February 2023 School Newsletter

## Sharing Positive Attention with Your Children

Random Acts of Kindness Week is February 12-18th. This year’s theme is to make kindness the norm. There are resources for increasing kindness at home, school, and work on the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation [website](https://www.randomactsofkindness.org).

Parents and guardians have the extraordinary task of raising a child. The topics covered in the at-home materials are respect, caring, inclusiveness, integrity, responsibility, and courage. These resources help provide activities to encourage kindness in yourself and your child.

There are many ways to show kindness and care. Some of the smallest acts are the most important. Giving a positive word, offering a hug, listening well, and saying you love them. One of the most significant ways to care for your child is to give them your undivided attention.

Children of all ages need undivided attention. They need attention like they need food and oxygen. Some things that can divide a parent’s attention is being busy cooking food, distracted by tv, on a phone call, physically absent, or occupied with social media.

Provide your child with 10-15 minutes of your undivided attention daily. This one-on-one connection reduces mental health symptoms and provides security for youth. This time should consist of no phones, television, chores, or multitasking. It’s about connecting with your kid. This time is also most effective when labeled. Call it “you and me time,” “talk time,” or “our hangout.” Make sure your child knows this is daily time to connect with you.

Here are tips for this time of positive attention:

* **Listen, don’t ask for a performance.** “Can you say the alphabet?” “What is 16x19?” “Will you sing a song for me?” Questions like this can feel like a quiz or put performance pressure on kids. Listen to what they want to share instead of asking things you want to know.
* **Show interest in what your child is doing.** Initiate a positive conversation by showing interest in what your kid is doing. Ask questions about their interest or recent activities. This should go beyond, “How was your day?” Instead, try, “How is that new art class?”
* **Provide positive encouragement.** Encourage their positive behavior during this time. Thank them for helping clean up their toys or bringing plates to the kitchen.
* **Ask follow-up questions.** While questions can overwhelm or focus on your interests, follow-ups can continue the conversation. “What happened next?” “What did you think about that?”
* **Do an activity together.** Some people have a hard time connecting over conversation alone. Try going for a walk, putting together a puzzle, or playing a board game. Just avoid screens.
* **Ask for their opinions.** Help your kid develop independent thinking by seeking out their opinions. It can be something that has to do with them or not. “What color should we paint the living room?” “What do you think made your teacher upset about your behavior?” “Why do you think bullying is wrong?” “Why do you think attending class is important?”

Don’t forget to end your time together with a hug! Hugs are another form of [positive attention](https://medicine.iu.edu/blogs/pediatrics/child-development---the-importance-of-positive-attention) and are most effective when between 5-10 seconds.

Visit [www.letstalk.care](http://www.letstalk.care) for local resources on how to start conversations with your children.