

# CONNECTION

In times of stress and chaos, connection with others is the most essential component for developing resilience.



## Infants and Toddlers: 0-2 years

- **Be present:** Be present with your baby or toddler by providing moments of your undivided attention. Look into your baby's eyes while nursing or giving a bottle, repeat the sounds and gurgles your baby makes, and narrate your baby's movements or play. These simple moments of attention can help you and your baby feel connected to one another and ease each other's stress and anxiety.



## Early Childhood: 3-6 years

- **Snuggle Time:** Preschoolers may regress to earlier stages of development or cling to you or a security item. Build into the routine snuggle times, read a book, play, or engage in nature, art or music together. Even if only for a few minutes, these snuggle breaks will increase your connection with your child.
- **Play:** Even if you only take a few minutes, take time to fully engage with your child in something they like to do. Read a story or engage in play. Play helps children feel seen and heard. Play provides an important opportunity to share connection to each other especially within stress.
- **Family activity:** Engage your young children in family activities such as reading a story or singing a song together. Connection is important through positive or fun interactions and it is also important through hard or sad moments. Connecting in the genuine emotions decreases feelings of aloneness within struggles and challenges.



## Middle Childhood: 7-12 years

- **Hugs not Shrugs:** As children get closer to adolescence, (think tweens) they may not want to be hugged as much. However, often during times of stress, children need both physical and emotional expressions of a parent's presence. Text messages, email, and sticky notes can be simple ways to let your child know you are there.
- **Provide Quiet Presence:** Sitting quietly with your child especially in times of heightened stress or emotion can often communicate more than words. Connecting non-verbally in genuine emotions decreases feelings of aloneness within struggles and challenges.
- **Play:** Even if you only take a few minutes, take time to fully engage with your child in something they like to do. Connecting in this way helps children feel seen and heard. Play provides an important opportunity to share connection to each other especially within stress.
  - **Family activity:** Engage your children in family activities such as reading a story or singing a song together. Connection is important through positive or fun interactions and it is also important through hard or sad moments.



## Adolescence: 13+ years

- **Connect before Correcting:** Teens may demonstrate angry behaviors as they work through their emotions. Correction is important, however connecting prior to correction can help build support in challenging times. For example, in response to an angry statement from a teen, you can say, "I hear you. Things are really hard right now. Try saying that another way"
- **Encourage Peer Support:** Encourage opportunities to connect with peers, especially with peers experiencing similar challenges.
- **Family activity:** Engage your teen in family activities. Connection is important through positive or fun interactions and it is also important through hard or sad moments.
- **Community/Spirituality/Faith:** Meditation, prayer and community can provide us with a sense of connection. Encourage and/or listen to your teen's ideas about who and what helps them feel connected and the practices that support that connection.