

You are your child's most important teacher

What your child learns from you and other family members will stay with them throughout their lives.

It doesn't matter what your family looks like – you could be a single parent or belong to an extended family, your child learns through the relationships they have within *your* family.

Most importantly, learning that they are valued and their world is safe and secure becomes the foundation for all the new behaviours, attitudes and skills your child will later learn.

Whenever you spend time with your child, you are teaching

Your child watches and copies what you do and say. This means you are teaching even when you're unaware of it.

As your child's most powerful and important teacher you will also take on different roles at different times. You will ask questions and offer ideas. You will demonstrate how to do things and also be a coach (encouraging and motivating your child). You will be a source of knowledge about the world and how it works. You might also be learn and discover new things alongside your child.

Learning is a social experience that can happen anywhere and at

any time – at home, at the park, in the community, as well as in formal settings. The trick is noticing when it is happening (or could happen) and making the most of those opportunities.

What does this mean for me?

- Value what you know about your child and don't underestimate your importance and knowledge. Your knowledge is important to share with early childhood educators, practitioners and school.
- Your child learns from your behaviour, conversations and actions. If you want your child to be compassionate, how do you model being kind? If you want your child to respect the environment, what do they see you doing? If you want your child to listen, first listen closely to them.
- Don't try to be a formal 'teacher'. Your child will have plenty of them as they grow older. Love your child and enjoy being a parent or carer or grandparent or uncle. Your child's learning will happen without flash cards, and fancy 'educational' toys. Often the most valuable lessons are when you share time and experiences together.
- Spend time with your child – without hovering over them. Include them in what you are

doing and thinking. Give them lots of time to play. Play with them.

- Have conversations with them where you ask an open question and listen to their response and then respond.
- Show your child the world outside your home. Visit the library, museum, art gallery or go to a playground. Take a trip on a train or bus – just for the sake of seeing the world. Go for walks in the bush or play at the beach. Being out and about in the world not only builds that important sense of belonging to a community, it gives your child the chance to explore, to experiment and to create.
- Above all, have fun and enjoy learning along with your child.

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