



Family Week 2018

BUILDING CONNECTIONS; GROWING TOGETHER



FOSTERING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

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How to use these materials

This guide contains tips and hints that families can use to build stronger connections and relationships with one another. Strengthening relationships in a family helps all members to come closer together and allows them to work through difficult times in a positive way.

When children have positive and strong relationships with their family, this also helps them in other aspects of their life - whether that's in their relationships with friends and the community, or when dealing with a crisis outside of family life. CatholicCare knows that when people have positive relationships with their families, their children are more likely to experience the same as they move through life, too.

This document can be shared with families in your school or parish community, to foster strong, positive relationships both in the family and with each other.

Fostering Healthy Relationships

Creating safety and security

- Talk with your partner, if you have one, about the rituals that you'd like to create for your child and family – for example, bedtime stories. Rituals add to your child's sense of security and belonging.
- Talk with your child about feelings. You might even make a regular time to share feelings. For example, each family member could share their 'highs and lows' for the day at your evening meal.
- Plan what you'll do to manage 'big' feelings in a calm way. If you or your child is feeling stressed or upset, you might like to take a walk, listen to music or phone a friend to help you cope.
- If you find yourself feeling critical and angry a lot of the time, it might be good to focus on looking after yourself or to get help with managing these feelings.
- Show respect for each other by listening, waiting until people have finished speaking and avoiding criticism. If you need strategies, you could look at ways to improve your negotiation, problem-solving and conflict management skills.

Creating warmth, care and positive attention

- Tell your child how much you love them, and look for opportunities to tell your child you're proud of them.
- Smile and look into your child's eyes when you talk to them.
- Create a family games night in teams.
- Write down activities that you enjoy doing together as a family (they don't have to cost much, or anything for that matter) and place them in a jar. When your children are bored or you don't have a creative idea for an activity, you can choose one from the jar at random. Keep an eye out for CatholicCare's bi-annual newsletter, Connect, coming in Winter 2018 for more ideas on this topic.
- Show physical affection when you can.
- Praise and encourage the people in your family when they do something well or something kind for others. For example, 'Harriet, thank you for unpacking the dishwasher this morning – it was a big help'. Be specific with your praise and describe the behaviour and its benefits.
- Create a family photo album, or themed album, and encourage your child/children to also take photos for it.
- Show your care through creating fun shared times together.
- Create opportunities for special one-on-one time, doing something you both enjoy.

Fostering Healthy Relationships

Creating family rules and routines

- Involve your child in tasks and chores and let them help work out who does what in your family. This gives a sense of contributing to family life.
- Cook together as a family.
- Involve your children in the running of a household, show them how to fold washing for example.
- Have regular family meetings to get your child involved in making family rules and planning for family events.
- Adapt routines and rules as your child gets older. This might be as simple as letting your child have a later bedtime or curfew, or letting them make dinner one night a week.
- As your child reaches adolescence, you can explain that extra independence goes along with extra responsibility.



Creating good communication

- Try to stop what you're doing and give your full attention when your child wants to talk to you. If you can't give your full attention, let them know when you can.
- Leave a note in your child's lunch box so that they know you're thinking of them.
- Have family meals together as often as possible, at the table with the TV off. This is a time when you can share what's happening in your lives.
- When emotions run high, talk to your child about what they're feeling and ask what they need.

Fostering Healthy Relationships

Connecting your family to others

- Encourage your children to see their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. If they live far away, talk to them on the phone, write letters or emails, or make video calls.
- Invite grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or family friends to school or sporting events that are important to your child – for example, an awards ceremony or performance.
- Get yourself and your child involved in a local community group or sports club. This gives your child the chance to get to know new people and to see community members working together.



Tips for blended families

- Although some parents are eager to be “one big happy family” early on, it’s often a good idea to take things slowly and put more emphasis on nurturing individual relationships.
- Stepparents need time alone with their stepchildren to get to know them, and learn to appreciate who they are and what they like, away from the rest of the family.
- Find activities that stepparents and stepchildren can do together to bridge the gap.
- Stepparents need to earn the child’s respect. They are not the parent, but are a significant adult in the household - they can contribute as such, and should expect to be treated as such.
- In the heat of the moment when you’re angry or frustrated at the parent who lives in the other household, keep negative comments or tension away from the children. All children want their parents to be respected. All parents deserve to be respected, even in their darkest moments. Children shouldn’t be in the middle of or privy to conflict between parents who are separated.