

## Six Ways To Build A Healthier Family

As parents we all want to have strong and happy family relationships. Here are some ideas and questions you may like to consider to give your family a healthy boost this year!

1. Make listening to your children a priority. When you listen using open questions you can really learn how your children are feeling and can see the situation more clearly from their point of view. One of the healthiest messages you can give your children is that it is absolutely ok to talk about feelings. This is particularly so for boys, as they are sometimes conditioned to keep their feelings to themselves. How can you build more discussion about feelings into your interactions with your children? Open questions such as “How did you feel about that?” are a wonderful way to really understand what is going on for your children.
2. Concentrate more on the positive behaviour you see. Parents are often quick to comment on any misbehaviour, but do we really take time to notice the positive behaviour our children show us every day? Parents may say 5 to 7 times as many negatives to their children in a day as they do something positive! If we could turn this around what a much more positive environment we would create! Take some time to think about how you communicate with your children. Can you include more positive comments and reduce some of the negative, by ignoring, diverting or structuring what you say differently?
3. Respect each family member for “who” they are. Family members are all different. How can you show your family that you value these differences? How do you let your children know that you value their individual strengths and qualities? Do you tell them? Do they get to demonstrate these strengths through their responsibilities at home? For example, your daughter is a very organised person. Do you get her to help organise part of your upcoming holiday? When we build on our children’s strengths, like this, we give a boost to their self-esteem!
4. Offer your children some choice. When we make a conscious choice to share some of the power in the family we build closeness and trust, as well as children who are more able to make decisions! For example, you have trouble getting your son dressed for preschool. Instead of going into battle over the outfit can you give him a choice of two outfits from which he can choose? Your teen has the job of washing up but doesn’t want to do it directly after dinner. Can she do it within an agreed time frame instead? How much choice do you offer your children?
5. Make time to be together. Strong, connected families are ones who do things together. What regular family time together can you plan for the

coming year? Will it be a family meal each evening with the TV off so precious conversations can happen? Will it be a special outing once a month? Is this something you could get the children's opinions about?

6. Seek some parenting support this year. You could attend one of our parent-coaching workshops. You will be provided with current information and research as well as being asked really thought provoking questions to allow you to come up with your own solutions. Or you may prefer to try our individual parent-coaching. This is a powerful way to make deep and lasting change in your relationship with your child. Individual or couple parent-coaching can even be offered over the phone, which is a wonderful option for busy parents.

Whatever you choose, may this year bring you healthy and close family relationships!