

Nurture

Nurturing care of a child teaches them how to trust, be empathetic, and compassionate when they get older. When infants and young children are nurtured it actually helps the central nervous system grow appropriately. Nurture is defined as “To help and encourage the development of; to cherish”. Nurturing usually comes naturally to mothers.

When your child is an infant, touch, stroke, speak, sing and look deeply into their eyes as you do this. As your child gets older make sure your words of correction are balanced with hugs, comfort, words of affirmation, eye contact, and loving, caring responses.

Security

Children need security. They have no say or control of their world. Therefore, the parents must provide it to them. Children with parents who are dependable, consistent, respectful, and responsive to their children develop a sense of security.

What does a dependable parent act like? First they are trustworthy. Their child witnesses them telling the truth to others and the child also experiences their parent being honest with them.

Acceptance

Part of being nurturing as a parent is accepting your child’s feelings, thoughts, experiences and personality. This is called “*Parental Acceptance*” and it influences healthy interactions between you and your child. Many have a problem distinguishing between acceptance and agreement. Acceptance means acknowledgment and understanding of someone’s emotions. *You can accept what a child is feeling, but not accept the behavior the child is displaying.*

When a child understands that a parent accepts and values him or her as a person, including feelings and thoughts, and independent of behavior, the child will internalize this acceptance and valuing, leading to a positive internal sense of self (positive self-esteem) with a core belief for the child that “I’m okay” rather than “I’m not okay.” This is extremely important for any child.

Parental Acceptance Says:

**I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU ARE FEELING AND THINKING BECAUSE I CARE ABOUT YOU
I WOULD LIKE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING
I RESPECT WHAT YOU ARE FEELING, THINKING, AND EXPERIENCING
YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO ME AND I ENJOY BEING WITH YOU
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU I WILL HEAR YOUR FEELINGS BUT NOT GIVE IN TO YOUR DEMANDS**

A child receiving these messages from a parent has an incredible advantage in life, not only for current healthy childhood development, but also far into the future for optimal functioning in adult life.