationship will go a long way toward helping your child sail those turbulent waters.

Tools -- Jan Faull offers the following suggestions for establishing and maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship.

Tell your child you love her. It's simple to do, but many of us forget. Say, "I love you," or "I'm glad you're my son/daughter." Do it routinely in certain parts of the day, at bedtime, when he sits on the potty chair, or when she does her homework.

Communicate love through gentle touch. Hold your child on your lap as you read to him. Cuddle her when she's sad. Rub his back. Stroke her hair. Touch communicates love without a word.

Let your child overhear you express pride in her achievements and activities to others. Say, "Jonathan got a 98 on his spelling test this week. We were so proud of him." If someone else compliments your child, repeat it to him.

Participate in your children's interests or hobbies. Go to their dance recitals, spelling bees, and sports games. If he's passionate about dinosaurs, take him to the local museum and look at fossils together. If she adores soccer, take her to see the local professional team play. When you support your children's interests, you're telling them they are important to you.



Respond when your child initiates a conversation. If your 8-year-old comes to you and says, "My friend Mary is moving", don't respond by continuing to read your newspaper and grunting, "Uh huh." Make eye contact and ask questions that will elicit further communication. You could say, "When is she moving?" and "I'll bet you'll miss her." Your reply ought to communicate, "I heard what you said, I'm interested, and I want to know more."

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *Mommy! I Have to Go Potty!* (2nd ed.) by Jan Faull, M. Ed. and Helen F. Neville, B.S., R.N.