

Parent and Child Relationships

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Strategies for promoting good relationships with children

One of the most important things that parents can give to their children is their time. Children need to grow up feeling that they have a caring relationship with their parents. Children also need to grow up with the understanding of their role and importance within the family unit.

Within all families, children will have different skills, temperament, ideas and abilities. It is this difference that makes up the family unit. Children need to develop an understanding of their place within the family, learning that all members play an integral role within the family structure.

Attachment by individual children to parents will differ. Each child will have a different relationship with each parent. It is part of the development of lasting relationships with one another. Attachments vary with one person to another and children form many attachment relationships which contribute to the child's overall development.

It is normal for children to develop specific attachment with one parent or the other. Often the male child will "want to marry Mummy" or the female child will "want to marry Daddy". Children may often request that the other parent should go away and take the siblings with them.

A child may even view the relationship of their parents to their siblings as unfair or unequal and as a result may develop behaviour issues rejecting their siblings and demanding attention from the parent at all times to the exclusion of other family members.

Strategies to Support Parents and Early Childhood Education and Care Workers

- Closely observe the child at times when they are demonstrating an attachment to another person (appropriately or inappropriately) and identify patterns of behaviour that are typical.
- Acknowledge that within a family structure there will always be forms of sibling rivalry however it is important that parents allocate specific one on one time with each child within the family.
- Specific one on one time needs to be reinforced with the child e.g. "Yes, you and I spent yesterday together at the park. Now it is time for your sister and I to spend some special time together".

- When a child says that they want to marry their Mother/Father, acknowledge that the child is expressing their love however remind the child that you, the parent, are already married to Mummy/Daddy and that when the child grows up it will be very exciting when she/he finds a special person to marry.
- Create opportunities for family talks about each member in the family e.g. What mummy does, what Daddy does and what each child does such as go to day care, school, work etc.
- Aim to reinforce what each role the children play within the family.
- Show the child that any inappropriate behaviour towards the other siblings is not part of how each family member treats each other.
- Acknowledge the positive aspects that each family member brings to the family unit.

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