



The Keys to Building a Strong Relationship with Your Kids

Being an “A” Parent Doesn’t Mean You Have to be Perfect

1. Affirmation

Affirming the emotional reality of your child builds a **sense of authenticity**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** If sad, show an interest. After asking what’s going on and listening nonjudgmentally, you can respond, “That does sound sad.” If happy, enter into their celebration by getting excited, too!

2. Acceptance

Accepting young people for who they are gives them a **sense of security**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** Tell your child, “There is NOTHING you can do that will make me stop loving you.” Especially when your child makes a mistake communicate this by valuing their well-being first – “are you okay?” – even before addressing or correcting what is wrong.

3. Appreciation

Communicating that what young people do matters provides a **sense of significance**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** Catch your child doing something well and comment on it: “I am so happy that you _____. I’m really proud of you!” The praise makes them feel good (just like it does for adults). But over time, it will reinforce positive behaviors, too.

4. Affection

Showing affection to young people assures them of a **sense of lovability**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** Show affection verbally by telling your kids, “I love you,” regularly; communicate your delight each time you see your kids with a warm smile. Show affection in appropriate (and desired) physical ways like a hug, a hand on a shoulder, or getting down to their eye-level when listening.

5. Availability

Making yourself available to young people in your life conveys a **sense of importance**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** When your to-do list feels “pressing,” remember that your relationship with your kids is more of a “payoff.” If you spend time with them now, they’ll spend time with you later

6. Approach

Finding out what is significant to your kids bolsters a **sense of relatability**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** No matter their age, get into what your kids are into. Pursue what captivates their heart. This says, “I care about you and what you are interested in.” It also opens up invaluable communication.

7. Accountability

Providing loving accountability gives young people a **sense of responsibility**.

- ⇒ **TIP:** With younger children, you establish and explain the boundaries and consequences. With teenagers, talk about what would be reasonable (e.g. for curfew) and build responsibility together.