

Women's Auxiliary Department

Topic: Communicate Love

When we show affection to young people, we give them a sense of lovability. Expressing affection to young people through loving words and appropriate touch communicates to them that they are worth loving. Every expression of care and closeness provides emotional reinforcement, helping children to realize that they are loved. As the apostle Paul says, "*...let us love one another, for love is of God...*"

I. Looking For Love in All the Wrong Places

There are so many young people who are starved for affection from their parents.

Research shows that youth who are "very close" to their parents are:

- more likely to feel "very satisfied" with their life;
- more likely to abstain from pre-marital sex ;
- more likely to espouse biblical standards of truth and morality;
- more likely to attend church;
- more likely to read their Bible consistently
- more likely to pray daily

II. Ways to Communicate Love to Our Youth

There are three excellent ways to communicate love and affection to your children. First and foremost, displaying love and affection to one another as husband and wife. Second, expressing love *verbally* to your children. Third, you can *demonstrate* love physically.

A. Be Loving and Affectionate in Your Marriage

Children feel loved and cared for when their parents are openly but appropriately affectionate in their home. As Mom and Dad demonstrate a loving

marriage relationship through hugs, handholding, kisses, kind words, and considerate care for one another, their children benefit from the emotional warmth.

B. Express Love and Affection Verbally

Children need to hear loving words from their parents, and they need to hear them often. They need to hear you say, "I love you" with **sincere devotion**. Obviously, if you rattle off these three words like a commercial one hundred times a day, they will lose their impact. Affectionate and loving words must come from the heart.

Be creative and look for ways to express love and affection beyond just saying "I love you." For example, use other affectionate expressions like: "You're really special"; "You're the best"; "You add so much joy to my life." And do not just *speak* your words of love. Use every means at your disposal: greeting cards, notes taped on a bedroom door, email, voice-mail messages, and handwritten letters. Be creative, but **be sincere**.

C. Demonstrate Physical Affection

The physical connection of appropriate loving touch somehow strengthens the emotional connection between parent and child. Hugs, kisses, gentle pats, and arm around the shoulder are common forms of physical affection. Physical touch alone will not supply the emotional connection, but it is difficult to maintain a loving emotional bond without the reinforcement of physical affection.

Older children and teenagers may act as if they don't need or want a lot of physical affection. But, they need it. Your children's inborn need for a loving touch may change a little during adolescence, but it never goes away. However, you may need to discover more timely and acceptable ways to demonstrate your affection in order not to embarrass your child. You may want to be careful not to overdo your affections with your kids in front of others. But your private hugs and kisses can turn your children into a very loving and affectionate young adult.

III. Conclusion

Take every opportunity to express love and affection to your children and young people in general. There are many young people who are from broken homes or are emotionally neglected by their parents, and you can be an instrument of God's love by giving them the love and affection they need.