



14 Ways to Show Your Child Love: Valentine's Day & Every Day

1. Have Heart-to-Heart Conversations



Ask your child "How was your day?" and actively listen to the answer. Be available when your child wants to talk, even if it's not the best time for you. If they tell you about a challenge they are facing, let them finish the story before helping them solve the problem. More than a year after the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) joined with other organizations to declare a national emergency (<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/interim-guidance-on-supporting-the-emotional-and-behavioral-health-needs-of-children-adolescents-and-families-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>) in youth mental health, many kids are still struggling. If you see signs of anxiety or depression (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Signs-your-Teen-May-Need-More-Support.aspx>) talk with your pediatrician. For more information, see [How to Talk About Mental Health With Your Child and Their Pediatrician \(/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/How-to-Talk-with-Your-Child-and-Their-Pediatrician-About-Mental-Health-Concerns.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/How-to-Talk-with-Your-Child-and-Their-Pediatrician-About-Mental-Health-Concerns.aspx).

2. Hold Time Together Dear

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Mark game nights or other family activities on your calendar so that everyone can look forward to enjoying time together. With cold winter weather (</English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx>) and the ongoing spread of respiratory viruses (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/How-is-the-Flu-Different-From-COVID-19.aspx>), take the opportunity to spend more time at home playing (</English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/Indoor-Play-Ideas-winter.aspx>) and connecting as a family. Also be sure to carve out one-on-one time with each of your children regularly to do something they enjoy. Put away cell phones, tablets and other media (</English/media/Pages/default.aspx>) devices during these special times and really focus on each other.

3. Share the Love of Reading



Start reading (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/10-Tips-to-Help-Your-Child-Fall-in-Love-with-Reading.aspx>) to your child beginning in infancy. Many studies show that reading together strengthens parent-child bonds and promotes positive parenting. Plus, when you read to or with your child, you help them build a foundation for success in school (</English/news/Pages/Pediatricians-rescribe-Plan-to-Boost-School-Attendance.aspx>), which is linked to long-term wellness.

4. Think Hugs First

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When your child is angry (</English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Staying-Cool-When-Things-Heat-Up.aspx>), grouchy or in a bad mood, try not to take it personally. Calm your own emotions first, perhaps by taking a deep breath, and then give a quick hug, cuddle, pat, secret nod or other sign of affection. Once they are also calm and feeling better, consider talking with them about the event and how they might better manage those strong emotions next time.

5. Embrace Health & Safety



Show how much you care by taking your children to the doctor regularly for well-child care visits (</English/family-life/health-management/pages/Well-Child-Care-A-Check-Up-for-Success.aspx>). Make sure they are up-to-date on vaccines to protect them against infectious diseases, including COVID-19 (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/when-can-children-get-the-COVID-19-vaccine.aspx>), flu (</English/health-issues/conditions/flu/Pages/which-flu-vaccine-should-my-child-get-this-year.aspx>), and other recommended immunizations (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Recommended-Immunization-Schedules.aspx>). Teach them how to be

safe from injuries, provide a healthy and nutritious diet, and encourage good amounts of sleep (</English/healthy-living/sleep/Pages/default.aspx>) and exercise (</English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Energy-Out-Daily-Physical-Activity-Recommendations.aspx>) to help them grow healthy and strong. Create a safe home (</english/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/default.aspx>) environment, and use seat belts or car seats (</English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>) every time you are in a vehicle. [Back to Top](#)

6. Discipline With Love



Use positive, non-violent discipline (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx>). Harsh physical and verbal punishments don't work and can damage long-term physical and mental health. From an early age, explain clear and consistent rules that your children can understand. Give praise when they follow them—not just punishment when they don't. Calmly (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx>) explain consequences and follow through right away when rules are broken.

7. Choose Words with Care



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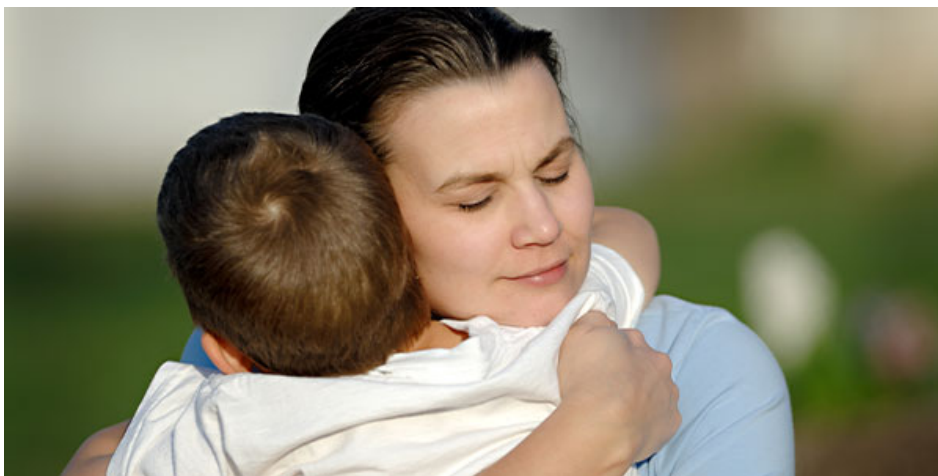
Use plenty of positive and encouraging words when talking with your child. Model consideration and gratitude by saying "please" and "thank you." Skip the sarcasm, mockery and put-downs, even if teasing. Children often don't understand your purpose. Even if they do, these messages can harm self-esteem ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Helping-Your-Child-Develop-A-Healthy-Sense-of-Self-Esteem.aspx](#)) and create negative ways of talking and connecting with each other.

8. Care for the Earth



Spend time together in nature when you can, exploring ways to appreciate and protect it. Taking steps to care for the environment will show your children how you care about their future. Many children and teens hear about or experience climate-change-fueled disasters such as wildfires ([/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Wildfires-Information-for-Parents.aspx](#)) and severe storms ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/climate-change-extreme-weather-and-children-what-families-need-to-know.aspx](#)). Talk with them about their concerns in a way that is honest, hopeful, developmentally appropriate, and solution oriented. For tips, see [Talking With Children About Climate Change](#) ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Talking-with-Children-about-Climate-Change.aspx](#)).

9. Forgive Mistakes, Including Your Own

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If you lose your cool and react harshly to your child, apologize and explain how you will handle the situation in the future. Be sure to keep your promise. Also forgive yourself. No one is perfect. Understanding how to forgive is important for your child to accept their own mistakes (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/A-Perfect-Parent.aspx>) as well, and build confidence (</English/family-life/Community/Pages/Contribution-Building-Competence-Confidence-Connection-Character.aspx>) and resilience (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Uncertain-Times.aspx>).

10. Cook & Eat Together



One of the best ways to teach your children about good food choices (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx>) and enjoy each other's company is to cook together. Involve them in the entire process, from planning the menus to shopping for ingredients to preparing and serving the meal. Family meals are a great opportunity to talk and connect. Put away any electronic devices, including your own phone.

11. Foster Friendships

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Help your child develop positive relationships with friends ([/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/what-parents-can-do-to-support-friendships.aspx](#)), siblings and members of the community ([/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Creating-Opportunities-for-Children-Teens-to-Contribute.aspx](#)). Teach them about the value of kindness ([/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Kindness-Can-Make-a-Big-Difference.aspx](#)). Encourage your child to be involved in activities that require teamwork, such as sports ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Youth-Sports-and-COVID-19-Understanding-the-Risks.aspx](#)). Get to know your child's friends and talk about responsible and respectful relationships ([/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Your-Childs-First-Crush.aspx](#)).

12. Make Room in Your Heart for a Pet

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Consider adopting a pet (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Before-Choosing-a-Pet.aspx>) if possible. Having a pet can help make some children, especially those with chronic illnesses (</English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Coping-With-Chronic-Illness.aspx>) and disabilities, feel better by increasing their physical activity, enhancing their overall positive feelings, and offering another way to connect with someone they care about.

13. Tell Your Child You Love Them No Matter Who They Love



Tell your teen they can talk with you about any crushes (</English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Your-Childs-First-Crush.aspx>) they may have. This is a good opportunity to talk about dating, relationships, gender identity (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/gender-diverse->

transgender-children.aspx) and sexual activity. We can make sure our children understand how to respect their bodies and others, that "no means no." [Back to Top](#)

14. Share These 3 Words Without Limit



Remember, all children want their parent's attention, no matter their age. Make time every day to talk. Young people are more likely to make healthy choices if they stay connected with family members. And don't forget to say "I love you" to your children on February 14—and many more times as they grow up. They are never too old to hear it.

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.