

# ideas for parents

## Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

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### FAST FACTS

#### ASSET #1: Family Support

*Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when their families provide them with high levels of love and support.*

**70%**  
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.\*

**What Are Assets?**  
Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Family support" is one of six support assets.

\* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

## Love and Support: The Family Foundation

**L**ove and support. It sounds easy. We know we give it. Everyone does. Right?

But giving your child consistent love and support can be tricky. How often does your child feel supported when you come home from an exhausting day and he or she wants to talk—but you want a break?

When your child messes up, do you provide support rather than discipline?

Young people know our body language. They listen to what we say—and don't say. They notice when our words and our actions don't match.

Supporting and loving our children refer to the many ways we affirm, love, and accept them, both verbally and nonverbally. When we hug them or say "I love you," the expression is obvious. Paying attention to them, listening to them, and taking an interest in what they're doing are less obvious ways of giving support,

but they're just as important.

The next time you're exhausted, say so. If you're mad, be honest. If you don't tell your child what you're feeling, he or she will read one message from your body and hear the opposite. And children usually interpret inconsistent messages as meaning they have done something wrong.

Be consistent. Be loving. Develop an openness so that your child always knows that you're available and you'll love her or him—no matter what.



### Helpful Hints

Tips that make loving your child easier:

- **Loving touch means a lot. Hug. Put your arm around your child. Comb your child's hair.**
- **Use loving words. Try: "I care about you." "I love you." "I think you're terrific." "You're great!"**
- **Be loving in your interactions. Look your child in the eyes when you talk with her or him.**
- **Tell your child when he or she does something that makes you feel loved and cared for.**

### time together

Three ways to be supportive of your child:

1. Have a weekly family game night. Take turns choosing games.
2. Spend one hour a week with each child alone. Take a walk, listen to music, or just hang out.
3. Find out one area where your child is struggling. Listen to your child's concerns. Help your child think of ways to address the issue.

# 10 Creative Ways to Care

1. Do something new together. Instead of a walk, go jogging—or skipping. Have a leaf fight.
2. If possible, eat at least one meal a day together.
3. Choose a book to read together as a family. Each day read 10 pages.
4. Ask what your child's highs and lows were for the day. Tell about your day.
5. Every day show love through hugs, words, kisses, smiles.
6. Frame your child's artwork and hang it on the wall.
7. Give your child space to think, to rest, to rejuvenate.
8. Lie under the stars together and talk about whatever crosses your mind.
9. When you're feeling stressed, reassure your child that he or she isn't the reason.
10. Write "family care" resolutions. Then keep them.

1 2  
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Quick Tip:**  
Hide an  
affirming note  
for your child  
to find.

## More Help for Parents

**Catch 'Em Being Good!** This 10-minute video gives tips on how to build relationships and how to encourage your child to act in positive ways. (Available from Boys Town Press, [www.girlsandboystown.org](http://www.girlsandboystown.org); 800-282-6657)

## talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- If you were to write new messages to put on candy hearts, what would they say?
- When have you felt most supported by our family? Least supported?
- How can our family support each other more?

## FiNAL WoRD

**"The one thing children need most to grow up happy and secure is a close-knit, loving family."  
—T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.**

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org); 800-888-7828.  
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