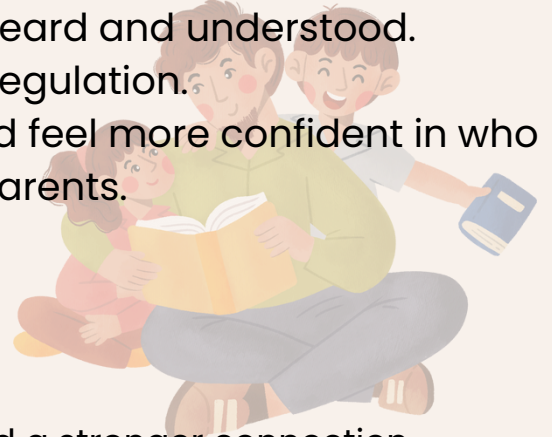


CONNECTION

BUILDING A STRONG BOND WITH YOUR CHILD

One of the most powerful things we can do for our child's wellbeing is to nurture a sense of connection – of being seen, heard and understood. This facilitates resilience, cooperation and self-regulation. Kids are better able to cope with challenges, and feel more confident in who they are, with connected attachments to their parents.



QUALITY time:

10 minutes 'special' time can reduce anxiety and build a stronger connection.

A short time, without distractions is better than hours of time divided between your kids, spouse, phone and job.

Make this time intentional and show your kiddo that intentionality 'lets take ten minutes just for us, I'll put away my phone, what would you like to do together'.

It can revolve around shared hobbies – games (board or video), surfing, beach, bike riding.

It can be a walk just the two of you.

It can be during 'chores', dishes, gardening, baking or cooking together.

Make a 'special time ideas' sheet for the fridge.

Daily rituals:

A daily ritual creates safety and connection for your child.

For the younger ones – Love connectors: draw a heart on each of your hands. A secret handshake when departing or reuniting. Put notes in lunchboxes.

The older: regular bedtime chats, intentional goodbyes and hellos,

Attunement

Attunement is being present and responsive to your child in the moment. Its noticing their emotions and meeting them with warmth, curiosity and care.

Attunement reduces emotional breakdowns, supports brain development and fuels self-regulation.

- Use reflective statements 'you seem frustrated'
- Validate first 'it makes sense that you feel that way'
- Be curious, not corrective when their behavior is 'off'

Foster unconditional positive regard

Our kids are with us for life, so for our own good, as well as theirs, we are best served by focusing on what we love about our kiddos.

- Focus on the great things about your kid, dwell on the magical moments

In words for them this can look like:

- "I love you no matter what."
- "I don't always love the behaviour, but I always love you."
- "You're allowed to feel how you feel. I'm still here."
- "Even when you're mad or sad, you're still my favourite person."

It can look like:

- After an argument: "We both had big feelings. I still love you."
- When they mess up: "You made a mistake, and I still think you're a great kid."
- When they're struggling: "You don't have to 'fix it' to be okay with me."

Rupture and repair:

Even the closest best relationships experience ruptures, especially in the busy and stressful worlds we live in. Connection is made by how we repair from these moments.

Rupture is anything that causes disconnect. Snapping, misunderstanding them, not engaging when they are attempting connection.

Repair can sound like:

- "I didn't handle that the way I wanted to. I'm sorry."
- "I was feeling overwhelmed, but it's not okay that I yelled."
- "You were trying to tell me something and I didn't hear you. Let's try again."
- "I love you, even when we have hard moments."

Ruptures are normal, repair builds trust.

Some cool resources:

Pop Culture Parenting – A podcast by two Dads one a developmental paediatrician working with tricky kids, who talk about kids and being parents challenges through the lense of different films.

Dr Siggie – on the Gram. Grounded and practical advice on how to respond to kiddos.

Raising Children Network – Government driven resource website.

