



## Everyday Practices to Make Your Child Feel Loved

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Your children need your love, time, and undivided attention. As a parent, you're likely to be the most significant influence in their lives — it's up to you to help them to feel secure and build their confidence.

Habits and rituals that become a regular part of your family life will have the most impact. Even on your busiest days, you can show your child that you care during your ordinary, everyday activities.

Consider the following ideas to integrate into your regular routines to make your child feel loved and valued:

1. **Be attentive.** Actively listen when your child wants to talk to you. Show that you're listening by stopping what you're doing and maintaining eye contact. Share their enthusiasm about what they're discussing, even if the subject is about insects, or a movie you've both watched a hundred times. If you're not able to put down what you're doing, let your child know and be sure to follow up on the conversation later in the day when you can provide undivided attention.

2. **Show affection.** Give your child hugs and kisses on the cheek on a regular basis. Physical contact will help you bond with your children. According to Child Trends, a non-profit research organization, studies show that higher self-esteem, better parent-child communication, and



fewer psychological and behavior problems have been linked to warmth and affection between a parent and their child.

3. **Provide genuine praise.** When it comes to praising your child, quality is more important than quantity. Let your child know that you're proud of him or her for making an effort, regardless of the outcome. The key is not to praise your child for everything they do, but to recognize when they do something out of the ordinary, or when they are working hard towards achieving a goal.

4. **Ask for help.** Enlist your child's help with chores and give him or her a chance to teach you how to do things, too. Ask them to set the dinner table, take out the trash, or walk the dog. Tell your child that you appreciate the part they play in keeping your house running smoothly. Thank him or her for explaining a new slang word or showing you how to use popular apps they may be using, such as Snapchat.

5. **Go for a drive.** Make your errands more meaningful by inviting your child to join you. While it may take you a little longer to complete your to-do list, the one-on-one time and conversations along the way are well worth it.

6. **Create bedtime rituals.** The time spent preparing for sleep is an ideal opportunity to unwind and connect. Snuggle together and share your favorite books. Create stories based on your real-life experiences. Take turns sharing something specific that happened that day for which you are thankful.

7. **Enjoy family meals.** Research indicates that there are physical, mental, and emotional benefits of having regular family meals. Having dinner together is another chance to spend some uninterrupted, quality time as a family. Make it a rule that mealtimes are device-free so there are no distractions. Kids feel important and valued when their parents show sincere interest in their child's day, ask questions, and share as appropriate about their own day.

**Fun Activities to Make Your Child Feel Special:** Thoughtful surprises and occasional treats also help a child to feel important.

There are many ways to brighten up your child's day without having to spend a lot of money.

Try these ideas:

1. **Send "snail mail."** Receiving physical mail from someone is so rare these days that anything you send may feel special. Write a letter to your child and mail it for their birthday or send a "Just Because" card to show you care — this is something they'll never forget.

2. **Plan outings.** Short trips can give you more quality time together as a family and help your child to continue learning outside of the classroom. Visit a museum in your neighborhood, and discuss what you experienced. Go to your town library. Encourage your child to pick out a few books that you can read together later that evening.

3. **Celebrate holidays.** Establish family traditions for Thanksgiving and Christmas and any other holidays that are meaningful to you. Even simple practices such as baking a favorite dessert together can create lasting memories.



Making your children feel loved and valued will help them to grow up to be happy and responsible adults. Treasure your time together and create memories that you'll both enjoy for years to come.

Visit [childtrends.org](http://childtrends.org) for more information about research on parental warmth and affection.

For more information on how to join the device-free dinner movement for happier and healthier kids, visit [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org).

Visit [thefamilydinnerproject.org](http://thefamilydinnerproject.org) to learn the many science-based benefits of having family dinners.

### **About The Author**

Monica Foley, M.Ed. With twenty years of career expertise working with children and families in the fields of school counseling, parent support coaching and most recently, non-profit based counseling and case management, Monica Foley offers a mandate to improve the lives of children and families around the world. She truly enjoys learning about others and easily establishes rapport while building relationships based on trust, respect, and integrity. Monica earned a M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of New Hampshire and a BA in Psychology from the University of Vermont.