

# Showing Love & Affection:

Remember, kids who are getting in trouble, acting-out, being “bad,” and who are otherwise “not deserving” of love and affection actually need to see, hear, and experience it MORE, not less. This is because, when kids are acting out, even if they don’t *feel* guilt, they know that they *are* guilty. This factual guilt often creates the subconscious thought that, “I AM bad,” which means they subconsciously conclude that, “I’m worthy of rejection.” This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy where they also think subconsciously, “If I am worthy of rejection, then that means I’m unlovable and worthless.” These hidden beliefs easily lead to the formation of a shame-based self-image. The only remedy for this is ongoing, unconditional love and affection from parents (which is NOT the same thing as condoning or approving of toxic behaviors). Here’s a list of ways to show love and affection that has been compiled after years of talking with other parents in this class:

- Saying, “I love you” / giving a hug or a kiss on the head / writing “I love you” texts and notes
- Keeping promises
- Trusting them with something small, then praising them when they are successful
- Explaining vs. commanding
- Providing them with new, appropriate, pro-social, healthy experiences that appeal to their likes and interests
- Eating dinner together with cell phones off
- Giving them your full attention when they’re talking / using Active Listening skills
- Validating their feelings when appropriate to do so / empathizing
- Asking them for their opinion / asking them for input, and then using that input in a constructive way
- Family Game Night
- Going for a Sunday drive / picking a new park or museum to visit
- Openly praying for them and their concerns / problems
- Actively learning about things they like and/or are good at
- Walking the dog together
- Arranging for something fun that you know they’ll enjoy (with supervision)
- Giving honest compliments
- Catching them doing something right, then praising them for it
- Helping them to build on their talents and strengths
- Bragging about something they said/did in front of others
- Coming to their defense when it’s appropriate to do so
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