

What Do Children Need?

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[This document is a work in progress; I would appreciate any input anyone might have to offer on this topic. – JRF]

- ◆ Children need to be protected and provided for.
 - Children need to be kept safe (includes protection from exposure to alcohol and drug abuse).
 - Children need to receive an abundance of appropriate (non-sexual) touch.
 - Children need proper nutrition and regular meal times.
 - Children need proper rest and sleep.
 - Children need appropriate clothing.
 - Children need appropriate and clean shelter.
 - Children need a (relatively) non-anxious environment.
 - Children need time for play and exercise, and appropriate peer socialization.
 - Children need sufficient medical and dental care.

- ◆ Children need to be cherished, enjoyed, appreciated, celebrated and affirmed.
 - Children need to be listened to with understanding, sympathy, acceptance and respect.
 - Children need to be affirmed as “good” and valuable; they need to be welcomed, invited, and actively included in conversations, family time and social situations.
 - Children need to be encouraged in their uniqueness and unique contribution, and to have their opinions, input and contributions valued.

- ◆ Children need to be encouraged in the development of their individuality and separateness.
 - Children need to be given emotional and social “space” so that they can experience personal/ interpersonal control in age-appropriate ways (including privacy).
 - Children need to be allowed to be assertive (and even adversarial) in age-appropriate ways.
 - Children need to be encouraged to be adventurous and risk-taking in age-appropriate ways.

- ◆ Children need to learn from observation how to function as adults, how to develop relationships and how live in community.
 - Children need to see adults engaging in self-care, work, recreation and leisure, service to others and spirituality/worship.
 - Children need to see adults developing relationships and making friends, expressing emotions (both “positive” and “negative”), discussing differences and resolving conflicts respectfully, admitting mistakes and apologizing, extending forgiveness and pursuing reconciliation.
 - Children need to experience themselves in various group settings – nuclear family, siblings, extended family, friends, teams, ethnic group, neighborhood, civic life, etc.
 - Children need to experience and participate in (in age-appropriate ways) life-cycle milestones and rituals, e.g., births, birthday parties and anniversaries, “coming of age” ceremonies, weddings, later-life transitions, and funerals/grieving rituals.

- ◆ Children need to be provided with disciplines, boundaries, education and training, and responsibilities.
 - Children need to be given boundaries and discipline that are age-appropriate, sympathetic and not abusive.
 - Children need to be instilled with a love of learning (both self- and other-directed).
 - Children need to be taught about the healthy functioning of their minds, emotions, bodies and spirits.
 - Children need to be given opportunities to expand their experiences of themselves, others and the world through participation in the arts and music, sports, travel, etc.
 - Children need to be instructed in their use of “self” skills (self-soothing, self-regulation, self-esteem, self-stimulation, self-sympathy, self-observation).
 - Children need to be given age-appropriate and meaningful chores and other responsibilities within the family.