

Family Relations - positive family relationships (PFR) - Family members getting along well and supporting each other

Family members might include biological and adoptive parents, foster parents, single parents, step-parents', older siblings, and other relatives and non-relatives who play a meaningful role in a child's life.

In other words, the term "parent" applies to an array of individuals whose presence impacts the health and well-being of children.

Building and maintaining positive relationships with children and with all family members is not always easy. Families have times when tempers flare, feelings get hurt and misunderstandings occur. It helps to have good communication, flexibility and creativity to manage these situations and maintain positive connections.

Cultural background, family values and differences in family make-up (e.g., single parents, step and blended families, same-sex parents and carers) can influence the values and goals adults have for children's development. This may also lead to diverse relationships and support needs.

Consider, for example, how your family values and cultural background has influenced your thinking and behaviour.

Making time for family members, communicating effectively and supporting each other are important ways to strengthen families and build positive relationships.

Working together as a family is also helpful in building strong and caring family relationships. In times of conflict, families who are able to work together find effective ways to manage and learn from the experience. As conflict is a normal and healthy part of family life, children can learn to manage it. Parents and carers can help children identify the problem behind the conflict and guide them through a process of peaceful problem solving.

When children are in a caring, trusting relationships, they are more likely to learn desired skills and values.

The parental task includes being a good role model, showing leadership and understanding

how behaviours are influenced.

Remember 'we are not raising obedient robots'.

Even though we are raising them to be obedient and respectful we must remember that we are not raising robots.

Remember we want them to be confident children with high self-esteem who will not succumb to peer pressure, particularly the undesirable youth lifestyle that we don't want them to engage in.

We also have to have realistic expectations that children cannot behave in the way we expect them to all of the time. A developing child will sometimes behave inappropriately. Try to understand the reason behind the behaviour.

ALL BEHAVIOUR HAS A REASON – TRY TO BE SENSITIVE TO THIS REASON

Children may do wrong/or break a rule because

- ✚ They want to test you
- ✚ To assert themselves
- ✚ To draw attention to themselves because they are feeling unloved or insecure
- ✚ Or have some other unmet need

Key elements of building positive family relations are:

- ❖ acknowledging one's own reactions as a parent
 - do I give this child enough attention?
 - Am I listening to my child?
 - Am I connecting with my child?
 - I am spending enough quality time with my child/ren?
 - Am I sensitive to his/her emotions – including naming them?
 - do I praise her/him when they do something right?
 - do I over criticise him/her or constantly compare him/her with others?
 - are my expectations of his/her behaviour/choices/decisions realistic?
 - do I take time to calm down when my child has done something wrong before I discipline them?
- ❖ Understanding the child's behaviour and reactions and supporting their growth and development

A good way to nurture positive relations in a family is through positive parenting.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2006) defines positive parenting as "... *nurturing, empowering, nonviolent...*" and which "*provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child*" (in Rodrigo et al., 2012, p. 4). These definitions, combined with the positive parenting literature, suggest the following about positive parenting:

- It involves Guiding
- It involves Leading
- It involves Teaching
- It is Caring
- It is Empowering
- It is Nurturing
- It is Sensitive to the Child's Needs
- It is Consistent
- It is Always Non-violent
- It provides Regular Open Communication
- It provides Affection
- It provides Emotional Security
- It provides Emotional Warmth
- It provides Unconditional Love
- It recognizes the Positive
- It respects the Child's Developmental Stage
- It rewards Accomplishments
- It sets Boundaries
- It shows Empathy for the Child's Feelings
- It supports the Child's Best Interests

Tips on building good Family Relations

1. Show your child that you love him/her

A strong bond between mother and child begins at birth and is closely related to the child's overall behavior & development. Many behavior problems in children and adults can be traced to a lack of bonding in the early years.

Hold and cuddle your baby as soon as possible after birth. Continue this close physical connection. As the child grows, regularly show your love and fondness for her or him

2. Talk to your child

Talking to babies -even though they may not understand you is important. Talking develops their language. Strengthens the relationship between you and the baby – a kind of conversation occurs with babies through facial expressions, gestures, googles.

If this relationship continues, he or she is more likely to talk to you about things that are bothering him or her.

3. Encouraging your child

Letting children know that you value what she or he has done will make the child feel good about himself or herself.

Give positive comments and encourage them when they learn something or achieve something they have been trying to do. Children love attention and when they get attention for good behavior, they are likely to repeat that behavior. Remember if they get attention for naughty behavior, they may repeat that behavior – no attention is better than none.

4. Share time and experience

Parents – particularly those with a new baby – may sometimes forget that the older siblings need attention too.

Try to share time together with your children – together and separately – even sharing routine tasks like drying dishes or folding clothes etc. Take this opportunity to listen and talk to your child/children about things that are important to them.

5. Acknowledging a child's feelings when they are upset, sad or anxious. Respect their feelings.

Watch and listen to your child. Put aside what you are feeling and listen carefully what your child is telling you. Even when your child has strong emotions, find a way to reason with them e.g. I can understand why you are angry or I understand you wanted this or that etc helping them find solutions

but check your own emotions and tone of voice. Don't give mixed messages and sometimes it is enough to just listen.

However, despite all your efforts a child's behavior may be outside of what you would expect for the age of the child or something may just not be right.

If you suspect that something is wrong, get help as soon as is important. This can improve the child's chances of recovery or ability to cope.

When there is a persistent pattern of undesirable behaviour it may be time to seek professional help.

Behaviour such as the following:

1. **Bullying behavior** (either as aggressor or as victim). If you have tried all means of resolving this and nothing has worked, it may be time to seek help.
2. **Destructive behavior** (repeatedly destroying their own or other children's toys and possessions). Again if you have tried everything and nothing has worked.
3. **Inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality after age six.**
4. **Persistent lying.**
5. **Setting fires.**
6. **Hurting animals with deliberate intent after age five** (children under age five may not understand that they are inflicting pain).
7. **Stealing consistently** – like can't help themselves or even stealing things they do not need.
8. **Loneliness or withdrawal** (a child who finds it impossible to make friends).
9. **Prolonged sadness, depression, or anger** (all children have these feelings sometimes. It is cause for concern when they are dominant all the time.)

Remember many children exhibit one or more of the above behaviours at some point. However, if this behaviour persists even after trying all sorts of things then it may be time to talk to someone.

Most important to watch is deviation from a child's usual behaviour – this may indicate need for help.

Deviation from a Child's Usual Behavior: Behavior that is markedly different from the child's usual behavior may indicate a need for help. It is difficult to know how long to wait before looking for help. The persistence, intensity, and duration of the behavior is a good indicator for the need for help.

Besides, parents should become more aware of what is normal in their culture or community.

What are beliefs in your community or culture about those who are different?

These beliefs may cause the family to feel shame, fear or guilt because of their child.

The child may be viewed as a burden, may be hidden or neglected or even abandoned.

Children who are treated this way begin to feel worthless.

It affects their self-confidence.

They may develop long-term social and behavioural problems.

If children with disabilities are accepted & treated with respect, they grow up with confidence.

Having a good relationship with children is emphasized - as the first step even with children with disabilities.

References

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Life Landscapes - Parents talk about raising children with disabilities This resource was developed by the Saskatchewan Family Resilience Project and published by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. The website is www.sacl.org.

