

Giving your child positive attention (0-6 years)

What is positive attention?

Positive attention is when you respond to your child with warmth and interest. When you show delight in your child and warmth in your relationship by smiling at her, touching or cuddling her, or using words to celebrate and encourage her, you are helping her feel secure and valued.

Why is positive attention important?

All children do best in an environment where they're supported, encouraged and enjoyed. They grow and develop through repeated, positive interactions in their first relationships.

From birth, your child needs experiences and relationships that show her that she is a valued, capable human being who brings pleasure to others. A healthy self-image is very important, not only for your child's relationship with others, but also for her confidence as she learns about the world. Your child's self-image builds up over time. Positive loving attention, reactions and responses from you and other important people in her life help her build a picture of how valued she is.

Your child's feelings of security and safety come from her interactions with you and the other people who care for her. If you reassure and support your child when she is frightened, uncertain or faced with a new or unfamiliar situation, she will feel safe and secure.

Tips for giving your child positive attention

Here are some things you can do to give positive attention to your child of **any age**:

- Look at your child and smile at her.
- Show interest in what your child is doing – ask her to tell you about it if she can.
- Pay attention and listen closely when your child talks to you.

Here are tips for giving your **baby** positive attention:

- Comfort her when she cries.
- Smile back when she smiles.
- Respond to the sounds she makes by saying something in return.

Here are some tips for giving positive attention to your **toddler**:

- Tell your child exactly what you like about what she is doing. For example, 'I love it when you help to pick up the blocks'. Use a positive tone of voice to match the praise.
- Get into the moment with your child. This could be as simple as squatting down to look at a caterpillar together.

- When you are talking together, pause after you talk so your child can reply, even if she cannot always find the right words.

There are many ways you can give your **pre-schooler** positive attention. For example:

- Make time to do your child's favourite activities with her – for example, jigsaws, Lego, or painting.
- Give lots of feedback about the kinds of behaviour that you want to encourage – for example, 'Thanks for bringing your plate to the kitchen. That makes it much quicker to tidy up after lunch'.
- Remember to smile and make eye contact with your child when you greet her in the morning – perhaps even take a moment for a special cuddle.

Try these ideas to give positive attention to your **school-age** child:

- Stop what you are doing and listen when your child wants to talk about her day at school. This might not always be as soon as she gets home, though – it might be when she's in the bath or just before she goes to sleep.
- Ask follow-up questions when your child starts talking. This keeps the conversation going.
- Notice your child's positive interactions with others and make a positive comment – for example, 'I think Michelle really liked it when you asked her questions about her holiday. It gave her a chance to talk about something that was important to her'.
- Before you correct your child, ask yourself: does it really matter, or could I just let it go? If you are always correcting your child, this sends the message that your child is not capable or valued.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Love you more than anything](#)
- [All the things I love about you](#)
- [The Baby Owner's Games and Activities Book: Owner's and Instruction Manual](#)