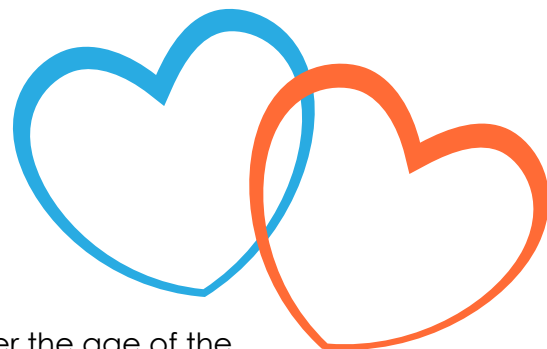


LANGUAGES OF LOVE: HUGGING

There are many customized ways to love. There is showing. There is telling. And there is hugging. Every person prefers a little different combination of messages of love.



Provide a Sense of Safety

Hugging/appropriate touch provides a sense of safety no matter the age of the person. Babies need to be held close for hours. Children feel safe and secure in the arms of a trusted adult.

Notice How Much Your Child Likes to be Hugged

Notice your child's reaction. Does she lean into hugs or fight them? Would he rather push and shove as a way of being in touch? When we pay attention to our children, we discover how much and what way they like to be hugged. Sometimes a child likes to be hugged more than a parent likes to hug. The parent can be glad that the child wants to connect, and the parent can prepare for hug time.

There are many ways to be in touch with children:

Sit close when you are riding together in the car or watching TV. Give the child a back rub. Sit near a child and talk. Wrestle, arm-wrestle, thumb-wrestle. Rub noses. Put an arm around him or her. Rub feet. Play basketball or soccer together. Brush her hair.

When our children know we are available for them, they may actually demand less attention. When we always seem anxious to get away, they may feel that they have to pursue us. When we respond gladly and readily to their needs, they learn to feel safe and strong.

FAMILY TIME ACTIVITY: HOT DOG GAME

Place a towel or blanket on the floor and have the child lay at one end. Tell the child you are going to pretend the towel is a hot dog bun and he/she is a hot dog. Then tell the child you need to add some ketchup. Pretend to squirt ketchup on the child and rub it all around (massage the child). Do the same action with other condiments one might add to a hot dog. Roll the child up in a blanket or towel like a hot dog. The child's head and feet should be outside the blanket. Next, place the child on your lap or leave him/her on the floor and pretend to gobble up the hot dog. If the child seems uncomfortable with being tightly rolled, tell him/her you forgot to add pickles, etc. so you can unroll and reroll. This helps the child to adjust to being tightly rolled. Be sure not to roll too tightly. You can use a burrito or any food that must be wrapped as well.

Activity slightly modified from "I love You Rituals" by Dr. Becky Bailey, Conscious Discipline.