

TIPS TO MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Hold, kiss, and cuddle. Provide lots of loving attention and touch.

Respond to them. Answer your baby in a loving voice when they make a sound or movement.

Play together. Hold your baby close, smile, and make silly sounds or faces. Play games like “peek-a-boo.” Take a break if they seem overwhelmed or look away.

Comfort them. Comfort your baby when they get fussy or cry. They might be tired, hungry, or uncomfortable. Try rocking them or singing a calming song. It will take time to learn what works best.

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Snuggle up. Hug and cuddle with your toddler so they feel safe and loved.

Encourage them. Encourage and support your child when they try new things.

Involve them. Invite them to help with household tasks, like handing you clothes for the laundry.

Talk about feelings. Name your child’s feelings and what caused them. Let them know that all feelings are OK, and that you are there for them when they are happy or upset.

Offer choices. Offer choices like what to wear or eat, but give a limited number of options. “It’s time for a snack. Do you want an apple or grapes?”

Set basic limits. Use simple rules consistently. Focus on things that really matter, like safety. For a younger toddler: put a calm “No” in front of the thing you don’t want your child to do and redirect them to another activity. For older toddler: give a simple explanation for the rule and what they could do instead. Praise good behavior.

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Put your love into words. Tell your child something specific that you love about them. What makes them special? What do you admire or enjoy most about them?

Describe feelings. Talk to your child about their and other people’s feelings. Let them know that all feelings are OK. See if they can name their feelings in different situations.

Talk about kindness. Describe what makes a good friend, like helping others, taking turns, and sharing.

Share strategies. When your child needs help managing strong feelings or getting along with others, you can help them come up with strategies like taking a deep breath or taking turns. Praise them when they use a good strategy.

Explain rules. Help your child understand how certain rules allow everyone to work together and stay safe—like using “inside voices” or putting things away after using them.

Have a Routine

Have consistent times and ways of doing daily activities like feeding, bathing, reading, and bedtime. Routines help babies and young children feel safe and know what to expect. They also help adults manage stress.

Take Care of Yourself

When life gets stressful, it’s important to take care of yourself so you can be there for your child. Try to find time—even a few minutes—for healthy activities that help you feel calm. Be forgiving with yourself. Ask for help when you need it, and talk to your doctor if you often feel sad or stressed. All parents and caregivers need help.