

21 ways to let your children know you love them

1. Learn sign language for 'I love you' and use it with them when in public.
2. Have a favourite colour day for each child – with clothes, food and surprises in their favourite colour.
3. Have a grab-bag party where each person makes a small surprise for another family member.
4. Keep an all about me file for each child's certificates, 'good work' or 'player of the day' cards etc.
5. Have a graffiti sheet for people to put up statements such as 'I like Tom because...'
6. Create a special 'secret code' between the two of you and send your child coded messages.
7. Take them to the beach to watch the sunrise or sunset.
8. Make a 'welcome home' sign to hang up when they return from time spent away.
9. Together make a hut with rugs and furniture then read stories in the dark by torchlight.
10. Bake and ice a cake to celebrate an ordinary day.
11. Turn the lights off one evening and have a candlelit family dinner.
12. Write a message on their back with your finger.
13. Regularly comment positively on their appearance.



Love is time spent together fishing
chatting about everything
usually catching nothing

14. Teach them things: to blow soap bubbles, make kites, cook chocolate crackles.
15. Invent special fun and loving nick names especially for them.
16. Each night before bed ask them what's the best thing that happened to you today? – tell them yours.
17. Send them a letter through the mail.
18. Put a surprise note under their pillow or in their lunch box.
19. Make them breakfast in bed.
20. Go for a mystery bike ride together – make it really exciting and have a secret destination.
21. Ask them out on a special date – just you and them.

Source: [www. ParentsInc.org.nz](http://www.ParentsInc.org.nz)

Build habitual ways of showing affection

'Interpersonal rewards (time and affection) are more important than material rewards.'
Dr Paula Barrett, Director of The Friends Program for Youth at Flinders University

- Ensure there is good one-to-one time with each child, each day – as simple as sitting on the bed to chat at bedtime.
- One parent says, 'Find something that your child and you both like, and do it together'.
- Author Dr Ross Campbell says parents need to learn to give each child focused attention, with eye and physical contact. In *How to Really Love Your Teenager*, Dr Ross Campbell reminds parents that it is their responsibility to 'emotionally nourish' their children. It is wrong, he says, for parents to look to children for their own emotional support.
- Paula Barrett advises of the importance of being positive and encouraging, and avoiding negative refrains. She warns against an over-reliance on negative consequences and on cold shouldering as a means of discipline.