



## Building Social Connections through Communication and Empathy

### What are Social Connections and Positive Relationships?

#### a) Social Connections

- Social connections refer to the deep relationships we create with others that provide us with emotional, physical, or even psychological fulfillment.
- These connections can contribute to a sense of belonging, making us feel cared for and valued.
- Social connections are crucial for our mental and physical health, as they reduce stress, enhance well - being, and even improve our life span.

#### b) Positive Relationships

- A positive relationship is characterized by shared respect, empathy, and effective communication.
- A positive relationship supports both individuals, creating emotional support and safety.

### How can we build Social Connections with Positive Communication?

- Positive communication involves using language and even nonverbal cues to create an understanding environment.
  - a) Active Listening
  - b) Expressing Gratitude
  - c) Non Verbal Cues (Eye Contact, Smiles)
  - d) Constructive Responses
  - e) Conflict Resolution (Approach disagreements with empathy)
- By practicing these techniques, you can create more meaningful and deep relationships.

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## **How can we build Social Connections with Positive Empathy?**

- Empathy is the ability to understand and share another's emotions.  
Here is how you can use empathy more effectively:
  - a) Perspective Taking (Imagine yourself in their shoes)
  - b) Empathic Listening
  - c) Small Acts of Kindness
  - d) Working to find Common Ground (Similarities or agreements)
- Empathy not only strengthens your own individual relationships, but also contributes to a more inclusive community where everyone feels more supported and understood.

## **Exercise #1: Storytelling Circle**



Goal: Foster open communication, empathy, and listening skills between parent or caregiver and child

### Instructions:

1. Set aside time (10 - 15 minutes) daily or weekly for a storytelling session where both the child and parent share stories about their day or past experiences.
2. Parents/Caregivers can prompt their children with questions such as “What made you happy today?” or “What was an upsetting experience you had recently?”

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3. Practice your positive communication skills while building emotional bonds!

## Exercise #2: Emotion Charades



Goal: Improve emotional awareness, non verbal communication, and empathy

### Materials:

- Small Pieces of Paper
- Writing Utensils

### Instructions:

1. Write different emotions (i.e. excited, sad, embarrassed) on small pieces of paper
2. Take turns acting out the emotions while the other person guesses what it is
3. After each round, discuss situations where the “actor” has felt that emotion, and how they responded
4. This activity encourages both parents and children to recognize, express, and understand each other's emotions!