



Behavior Bits



Volume 4: Healthy, Interactive Relationships

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The Role of Positive Relationships

At the start of each school year, teachers spend weeks establishing interactive games and activities that allow them to form relationships with your child. This is because in education, we believe that relationships are the foundation on which children develop all skills- both as learners and as humans!

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs states that in order for students to experience academic achievement and develop positive self-esteem, they must be connected in meaningful relationships that promote a sense of love and belonging.

The best way to maintain this safety of love and belonging at school and at home is through child-led interactions. Whether you have a toddler or a teen, interacting with your child in an activity of their choosing and letting them lead the conversation allows for you to continue to promote healthy, interactive relationships in your home.

<http://parenteffectivenessstraining.blogspot.com/2009/03/defining-needs-with-maslow-s-hierarchy.html>



Establishing Child-Led Interactions: Elementary Aged Students

Child-led interactions do not mean that the child is in charge of everything that he or she is doing. It means that he or she has more responsibility and freedom to explore and make mistakes if needed. This freedom helps to increase a child's self esteem and confidence.

There are several strategies that can help when using child-led interactions:

- Labeled praise of appropriate behavior
- Verbal reflection and/or description of what your child is doing or saying
- Imitation of what your child is doing or saying
- Showing enthusiasm

During these interactions, try not to take the lead away from the child by making commands, asking questions or giving criticism. If possible, ignore any inappropriate behavior that is not dangerous or destructive.



How Relationships and Play Build Social Skills



Playful interactions with your child are a natural way to teach social skills! Whether you are playing blocks with your preschooler or Minecraft with your teenager, you are teaching social skills. Play teaches your child when to be a leader and when to cooperate, how to take turns, and how to be a good sport whether he or she wins or loses. Playing with your child also builds trust, a sense of belonging and love, and memories!

How do I teach social skills through play?

The best and easiest way to teach social skills through play is by modeling these skills! For example, while playing a board game, model encouraging statements to your opponents such as, "Wow, you are in the lead!" or "I didn't think of that move, you've got a great strategy!" This models positive interactions to your child while maintaining your healthy relationship. You can also model turn taking by alternating who goes first or who gets to choose the activity that day. The best teaching happens when you are having fun!

Establishing Child-Led Interactions: Middle/High School Aged Students

While being cooped up with your teenage child may be getting more difficult as this extended school closure continues, it is still important to engage in child-led interactions. Age appropriate ways of incorporating child-led interactions for this age group could include:

- Playing or watching them play video games
- Doing your hair or nails together
- Making a favorite meal together
- Going on a walk together

It is important to set these times aside in advance so that your teen feels like they have control of these times. While interacting, allow your teen to lead the conversation and only provide feedback or criticism if your teen asks. Avoid asking questions and do your best to show a genuine interest in his or her chosen activity and conversation.