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# Creating Connections with Your Children

*Parent ConnexT® is under the Beech Acres Parenting Center umbrella of programs. Serving children and all the adults in their lives for over 170 years.*



# This month we will be talking about Creating Connections with your Child.....

- Save this deck somewhere that you can easily refer to it as your child grows.
- Take a moment to reflect on your relationship you had with your parents growing up. What is your relationship like now?
- Do you feel like you have a connection with your child(ren) now? What do you think your child would say?

The relationship you have  
with your child shapes the  
structure and function of  
their brain.

Dr. Dan Siegel





# The Fundamentals

## QUALITY TIME

Spend uninterrupted (no distractions), unstructured time with your child. **It can be as little as 5-10 minutes a day, however, consistency is key.**

With **young children**, this time may be spent in child-led play.

With **older children**, it might be talking or doing an activity together.

Make sure this time is **1:1 (one adult with the child)** and the child chooses the activity if possible.

## RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS

Express empathy for their emotions. If they tell you something upsets them, believe them. It doesn't mean you will fix the situation, but it does mean you will hold space for them.



## SHOW INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIVITIES

Engage with them in what they are doing and/or ask them about their school day, practice, hobby.

## DEMONSTRATE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE / POSITIVE REGARD

Pay attention when they enter the room. Smile at them. Make eye contact. Tell them you love them. Tell them the things you appreciate about them. Treat them with respect.









# Toddlers and Preschool

This stage may seem harder to find ways to connect as your child's interests may not match yours. However, focus on seeing the world through your child's eyes at this stage. Remember how new everything seems. Focus on their strength of curiosity and exploration.

- Continue with the infant recommendations of talking, reading, positive touch and singing with your child.
- Go on a rainbow nature scavenger hunt (find something of each color).
- Play with your child with their toys. **Let the child lead and the play.**
- Play board games like chutes and ladders and candy land.
- Include them in household chores. **Cooking/baking and cleaning can be fun if done together.**
- Create an indoor obstacle course (this is really great when you are stuck inside with bad weather.)
- Play Hide and Seek, Red Light/Green Light, or Simon Says. **These games teach life skills while also having fun.**
- Create a time as a family to **spend time together** as a ritual.
  - Meals are a great way to do this, but it can also be a before bedtime connection time.
  - Ask about their day.
  - Have each person share what you are grateful for.







# Create a Fun & Play List as a Family

- Sit down together as a family and ask each family member what fun means to them and what play means to them.
- Write down what each person says and then find areas where you overlap with each child and as a family.
  - One family found out they all liked hiking, so they made that a family activity.
  - They were able to see where each parent aligned with each child and how to incorporate fun and play with each child separately.

	Mom	Lily	Dad	Jack
	Board games	Soccer	Cooking	Board games
	Crafts	*Hiking	Soccer	Basketball
	Basketball	Bikes	Baseball	*Hiking
	*Hiking	Crafts	Hiking	Cooking
	Bikes	Legos	Legos	Legos
	Friends	Dance	Video games	Video games
	Reading	Cooking	Golf	Baseball
		Friends	Watching	Friends
		Reading	football	Watching football



# School Age Children



## Take time each day to play with your child.

- Let them pick and lead the activity.
- Take a day off when your child has a school holiday and plan a special outing – to a museum, the library, or a picnic at a park.

## Participate in their interests.

- If they play soccer, kick the ball in the backyard with them.
- Stay for their practices and games.
- Let them show you the tower they built.
- Ask about the book they are reading or you are reading together.

## Engage with your child when you pick them up from school or arrive home.

- Take a few minutes to give them your undivided attention and talk about your days if they are ready.
- Some children need **downtime before sharing**, so when they get home from school say, “I’m so happy to see you,” then let them lead as to when they are ready to share about their day.





# Pre-Teens / Teens

**Quality Time at this age can be challenging at times as this age group can be very busy with school and other activities.**

- Quality time may mean having breakfast or dinner together. It could be time on a car ride somewhere to talk about whatever is on their mind.
- The important thing is to let them guide the conversation.
- Try to carve out larger chunks of quality time where you can – maybe a night once a month where you do something special together like make a meal, go on a hike, watch a movie and talk about it after.
- Even though this age group naturally gravitates toward their peers, it is still important to build or maintain a strong connection.







# Pre-Teens / Teens, cont.

## Show interest in their activities by going to their games or shows.

- Ask questions about the clubs or activities they participate in.
- Try their interest with them or have them show you how something works (i.e. if they are into computers, show you how a game or program works, if they like horseback riding, take a lesson with them.)
- Visit where they work.

## Demonstrate unconditional love / positive regard.

- Emphasize listening over lecturing, and connection over criticism.
- It is easy to point out the things children are doing that we don't like and take for granted the things that we do.
- Show appreciation for the positive things your child does.
- Kids this age can be bristly, but they still need hugs and affection.







# Pre-Teens / Teens, cont.



## **Respect your child's feelings.**

- This doesn't mean giving in if they are upset you said they couldn't go to an unchaperoned party. It means acknowledging that they are upset and being willing to sit in those negative feelings with them.

## **Pre-teens and teens often like to know that their parents are nearby, even if they aren't engaging with them.**

- Enjoy sharing space with your child, even if you aren't actively doing something together or talking (i.e., answer emails next to them while they do their homework. Watch a tv show together.)

## **Pre-teens and teens sometimes have an easier time communicating when engaged in a side – to –side activity.**

- For example, working on a puzzle, riding in the car, walking the dog.

**A quick text to your teen** can let them know you are thinking about them without being overly intrusive.





# For You as the Parent or Caregiver

- **Self care** is still important for you to fully be able to be present with your child.
- **Take time for activities** you enjoy outside of your family. This helps sustain your identity outside of being a parent/caregiver.
- **Take time to connect** to your partner if you have one, as taking care of this relationship is also important for the entire family.
- **Modeling** that you are taking time for yourself to recharge is important.





What strengths does your child have? How can you celebrate those strengths to promote their self esteem?

Take the complete survey at

<https://www.viacharacter.org/>

*\*You may notice a few character strengths have different names as we made it more kid-friendly...  
Social Intelligence = Friendship*



**Appreciation of Beauty**  
I value and respect the unique qualities in everything I see around me.



**Bravery**  
I take on challenges and speak up for what is right.



**Creativity**  
I can think of lots of ways to solve problems and use my imagination.



**Curiosity**  
I explore the world around me with an open mind and ask questions often.



**Fairness**  
I believe everyone should have the same opportunities.



**Forgiveness**  
I believe that everyone deserves a second chance. I can let things go.



**Friendship**  
I get along well with others and my friends can count on me.



**Gratitude**  
I appreciate the good things that happen to me.



**Honesty**  
I am open and truthful.



**Hope**  
I feel positive when I think about the future.



**Humility**  
I let my accomplishments speak for themselves.



**Humor**  
I like bringing a smile to others.



**Kindness**  
I am helpful and nice to others.



**Leadership**  
People value my opinion and look to me for direction.



**Love**  
I value my close relationships with others.



**Love of Learning**  
I get excited about discovering new things.



**Perseverance**  
I work hard to achieve my goals and don't give up.



**Perspective**  
I can see other people's points of view and offer good advice.



**Judgment**  
I am open-minded and think through my decisions.



**Prudence**  
I carefully and thoughtfully approach situations I encounter.



**Self-Control**  
I can stop, wait and manage my emotions.



**Sense of Meaning**  
I am discovering my purpose and place in the world.



**Teamwork**  
I like being part of a team and doing my share.



**Zest**  
I approach daily life with energy and excitement.



# Strength Spotting

Spotting strengths is a great way to increase your connection with your child(ren).

## STRENGTH SPOTTING CERTIFICATE

**YOU USED:**

<input type="checkbox"/> KINDNESS	<input type="checkbox"/> HOPE	<input type="checkbox"/> JUDGMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> ZEST	<input type="checkbox"/> FORGIVENESS
<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE (FRIENDSHIP)	<input type="checkbox"/> PERSEVERANCE	<input type="checkbox"/> APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> HUMOR	<input type="checkbox"/> PRUDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> GRATITUDE	<input type="checkbox"/> CREATIVITY	<input type="checkbox"/> CREATIVITY	<input type="checkbox"/> BRAVERY	<input type="checkbox"/> LEADERSHIP
<input type="checkbox"/> LOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> CURIOSITY	<input type="checkbox"/> CURIOSITY	<input type="checkbox"/> SELF-REGULATION	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIRNESS
	<input type="checkbox"/> LOVE OF LEARNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LOVE OF LEARNING	<input type="checkbox"/> SPIRITUALITY (SENSE OF MEANING)	<input type="checkbox"/> PERSPECTIVE

**IN THIS SPOT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AND THIS HAPPENED:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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# How are we doing?



[Link](#)

Your voice matters. Please scan the QR code for a quick survey.

Help us do better!



Our vision is a world where every child's natural strengths are nurtured so they realize their endless potential – use your strength of honesty to help us get there.

Answer 4 quick questions by scanning the QR code and enter to win a family game night package!

