

6 Ways to Show Your Children You Love Them

Love is in the air. The abundance of hearts, flowers and candy tell us that Valentine's Day is right around the corner.

Many of us focus on romantic love on February 14. But it's also a good time to think about the love we show our children.

As caregivers, we are the first to show our children what love really means. Love is incredibly important to a child's healthy development. And it also sets a living example of what true love is.

It's more than romance and candle-lit dinners. Here are a few ways you show your kids you love them - on Valentine's Day and everyday.

Say "I love you."

Showing love to your kids will definitely go beyond saying it. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't say it. Telling children that you love them gives them the confidence to say it, too.

Set boundaries.

"Research shows that kids actually want to have rules," says Natalie Doyle, early childhood program coordinator and education consultant for the Rock Island County Regional Office of Education. "They need limits to feel loved and safe."



Support their dreams.

The dreams your kids have will change over time. But in addition to being a caregiver, you can also show love by being a cheerleader and their biggest fan.

"Once parents set limits and structure, they should empower their kids and allow them to explore," explains Angie Kendall, director of development and communications at the Child Abuse Council.

Get comfortable with physical displays of affection.

It may not feel natural to hug or kiss or hold hands - and that's okay. Not everyone feels comfortable being affectionate - it may not be natural or it may be foreign to the way you grew up.

If you aren't comfortable with hugs and kisses, try giving high fives, putting your arm around your child's shoulder, sitting together in a chair, or sharing a special handshake.

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Kids need physical touch from those who love them. It's so natural that at birth, kids are often soothed by the touch of their parents.

But this goes beyond physical touch in infancy. As kids grow, they need to learn about healthy touching. Not only does this help them feel loved, but it also keeps them safe.

Establish routines.

Establishing traditions and routines also create security for children - which help them feel loved. "Things like reading books can be a great routine for families," explains Natalie. "Even a few minutes can make a difference."

Show love in your own way.

"There is no one size fits all," says Angie. "Every family shows love and affection differently."

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The bottom line - you can show your kids you love them in millions of different ways. And every day, the way you display your love could be different.

It's worth the effort.

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Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 2/4/15 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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