

Family Attachment Matters

Skills for Strong Families

We all strive to form strong families because loving connections are critical for our children's and our own well-being. Having a strong family brings us comfort, safety, joy, and a lifetime of love. Research indicates that strong family bonds can help prevent or reduce the effects of negative mental health issues and behavioral problems in children. Strong family bonds also lead to positive decision-making and ease difficult times in adulthood. To strengthen your family, use these five skills as building blocks:

- nurturing parenting
- social support
- protection and safety
- positive conflict management
- positive co-parenting



Nurturing Parenting

One of the top skills that predicts positive outcomes for children is warm, responsive, and nurturing parenting. You are likely already practicing nurturing parenting in some ways. Here are some examples of ways to express warmth to your children.

What does that look like?	How does this help families?
Being responsive to your child's basic needs (e.g., picking up and comforting a crying baby; helping a young child make a snack)...	establishes and strengthens trust between you and your child.
Responding calmly when your child brings bad news to you or misbehaves...	reinforces your unconditional love for your child and increases the likelihood that they will come to you if something more serious happens.
Spending one-on-one time with each child...	gives you the opportunity to nurture your individual relationship with your child.
Consistently showing up for your child's activities when you are able and knowing their friends...	demonstrates to your child that their interests and relationships are important to you.



Social Support

Social support is important for your child, and it's also important for you as a parent. Having people in your family or community who you and your child can rely on is critical for the health and well-being of your family.

What does that look like?	How does this help families?
Having a friend or family member you trust to look after your child when you need a break...	provides you time to recharge and better show up for your family.
Relying on friends or family members for advice and comfort...	allows you the support you need to work through the good times and the hard times.
Accessing community resources when needed...	offers you additional help when something unexpected or difficult happens.
Your child being involved in sports, clubs, or religious activities...	gives your child positive and trusting relationships with other children and adults.



Protection and Safety

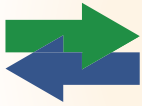
Protection and safety may sound straightforward, but some aspects of this skill are not so obvious. Creating safety for your child includes both physically safe environments and emotionally safe relationships. See below for some examples of protection and safety you can implement with your child.

What does that look like?	How does this help families?
Ensuring that your child is not only physically safe, but feels safe to be themselves, talk openly with you about their worries, etc...	builds trust and encourages your child to talk openly with you.
Knowing your child's friends and adults they are frequently around...	establishes a network of security around your child and allows you to catch early signs of danger.
Maintaining a reliable schedule with family-centered routines such as regular mealtime together at the table...	creates a predictable daily routine and consistent, reliable contact between all family members.
Establishing family rules together as a family and working together to enforce those rules...	gives everyone a voice in the family's expectations, leading to higher cooperation with the rules.



A resource from





Positive Conflict Management

Conflict is a normal and unavoidable part of family life. It can happen between parents, between children, and between parents and their children. How you deal with that conflict can make a big difference in your child's outcomes, including how well they do in school, how their nervous system responds to stress, and how they handle conflict later in life.

What does that look like?	How does this help families?
Coming together as a family to discuss and overcome challenges...	provides everyone an opportunity to express their feelings and come up with a compromise or solution everyone agrees with.
Talking through concerns with your partner as they come up...	prevents frustrations from building and causing larger arguments.
Reminding children to talk kindly to one another during disagreements...	focuses on how they feel rather than actions of others and can break up major fights.
Modeling calm conflict management with your partner or other family members in front of your children...	gives children positive tools for managing their own conflicts and keeps the brain and body in a healthy state of regulation.

For more information about this and other relevant parenting topics, go to tips.extension.msstate.edu.



Positive Co-parenting

Positive co-parenting is important for parents who live in the same household and are partners, and for those who live in different households and are not partners.

What does that look like?	How does this help families?
Providing consistent rules and guidance to your child...	eliminates confusion about family rules.
Speaking kindly about your child's other parent in front of your child...	shows your child that you have a positive and cooperative relationship with your co-parent.
Ensuring that both you and your co-parent have a strong bond with your child...	instills feelings of security for your child in both of their parental relationships.
Discussing plans to overcome any parenting challenges with your co-parent...	ensures that your child receives consistent and appropriate support from both parents.



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