

# Connecting with your child takes time commitment

By SAMANTHA CRIST

Some days go by in a blur and you struggle to remember what you did with all of your time. Adults can become stressed and overwhelmed by responsibilities throughout the day and forget that the smallest people in their families often need the most attention. But what can we do to connect with our children and why is this so important anyway?

Connections with other people build neural connections within children's brains. We can connect with our children, and others in our lives, by taking time to be present in a situation, to create social bonding moments and the sharing of love.

Imagine you're in the shoes of your toddler, taking in the world around you. Everything is bigger than you, louder than you, and scary. Who are you going to look for to feel safe and help you regulate your emotions? You are going to seek safety from the adults in your life and rely on them to help you understand the world around you.

Adults create this sense of safety and understanding through caring connections with children, leading to stronger relationships. Adults who foster these connections enable children to develop into self-confident individuals who are able to create relationships of their own and understand the importance of self-regulation. They will also create a relationship with their children that is more cooperative and full of energy.

Knowing why connections are important is the first step in supporting children, but knowing how to connect even more important. Think about a time when you felt connected to someone. What did



it look like? Were you looking at that person? Did you have some kind of physical touch that fueled the connection? Where you present in the moment and being playful?

A true connecting experience with another person will have these factors built in and creates a bond with that person. Each of these experiences tells your brain that you are safe and loved by the other person. This is the exact thing that children are seeking as they experience the world around them and it's crucial to positive growth and development.

Some great ways to create

connecting moments with your child is through fun games or activities that can take less than five minutes. Make yourself and your loved ones a commitment; take time out of each day to truly



## Strategies

your relationships together, it will create a sense of safety in the relationships that are built, and most importantly, it will allow your children to have the ability to connect with others as they grow.

We understand why connections are important, what connections can look like, and I have given you examples of how to connect with people. But I am not going to tell anyone that connecting with children, or others in your life, is always easy. It can be hard at times or it can be easy, but no matter what, it will have a positive impact on both you and the person you are connecting with and will be worth it!

Put in the effort even

if you have a busy life or feel like you are barely making it. It will not only build the relationship with your children, but it will make you feel better. We all can use a little extra playfulness and joy in our lives. Wishing you well!

connect. Play pat-a-cake or peek-a-boo with your young child, check in with your older children by playing a game — make cards with questions on them to find out how their day went or what is happening in their lives. Be present for your significant other as they discuss their struggles or successes. Connect as a family by doing an I Love You Ritual, interactions and games that you can play with your children to connect, created by Dr. Becky Bailey founder of the self-regulation program of Conscious Discipline®.

Taking this time out of your day will cement the bond that holds

*Samantha Crist is an Education Coordinator for Eastern Oregon Head Start, a partner with the Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub, which works to bridge early childhood resources and prepare children for kindergarten. For more information visit [www.bluemountainearlylearninghub.org](http://www.bluemountainearlylearninghub.org).*