



HELPING
FAMILIES
TEAM



South London
and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

CONNECTING AND STRENGTHENING

SHORT QUICK TIPS



CPCS
THE CENTRE FOR
PARENT & CHILD
SUPPORT

CONNECTING AND STRENGTHENING

Connecting and Strengthening strategies can help you to meet your child's emotional needs, increase positive behaviour, recognise your strengths as a parent, and improve your relationship with your child.

Email us: HelpingFamiliesTeam@slam.nhs.uk

Website: [Helping Families Programme](#)

Helping Families Team

Michael Rutter Centre

Maudsley Hospital

DeCrespigny Park

London

SE5 8AZ

USING PARENTING GROUNDWORK: STAYING CALM, CONNECTED AND KIND TO YOURSELF

Have a look at our separate Quick Tips guide on Parenting Groundwork before trying these strategies. Be kind and check in with yourself before trying parenting strategies:

- Ask, 'how am I feeling right now?', and 'am I feeling calm enough and ready to connect?'
- If not, try a groundwork strategy to settle yourself, such as deep breathing
- If you are not feeling calm, try explaining to your child, for example, 'Mum/Dad needs to calm down because I am feeling a bit stressed, give me five minutes and I will come back and really listen to you'
- Ideally aim for a relaxed and calm tone of voice, giving eye contact, a relaxed and open body posture, a friendly or relaxed expression, and gentle words.



QUICK WIN SUGGESTION:

Notice how your body is feeling and what it needs right now. Give yourself permission to do this first, whether that's a cup of tea, an online exercise class, or some stretching. Notice the effect on your body.

COMMUNICATING: TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT COVID-19

- Before talking, make sure that you feel calm and ready to connect to them
- Ask your child what they know, and answer their questions honestly
- Think about how old your child is when answering and simplify information
- Check if your child is okay after talking, remind them that you can talk anytime, and move onto a positive activity
- A helpful resource for younger children can be found on the Nurse Dotty Books website: [Dave the Dog is Worried about Coronavirus](#)

COMMUNICATING: LISTENING

Actively listening to your child helps them to feel valued and manage their emotions.

- Show that you are listening through your body language
- 'Reflect' back what they are saying by repeating it
- Give them time to explain, asking questions to help them if necessary. For example, 'that sounds fun, tell me more,' or, 'Let me stop what I'm doing so I can really listen to you'

COMMUNICATING: LABELLING

Currently we are all likely to be feeling an increased intensity of emotions. Labelling emotions helps children to learn about and manage their feelings.

- Notice and put words to feelings. Accept all feelings as valid
- Ask your child to pick an emoji that expresses their feelings
- Name feelings to defuse difficult situations, for example, 'I understand that you're angry'
- Focus on the emotion behind what your child is saying, or their behaviour, and checking this with them, for example, 'I'm not sure, but are you feeling sad at the moment?'



QUICK WIN SUGGESTION:

Practice spending 10 minutes really listening to your child. Ask them about their day. Think about your body language and your eye contact.

Reflect back what they are saying, and sound interested. Notice the effect on your child.

CONNECTING: SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

- Listen to your child, look at them, give them your full attention
- Try and give each child in the family some individual time with you each day
- You can give gentle prompts, but do not feel you need to ask lots of questions
- Focus on the connection between you, rather than getting the activity 'right'



QUICK WIN SUGGESTION:

Play a game with your child. Give your full attention and put your phone away. Focus on the connection with your child rather than getting it 'right'. Notice the effect on your child.

CELEBRATING: PRAISE

Praise is particularly important at this uncertain time, as it helps your child understand what's expected of them. It is also free and can be used as much as you like.

- Think about your tone of voice and facial expression
- Be specific about what behaviour you are praising. For example, 'well done for standing next to me in the queue when I asked', rather than, 'good boy'
- Use hugs and eye contact as well as words

CELEBRATING: REWARDS

Rewards make the current situation more bearable for families, and show your child that you notice and appreciate positive behaviour and effort.

- Stay alert and notice times when your child has made an effort or shown a positive behaviour. Be enthusiastic and take the lead
- Name the positive behaviour that you have noticed and what the reward will be
- Remember to reward yourself too! When and how could you give yourself a break?
- Do not take rewards back in any circumstances. If you need to use a consequence with your child, pick something else.
- Ideas for rewards: Habyts have a [useful list of ideas](#) to reward, motivate and inspire your children



QUICK WIN SUGGESTION:

Think about one positive behaviour you have seen from your child today. Tell them you have noticed it and suggest a reward such as your child picking tonight's TV programme. Notice the effect on your child.