



Building Conversations

Part 1: Re-Connect

Social Connection

- Social connection is the experience of feeling *close and connected* to others. It involves feeling *loved, cared for, and valued*, and forms the basis of interpersonal relationships.
- Social connectedness in close relationships is one of the most fundamental aspects of human life.
- An individual's sense of "*me*" arises out of social interaction.
- Social connectedness has been proposed as the *primary determinant* for youth adjustment.

Physical Connection

- A *physical gesture* between parent and child provides a connection that conveys warmth and affection. Positive physical contact provides stimulation for brain and body.
- Neurologically increases release of *oxytocin* - aka *love hormone*, enhances child's growth, strengthens the immune system, calms anxieties and stress.
- Results show that it promotes *lifelong positive outcomes* for children including higher self-esteem, improved academic performance, better parent-child communication, increased resiliency and fewer psychological and behavior problems.
- Virginia Satir famously said, "We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth."



Re-connect through
discussion

What does it look like?

- Choose a place **without distractions**
 - car, bedtime
- **Limit** conversation time - even 5 minutes can be helpful and enlightening
- Sit side-by-side, limit eye-contact
- Engage in parent-child focused activity for 5-10 minutes to signal that you're available for a conversation
 - *Coloring, puzzles, watching favorite TV show*
- Slow down and take your time, enjoy the time together
 - Conversations don't have to finish in one sitting
- Be aware of body language
 - active listeners lean in
- Put away the technology during the interactions

What does it sound like? - In general

- Start with a safe topic -
 - *What game did you play with your friends? What book did you choose to read?*
- Ask open-ended questions - ones that do not have a *yes/no* for an answer
 - *Tell me about...*
 - *What questions - "What did you think about..."*
 - *How questions- "How did it go at..."*
- Listen actively - the purpose is **not for giving advice** but for getting information and their perspective
- "Tune-in" to your child's **tone and responses** - The manner in which they respond can reflect the mood that they are in.
- **Empathize** and don't over-react
 - *That must have been hard*
 - *That makes me sad to hear*

What does it sound like? - continued...

- Tell your child that you love them, what they are doing, or saying - promotes a connection and open communication
 - *I love it when you feel safe to talk with me.*
- Use **positive language** - use a supportive tone to convey respect and a belief in your child.
- **Praise** - be honest and sincere when offering encouragement. Be specific and do not overgeneralize to all actions.
 - *I'm proud of how you _____*
- End the conversation by thanking them, making a joke, or switching to a safe, easy topic
 - *That must have been hard to talk about. Thank you for sharing.*

What does it sound like?

- When picking up from school
 - Greet them
 - Tell them you missed them and are happy to see them
- Start with a safe topic -
 - *Younger children*
 - *What game did you play with your friends?*
 - *What book did you choose to read?*
 - *Older children*
 - *What did you talk about with your friends?*
 - *What made you happy/sad in school today?*

What does it sound like? - young children

- Ask open-ended questions - ones that do not have a *yes/no* for an answer
 - *Younger children*
 - *Tell me about recess?*
 - *What songs did you sing?*
 - *What did you like better today _____
or _____?*

- Open ended questions for older children
 - *Tell me about...*
 - *What do you think about _____?*
 - *How do you feel about _____?*
 - *How would you solve _____?*
 - *What would you like to see happen?*
 - *What do you think should happen?*
 - *How should _____ be solved?*

- Observe a behavior and talk about it
 - *When I picked you up today, you had a sad face. What happened?*
- Use **positive language**
 - *Yelling is for when we are outside, when we are in the house we speak quietly.*
 - *We like it when you use kind words.*
- Give them **praise** -
 - *I'm glad you used your words to tell me.*
 - *That was nice that you shared your story.*

What does it sound like?

- Listen actively, empathize with their experience and validate their feelings
 - *It sounds like you had fun.*
 - *I'm sorry that happened.*
 - *That must have been hard.*
 - *I'm proud of how you handled that.*
 - *What would you change next time?*
- Allow for silence
- End the conversation by thanking them, making a joke, or switching to a safe, easy topic
 - *I love it when you share things with me.*
 - *I like how you think about things.*
 - *Thank you for sharing.*



Re-connect through play

Importance of Play

Social play interactions between you and child promote opportunities for your child to develop a sense of “*self*” in relation to what parents want them to do. It is a tool to foster their *creativity*, to help them *express their emotions* and to *practice social skills* such as sharing, cooperating, and compromising and respecting the feelings and opinions of others.

What do play interactions look like?

- **Set aside** some time to include play activities in your schedule
- Be “**present**” - be in the moment and give your child undivided attention
- Connect with your child **on their level** - get down on or below your child’s eye level and communicate comfort and safety.
- **Sit across** from each other to **model** positive social behaviors
 - making eye contact
 - sharing pleasure in activity
 - commenting
- Let your child **lead** the play interaction
- **Notice** what your child is doing and make comments without judgement related to their play-

What does Play Look like - Preschool

- Get down on the floor to participate in play such as dolls, cars, building blocks, puzzles.
- Participate in interactive social play -
 - Tea party
 - Dance party
 - Book reading party
 - Dress up
- Have a scavenger hunt

What does Play Look Like?- Early Elementary

- Play simple card games or board games.
- Play silly games such as “tickle monster”
- Build a fort or a castle
- Have a picnic
- Play charades
- Play “Hide and Seek”



Re-connect by
creating a new
tradition

The importance of Family Rituals

Family rituals *strengthen the bonds* between parents and child. They offer opportunities to create special connections that are shared among each other which lets the members of the family feel unique and special.

- Plan a special dinner to celebrate a meaningful event
- Schedule video conference read alongs with Grandparents
- Bake a cake and make decorations for a family member's birthday party
- Make handmade presents