

CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND INTERVENTION (CYDI)

Ways to make your kids feel loved and supported: Tips for parents from toddlerhood through early adulthood

When talking about being a good parent, parents probably are thinking about whether they discipline their kids in a non-violent way, whether they set up consistent rules and implement them appropriately, or whether they are able to protect their child from threat. However, parenting is much more than simply avoiding negative behaviors (e.g., not yelling at your kids), enforcing appropriate rules (e.g., no screen time until schoolwork is done), or only caring about your child's safety. What is more important, but often less emphasized, is positive parenting. Positive parenting, like soil nutrition for plants, is critical for children's healthy interpersonal relationships, strength and competence development, and long-term physical and mental well-being. It refers to child-centered interactions between the parent and the child that allow the child to better connect to their true self and realize their full potential (to read more: <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/application-parenting/>; <https://positivepsychology.com/positive-parenting>).

Positive parenting has many facets (e.g., encouragement, quality time), but four important components are shared across developmental stages. Below, I'll explain what they are and then give some specific tips from toddlerhood to early adulthood.



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<https://mxia.people.ua.edu/feeling.html>

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**CURRENT RESEARCH
STUDIES**

1. **Accepting.** *Accepting your child for who they are, flaws and all, without conditions.*

Toddlerhood: Responding positively to your child's need (e.g., hugging) even when they are throwing a tantrum or having a meltdown, or simply remaining present and calm to demonstrate unconditional regard.

Childhood: Let your child know that it's okay to learn at their own pace (which may be slower than their peers sometime) and to make mistakes.

Adolescence: Your child may want to rebel against authority, and their actions may hurt your feelings at times, but you still love them unconditionally.

Early adulthood: When they are hurt or need someone to talk to, you are always there for them, as a safe haven for them, no matter when, where, or for what.

3. **Valuing.** *Making your child feel important and special, as well as recognizing and appreciating their strengths, progress, positive qualities, and accomplishments.*

Toddlerhood: Showing your interest and attention to your child, as well as cherishing them with kisses, hugs, praises, and appraisals.

Childhood: Taking an interest in what your child is interested in, celebrating special days and complimenting their accomplishments, and making time to accompany them.

Adolescence: Making your child feel important by attending their events and bragging about their accomplishments, as well as showing your child their strengths even when they face setbacks.

Early adulthood: Consulting with your child before making major decisions, posting them on social media to show you are proud of them, and always being available and supportive when needed.

2. **Understanding.** *Truly seeing your child from heart, and being tuned into their feelings, thoughts, and needs.*

Toddlerhood: Being sensitive to your child's cues and hints, trying your best to understand what they need and wish to communicate.

Childhood: Encouraging your child to talk about their true feelings, listening to them and being a playmate as a friend to truly be in tuned with their experience and feelings

Adolescence: When your child exhibits "nonsense", try to put yourself in their shoes, reflect on your own adolescent experience, and respond nonjudgmentally.

Early adulthood: Listen attentively when conversating, and proactively check in and initiate deep conversations with them on a regular basis to get to know them better.

4. **Supporting autonomy.** *Giving your child the opportunity to choose and support their own decisions based on their free will (whenever appropriate).*

Toddlerhood: Because your child still needs a lot of guidance, autonomy can be granted in minor ways, such as allowing them to choose whether to brush their teeth first or take a shower first, or whether to wear a pink kitty or a blue tiger shirt.

Childhood: Allow your child to choose the after-school program(s) in which they is interested; allow your child to choose the healthy foods that they prefer when you go grocery shopping.

Adolescence: Being aware of your own opinions and values, and recognizing your child might have a different opinion that should be respected.

Early adulthood: Being completely supportive of their decisions, giving advice only when they ask for it, and accepting the fact that they may fail at times but being okay with it because that's how they learn the world and get to know themselves better.

CYDI MINI WORKSHOPS

The CYDI is proud to highlight clinical research going on at The University of Alabama as well as the work of our community partners. These half-hour workshops are designed for parents, caregivers, and educators and offered free of charge; register online to learn more!

MONDAY, MARCH 28
4:30-5:00PM
DR. HEATHER GUNN

***We Need More Sleep! Guidance for
Improving Sleep Health of Parents and
Their Kids***

REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/UACYDI](https://tinyurl.com/uacydi)



FRIDAY, APRIL 8
1:00-1:30PM
DR. MENGYA XIA

***What Makes Kids Feel Loved?
General Tips for Positive Parenting***

REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/2P98DDN6](https://tinyurl.com/2p98ddn6)

**FIND RECORDINGS OF PAST
MINI WORKSHOPS HERE:**



[HTTPS://CYDI.UA.EDU/EVENTS.HTML](https://cydi.ua.edu/events.html)



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SPRING 2022

CYDI COLLOQUIA

The CYDI is proud to sponsor talks from experts in Alabama and around the country which focus on research related to child development and associated clinical interventions. These one-hour lectures are geared toward researchers and providers; register online to learn more!



LEAH LEFEBVRE, PHD

TBD

**MONDAY, APRIL 14
3:00-4:00 PM CDT**

**REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://UA-
EDU.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTER/TZEUC-
IGQZ0RG7JHRQ79AZT5KG0KN6SGFOFL](https://ua-edu.zoom.us/join/9aZT5KG0KN6SGFOFL)**

TERESA ANN GRENAWALT, PHD

**AUTISM IN THE WORKFORCE: KEYS TO
A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 21
12:00-1:00 PM CDT**

**REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://UA-
EDU.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTER/TZELDE2RQJWIET
C3H-JLK7CWBQGDJXUEU_KS](https://ua-edu.zoom.us/join/2RQJWIETC3H-JLK7CWBQGDJXUEU_KS)**



CHUONG BUI, PHD

**EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS: MIND THE
SUBTLE**

**THURSDAY, MAY 12
10:00-11:00 AM CDT**

**REGISTER HERE;
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/CYDI5-12-22](https://tinyurl.com/cydi5-12-22)**



**ARE YOU AN EDUCATOR, CLINICIAN,
ORGANIZATION, OR PROFESSIONAL AND WANT TO
BE A CYDI PARTNER?
COMPLETE OUR PARTNERSHIP SURVEY AND LET US
KNOW!**



CURRENT RESEARCH STUDIES

Social Attention Study

Study for 11-13 year olds to learn about how our brains understand people

b.rad.laboratory@gmail.com
205-348-4201

Brain Research Study

Study for 10-17 year olds with or without autism to learn about the social brain

b.rad.laboratory@gmail.com
205-348-4201

The Peer & Parent Relationship Study

Online survey for teens with autism to learn how they view parent and peer relationships

lwatkins2@ua.edu

JOIN OUR REGISTRY TO BE NOTIFIED ABOUT STUDIES AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES!



The FEELING Study

Online surveys for teens in high school and their caregivers

mxia3@ua.edu

FAST: Facial Affect Sensitivity Training Study

Intervention for 6-11 year olds who struggle with lack of concern for consequences

fastclinicaltrial@ua.edu
205-348-2472

EASE: Managing Emotions for Teens and Young Adults with Autism

Intervention for 12-21 year olds with autism who struggle with managing emotions

npowell@ua.edu
205-348-6551

SMILE: Online Social Counseling Program for Children with Autism

Study for 8-12 year olds with autism who struggle with social relationships

glsimmons@crimson.ua.edu
205-547-0870