

Nine Ways to Make Your Daughter Feel Loved

By Becky Freeman

1. Give her the gift of your presence. Listen with focused attention, look her in the eyes, sit down, and slow down. Touch her in nurturing ways: stroke her hair, rub her arm, hug her.

2. Speak to her with respect and kindness. If you are stuck in a rut of being cranky with your kids, try the mental trick of treating them like guests in your home for a day. My mom used to say, “Treat your guests like family, and your family like guests.”

3. Encourage her efforts with enthusiasm. Let her know she has her own private cheerleader to count on at home. Convey that it is her courage to try new things that makes you proud, whatever the results.

4. Seek first to understand your daughter’s point of view. Let her know you really hear her, before you express your own opinion. This is one of the most challenging habits to implement!

5. Answer her honest questions with honest answers. “Good question! I don’t know, but I’ll try to find out” is always appropriate.

6. Say "yes" whenever you possibly can. Reserve "no" for when it is necessary.

7. Ask her opinion. Girls love giving advice. Or even better yet, share something you’ve learned *from* her. You can almost see the self-esteem rising in a child’s face when you say something as simple as, “Come taste this soup, would you? Do you think it needs more salt? More garlic? What do you think?”

8. Allow your daughter to feel any feelings she may have. In fact, if there is such a thing as a functional family, the common denominator is that all feelings are allowed and able to be expressed. However, you do have to teach her ways she can express those feelings - and ways she cannot - without damaging relationships.

9. Let her cry, and don’t be afraid to cry with her, too. Part of teaching empathy and tolerance is to allow for the “crankies” in your family now and then. If it becomes habitual, you’ll have to take a different turn, but everyone has bad days, and you will want her to learn to be understanding when you are frustrated with life, too.

Adapted from Mom's Everything Book for Daughters (2002) by Becky Freeman, Zondervan Publishing.