

CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Kind words, gentle play and other loving interactions between you and your child release powerful chemicals within your child's brain that create positive emotions. Experiencing those emotions actually helps wire the brain to pay attention and have positive responses towards others. When children experience and feel love through a variety of loving expressions and interactions, their brain development is fueled. Connecting with your child through eye contact and touch creates a rich foundation for learning. Feeling unconditional love is crucial to the development of an emotionally healthy child. Additionally, these early connection experiences and interactions will actually help children experience greater success in school.

In her book titled *I Love You Rituals*, Dr. Becky Bailey offers numerous ideas for families to make these important connections. Seek opportunities to regularly connect with your child throughout the day and evening. These "love moments" can occur during transition times such as waking or going to bed or during care giving activities such as diapering, feeding or bathing.

Remember that your goal is to connect warmly with your child. It is important that the activities are fun for both you and your child. Try a few of the ideas listed below and begin your own love rituals with your children.



✿ Play games like "Goodnight Elbow" and tell your child, "I'm going to say goodnight to your head, ears, hair, forehead, eyebrows, shoulders, elbows, etc..." Start at your child's head and move along his or her body, gently touching and massaging each body part as you say goodnight.

✿ Blow kisses.

✿ Give "raspberries" by blowing noisy kisses on your child's tummy.

✿ Play hide and seek and peek-a-boo.

✿ Say "I love you."

✿ Make up unique endearments, individualizing them for each child. "You are my special brown haired boy." "You are my precious baby."

✿ Make rhymes and songs fun and special with your child. For example, hold your child and gently rock back and forth as you sing, "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream."

✿ Use your child's name as part of the rhyme or song. For example, you could change "Jack be nimble" to: "Henry be nimble, Henry be quick, Henry come over and hug me quick!"

Concepts adapted from the *Conscious Discipline*® program by Dr. Becky Bailey. www.ConsciousDiscipline.com 1-800-842-2846