

# CREATING PREDICTABILITY

Everyone likes to know what's going to happen in their day; kids are no different. In fact, kids need to know what is about to happen far more than adults do. Familiar routines or schedules are calming for children, as they reduce uncertainty and fear of the unknown.

Predictability gives kids the ability to know what to expect, so that they can organise themselves and their behaviour accordingly. Life can be unpredictable and routines often change - it's impossible to make sure that every day turns out the way we planned. This is OK!

There are several ways to give your child predictability, even when things change unexpectedly.



## MORNING



WAKE UP



GET DRESSED



BREAKFAST



BRUSH TEETH

## DAYTIME



BUS



SCHOOL



SOCCER  
WITH DAD



HOMEWORK

## EVENING



PACK BAG



DINNER



SHOWER



BEDTIME STORY  
WITH MUM

### Top tip

→ Sometimes showing children what will happen in their day can be easier for them to understand than telling them. Create a visual schedule, such as the one shown here, that helps visualise what the day might look like.



## HOW TO BE PREDICTABLE

### COMMUNICATE

Tell your child what's going to happen ahead of time. This will help them to understand what they can expect.

### CONSISTENCY

Respond to emotions and situations in a calm and consistent way. Try to focus on the feelings, rather than the behaviours through validation.

### CONNECTION

Make time each day to connect with your child. Show interest in what they love to do without interfering with your ideas. A fun activity that you both enjoy is a great way to build connection.

### ROUTINES

Every day doesn't have to be exactly the same, but try to make sure that some times of day consistently happen in the same way. For example, always have cuddles before bed time, or always have a singalong in the car on the way home from school.

### GIVE WARNING

Give your kids a clear warning before an activity needs to change. For example, 'Five more swings and then we leave the park' or, 'after this episode, the TV is being turned off'. Visual timer apps on your phone are helpful, because kids often don't understand the concept of time passing. Don't forget to be empathic if they're still upset that it's time to go!

### PICTURES/VISUALS

Showing children what will happen in their day while you are telling them about it can make it easier for them to understand. This could be something as simple as showing them a picture on your phone of where you are going next, or more structured, such as a visual schedule.



### If there's one thing to remember it's...

- Set aside some time each day to spend connecting with your child. Whether it be through reading a book together, playing a game, or even just chatting before bed, having a regular check-in will help them to feel supported and safe.

# TAKING TURNS

Turn Taking is the act of allowing your child to take turns in play and conversations. Turn Taking helps children develop the skills needed for making friends, waiting, problem solving and negotiating. This builds resilience by increasing the positive relationships in a child's world.

## Good Turn Taking activities

- **Shared book reading**  
Looking at the pictures on the page together. You don't need to read the words in the book.
- **Blowing bubbles**  
Get down on your child's level, with each of you taking turns to blow and react to the bubbles.
- **Stirring the cake mix together**  
Exaggerating how you add, stir and taste all of the yummy ingredients.
- **Messy play**  
For example, with water and sand. Don't be afraid to get messy. Children love messy play and it leads to great turn-taking moments together.

## HOW TO PROMOTE TURN TAKING

### LET YOUR CHILD LEAD

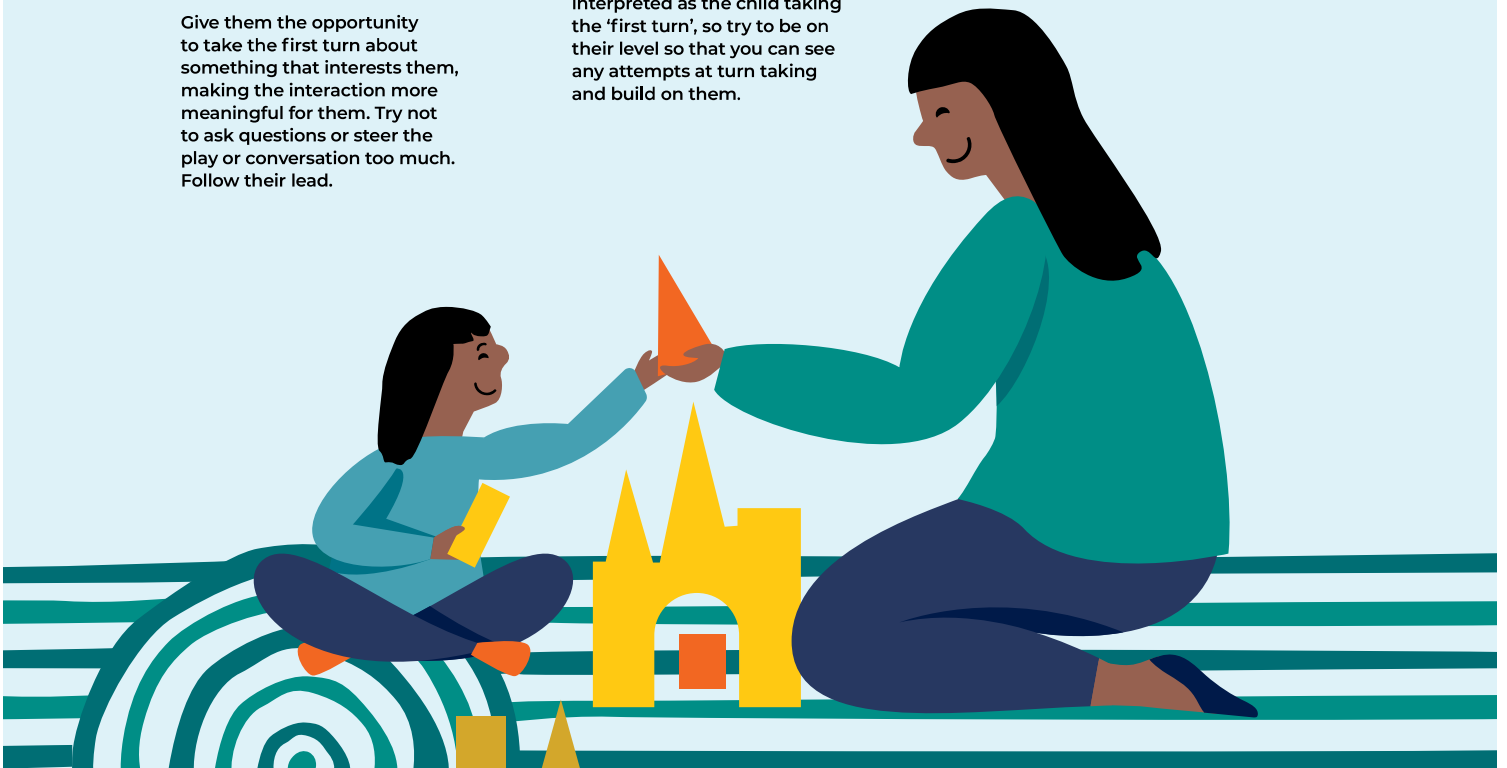
Give them the opportunity to take the first turn about something that interests them, making the interaction more meaningful for them. Try not to ask questions or steer the play or conversation too much. Follow their lead.

### BE OBSERVANT

Get down to your child's eye level so that you can both observe each other's facial expressions and gestures. Smiles, eye contact, gestures, sounds and words can all be interpreted as the child taking the 'first turn', so try to be on their level so that you can see any attempts at turn taking and build on them.

### WAIT AND LISTEN

As with the first point, it's important that you wait for your child to lead. Remember, children don't need to only use words to send you a message. They might give you a look or a gesture and this can be the start of them taking turns. Treat any communication attempt as your child's 'first turn' and build on that. If they make a sound, gesture, face, word etc., you respond with something similar to keep the 'turn taking' going.



## SLEEP TIPS FOR A WELL-RESTED CHILD

- Create a good sleeping environment
- Limit screen time before bed
- Ensure bedrooms are for sleeping
- Have a regular routine
- Establish a sleep pattern
- Go to bed on a full tummy
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks before bed
- Exercise regularly

Remember, if your child is suffering from persistent sleep problems, it's always best to seek help from your local GP or paediatrician

# GETTING ENOUGH REST



Sleep restores children physically, helps them grow and boosts immunity. Children of all ages need enough rest and sleep so that they can play, learn and concentrate to the best of their ability and so they don't get overtired. But the amount they need varies. Being well-rested helps us to stay regulated, which again helps us to build resilience.

Good-quality sleep can help your child to be a successful learner and a happier child. Poor sleep, or not enough rest in the day, can affect behaviour and make your child frustrated, restless and tired.

A good night's sleep is about getting to sleep and staying asleep. Most children wake up by themselves in the morning if they're getting enough good-quality sleep.

These proven sleep tips can help your child to learn to fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer, meaning more restful sleep for them and more shut-eye for you!

### Did you know?

- Children of all ages need to get enough sleep so they can play, learn and concentrate during the day.
- A regular bedtime routine can get children used to falling asleep at the same time every night. It also helps to get your child up at about the same time each morning.



# CONNECTING WITH KIDS

We all crave those moments with our children that make our hearts melt. Connection is as important to us as parents as it is to our children, because it makes parenting worth all the sacrifices. Connection makes kids feel safe, which is essential for healthy development. That connection is often the reason children willingly follow our rules. Children who feel strongly connected to their parents want to cooperate, if they can. Kids will, of course, still be kids, which means their emotions will sometimes overwhelm them. But if they trust us to understand and support them, they'll be more motivated to follow our lead.

## Key points



- When it comes to connecting with children, it isn't necessarily about talking at them, but rather tuning in and listening to them. See Emotions chapter on page 8 for more info.
- When you make time to connect with them, your child learns that they are important, loved and cared for. This helps them thrive emotionally and physically!



# TIPS FOR CONNECTING WITH KIDS



## BE OPEN

Be prepared to talk about all sorts of feelings, not just nice things and good news, but also anger, embarrassment, sadness or fear.

## TUNE IN

Pay attention to your child's body language and what they might be trying to tell you through non-verbal communication. For example, 'You're very quiet today. Did something happen at school?'. Likewise, be aware of your own body language.

## ASK THEIR OPINIONS

Encourage your child to express their own ideas and opinions. It will help them to feel valued and heard.

## GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT

Give praise when they are doing the right thing, such as taking turns or being kind. It reinforces good behaviour and helps children to feel confident and happy. Be descriptive – make sure they know what they are being praised for!

## MAKE TIME

Set aside time for talking and listening. Family meals can be a great time to do this.

## RESPOND WITH EMPATHY

Respond to emotion with a statement about how they are feeling, or why they are feeling like that, before you reinforce a rule or redirect them.

## SHARE LOVE, UNCONDITIONALLY

Tell them that you love them. Often. Try to separate the child from their behaviour. For example, 'I can see that you're frustrated; I'm not going to let you hit your brother. I'm going to help you move away from him. It's hard feeling this way. I'm going to sit with you while you have these big feelings. When you're ready for a cuddle, I'm here.' Your child needs to understand that your love is not conditional.

## BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Our children learn how to communicate by watching us. When you talk with your child (and others) in a respectful way, this gives powerful messages about positive communication. Let your child finish talking before you respond, don't cut them off and resist the urge to correct them.

## ACTIVELY LISTEN

Turn off phones and remove any other distractions. This shows them that you're completely focused.

## SHARE CULTURE

Sharing stories, practices, songs or rituals from your own culture and community is an important factor in developing your child's identity and, in-turn, will help to build their resilience.

## Communicating with babies

Right from birth, warm, gentle and responsive communication helps babies to feel safe and secure in their worlds. It also builds and strengthens the relationship between children and their parents or carers.

### Top tips:

- Talk a lot to your newborn and leave pauses as if you were having a conversation. When they babble, babble back and wait and see if you get a response.
- Talk in the first person, rather than using third-person phrases such as 'Mummy loves Billy'. Instead say, 'I love you'. This will help them use correct pronouns earlier on.
- Talk your babies through everyday activities. For example, explain what you are doing as you change their nappy; tell them you are about to leave a room and that you will be right back.



## Communicating with toddlers

Toddlers understand much more than they can express.

### Top tips:

- Encourage language development by listening patiently and trying not to correct their grammar or finish their sentences.
- Talk about real things rather than asking children to label objects and colours. Explain what you are doing or what is happening so there is meaning in what you say. For example, instead of pointing at a ball and saying 'what is that?' or 'what colour is that?', say 'wow, that red ball bounces so high!'.

# COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR KIDS



## Communicating with older kids

Primary school-aged children have more developed language skills and are often able to communicate better. However, some kids at this age choose to be more selective with the information they share.

### Top tips:

- Try to avoid questions that result in 'Yes' or 'No' answers to encourage more sharing.
- Don't ask questions that you already know the answer to. For example, instead of asking 'Is that a dirty uniform?', say 'I can see that uniform is dirty. There is a clean one here'.



## CONNECTING WITH CULTURE

Many cultural practices involve some of the activities already discussed in this booklet, such as physical movement, connecting with nature and participating in song, dance or other artistic expressions.

By encouraging children to participate in activities or rituals that are unique to their culture, we not only help them to connect with their shared cultural heritage, but also to build their sense of belonging, identity and overall wellbeing.

### Cultural identity

→ Cultural identity is important to promote resilience, self-esteem and self-worth and is seen as a protective factor in children's lives. For First Nations peoples, strong cultural identities are maintained through an ongoing connection to Country, family, Elders and participation in cultural practices.