



Adapted from: Australian Childhood Foundation, Every Child is Important, A Booklet for Parents. www.kidscount.com.au

A gift for parents and caregivers

One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is spending time with children.

Children love and admire you just for being you.

Children trust that you are the strongest, smartest and bravest person in the world.

You are their hero.

Caring for children lets you take time out from being a grown up, by sharing the magic of their new world and the fun of children's play.

Caring for children gives you a chance to reflect on your own views.

You'd be amazed at how much a child can teach you.

Take time each day to laugh, talk, sing, read, play and dream with a child

Ask us for information about children's development

We have information about helping children and parents be their best, early literacy, play and the first three brain building years.



Families NSW
Communication Strategy for Parents
and Carers Project Northern Sydney |
South East Sydney | South West Sydney



Helping parents and carers be their best

You are the most important person in your child's life.

Take care of yourself so that you can take care of your child.

Helplines

Karitane: 9794 1852
Tresillian: 9787 0855
Parent Line: 13 20 55

Mensline: (24 hour helpline for men) 1300 789 978

Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463

Services

Family Support Services: 9692 9999 to find a centre near you.

More information

www.community.nsw.gov.au

Being a Dad

www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs
(Parent Easy Guide no. 26)

Being a Mum

www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs
(Parent Easy Guide no. 76)

Grandparenting

www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs
(Parent Easy Guide no. 12)

Many people are needed to help raise a child

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. This is because one person cannot give a child everything he/she needs and no one person can be expected to cope on their own. Many people play a role in children's lives and children benefit from this. Family, friends, child carers and neighbours are people that can support family life. Your local council can tell you about child care options in your area.

Make time for yourself

Make regular time for yourself and the things you like doing, also make time for the relationship with your partner so that you can do things you enjoy together. Doing these things can help you to handle the stress that sometimes comes with being a parent or carer.

Parents are learners

Every parent makes mistakes and learns by experience. Parenting groups or courses can provide good ideas and support with parenting. Look for these groups in your local area, www.resourcingparents.com or ask your Child and Family Health Nurse.

Manage feelings

You may experience times when you feel depressed, anxious or angry. Most parents feel like this at some time and manage these feelings successfully. Sometimes, these feelings may be so powerful that they could stop you enjoying life or make it difficult to cope. If this happens it is important to tell someone and get help early. Talk with your doctor or Child and Family Health Nurse.

Trust and believe in yourself

Have realistic expectations of yourself. Have confidence in what you are doing. Be prepared to ask for information or advice when you need it.

Spend time with other parents

It is good to share your experiences and learn from others who are having similar experiences. Playgroups are great places to meet other parents. Your council can tell you where local playgroups meet.





Play is important

Children don't need expensive toys - you are their favourite toy.

Children want to play because it is fun

The fun times children have playing will form their memories of childhood.

Playing is learning

When children play they are learning to use their bodies, their imagination, how to communicate and cooperate. They learn how things work, how to manage feelings and gain confidence when they try new things while playing.

You are your child's first play mate

The time you spend having fun together helps you get to know each other. It also makes your child feel loved and secure, which helps develop his/her confidence to try new things and this helps him/her learn.

Everyday activities can be play

- ▶ You can play with your child as you do the things you normally do each day during bath times, waiting in line at the supermarket or hanging out washing.
- ▶ You can provide indoor and outdoor activities for your child suitable to their age, such as play dough, colouring in, dress ups, cardboard boxes, a cubby house or sand pit.
- ▶ Get down on the floor with your child. Let him or her climb over you, play peek-a-boo, make up silly songs together, draw, kick or throw a ball together.
- ▶ Playgroups are a good way for your child to play with other children and play in new ways. You also get to meet other parents. Ask at your local council about playgroups in your area.
- ▶ Toy libraries offer different toys that can be borrowed. Ask at your library.
- ▶ Follow your child's lead during play. Let your child make choices about playing.
- ▶ Play is about trying new things. Let your child know that mistakes are OK.
- ▶ Recognise when your child has had enough play and needs a rest or a change.
- ▶ All children need free time to play how they want to play.
- ▶ Older children still need free time to play at home, with friends or at a park.

More information

www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.srq.qld.gov.au/school_community/active_baby.cfm

www.kidscount.com.au

www.playgroupaustralia.com.au

www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au
*Fact sheet in many languages:
Play is about learning – A guide to play for parents of children, NSW Health*



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Talk, sing and read

Learning to talk and read is an ongoing process that begins early in life.

It is never too early to talk, sing and read with children.

Talk and sing with your child

Talking, singing, playing and sharing books each day with your baby will make a difference to your baby's development. As soon as they are born, babies are learning to communicate. They communicate by crying, squealing, laughing, smiling, mouthing and throwing objects and copying other sounds. Copying their sounds, singing and talking with them helps their language development. They develop skills to understand language before they start speaking. These language skills then help children develop other thinking and reading skills.

Read with your child

Reading or singing with your baby in your lap brings together many of the things they need – closeness, safety, touch, seeing, hearing and learning about sounds and their meaning.

Children who enjoy books and stories are likely to become confident readers. Confident readers tend to do well at school and this can help their opportunities in life. Stories also help children cope with everyday life and stories help to develop their imagination. Stories told by family about their culture and history help children feel that they belong and this sense of belonging also makes them feel good about themselves.

Ideas

- ▶ Use meal times for the family to talk.
- ▶ Talk, sing songs and rhymes to your child in the language you speak at home throughout the day.
- ▶ Respond to your child's sounds and encourage attempts at words.
- ▶ When reading to babies, use a playful manner, different voices and sounds.
- ▶ Story time at bedtime can help your child look forward to going to bed, to relax and get ready for sleep.
- ▶ Let your child choose books.
- ▶ Ask questions about the pictures and the story when reading.
- ▶ Help your child know letters and sounds by singing the alphabet song, having alphabet fridge magnets and talking about the sounds of letters.
- ▶ Libraries hold story time activities for young children. Librarians can help you choose suitable books.

More information

www.earlywords.info
Resources in Aboriginal English, Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tamil, Dari, Urdu, Hindi and Korean

www.letsread.com.au

www.liswa.wa.gov.au/bb/index

www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs
Why stories are important
(Parenting Easy Guide 57)



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The first three brain building years

The first three years of life are important brain building years. The experiences children have during this time will influence their future development.

Babies begin learning as soon as they are born

At birth your baby's brain has all of its brain cells but the connections between the cells have not been made. The genes your baby is born with form the cells of the brain and the connections between the brain regions. The fine tuning of those connections depends on the experiences he/she has. For example, all children can learn a language, but the language they learn will depend on the language they hear spoken around them.

In the first years of life the connections in the brain that influence children's social, emotional and intellectual development are forming. These connections depend on the experiences they have. Young children's brains are more open to enriching experiences, such as feeling secure and loved at this time than later in life. For the same reason, negative experiences in the early years, such as neglect or abuse can have long-lasting effects.

Babies need love to learn

When a baby's needs for security and comfort are met and they are responded to in a caring way, such as being cuddled and comforted when sad or scared, the connections in the brain for feeling good become strong. Loving early relationships and opportunities to explore lead children to develop confidence, the ability to get along with others, to cope with stress and control their emotions. They also prepare children for making the most of learning during the school years.

You can help your child learn and develop by:

- ▶ Holding and cuddling your child.
- ▶ Looking into your child's eyes and smiling.
- ▶ Singing and talking with your child.
- ▶ Telling stories and reading to your child.
- ▶ Playing with your child.
- ▶ Understanding and responding to your child's needs.
- ▶ Making sure that your child feels safe and secure.
- ▶ Giving your child new experiences.

More information

www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders

www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs
Right from the start
(Parenting Easy Guide no. 75)

www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.kidscount.com.au
Information in many languages



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Helping children be their best

Children's behaviour is shaped by their relationships with their parents and carers and the environment in which they are growing up.

Children need to know they are loved

Your child needs to know that you really care about him/her and will always be there for him/her. This develops a strong bond between you and makes your child feel confident to try new things and learn. Children need to feel they have a place and belong in their family and in society and that they are loved for the special person that they are.

Children need to feel good about themselves

- ▶ Give your child hugs and smiles.
- ▶ Spend time with your child doing what they like.
- ▶ Tell your child that you love him/her.
- ▶ Help your child try hobbies or sports that he/she is interested in.
- ▶ Family and friends can praise your child's achievements and encourage them to try again if they do not get it right the first time.
- ▶ Take care of your own self-esteem. Let your children see that you feel good about yourself.

Children need to hear positive words

Always say positive things to your child and chose your words with care. e.g. "It's great that you shared your toy, thank you." The words you say to children will determine how they feel about themselves and how they feel about you.

Children need to know they are safe

Childhood is about growing and learning and children need a safe home and community in which to do this.

Children need limits that are reasonable

Children are not born knowing what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They learn this by watching how you and others around them behave. Children need safe rules in order to make safe choices, develop responsibility and experience success.

You can help your children learn appropriate behaviour by:

- ▶ Listening to them and acknowledging their feelings.
- ▶ Being consistent so that they know what is expected of them.
- ▶ Having realistic expectations for their age and stage of development.
- ▶ Asking them about things that affect their lives.
- ▶ Encouraging their own problem solving.
- ▶ Praising their good behaviour.

More information

www.community.nsw.com.au

www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.triplep.net

www.parenting.sa.gov.au

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