



KNOW! HOW TO EXPAND YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

JULY 2026

Read on for five simple ways to help your child build meaningful community connections

Strong community connections help children grow and thrive. Research shows that trusted adults, such as teachers, coaches, family friends, neighbors, and mentors, can strengthen a child's academic, social, and emotional well-being while helping reduce risky behaviors. Building a strong network of support helps young people feel connected, resilient, and supported.

Expanding your child's community of support can also benefit you by giving your family more people to lean on when needed. You don't have to be the only support for your child. A strong support system can make a lasting difference in your child's life. Here's how:

A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM CAN:

- Increase belonging
- Reduce isolation
- Improve social skills
- Provide trusted adults they can turn to for help
- Introduce new people and experiences
- Build resilience, and
- Increase positive influences in their life.

CHECK IN FIRST

Start by asking your child about the supportive adults already in their life. Who do they trust? Who do they feel comfortable going to for help? What connections do they wish they had? Understanding your child's experience can help you strengthen current relationships and build new ones.

TALKING TIP

Ask your child what they like about the supportive adults in their life. Try asking, "What's your favorite thing about spending time with [trusted adult], and why?" This can help you understand the kinds of relationships your child values and prevent them from feeling pressured into unwanted connections.

EXPAND FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Family members and trusted family friends can play an important role in a child's support system. Encourage these connections through shared activities, celebrations, or regular phone and video calls. Even one strong, supportive relationship can help a child feel connected, valued, and supported.

TALKING TIP

Look through family photos together and share stories about important relationships from your childhood. This can spark your child's interest in getting to know different relatives, especially those they may not see often.

EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Help your child build connections by exploring your community together. Point out trusted adults like librarians, crossing guards, and other community helpers, and talk about the important roles they play. Attending local events, festivals, or community gatherings is another great way to help children build positive relationships, strengthen their sense of belonging, and feel connected to their community.

TALKING TIP

Model friendly social behavior by smiling, waving, or saying hello to neighbors. Children learn social skills by watching the adults around them. Positive interactions with your neighbors will help your child learn how to get along with others.

EXPAND SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

School is often one of the biggest sources of community for children. Encourage your child to build positive relationships not only with peers, but also with teachers, coaches, counselors, librarians, nurses, and other school staff.

Attending school events and joining extracurricular activities can also help your child feel like an important part of their school and introduce them to new trusted adults. Support your child in finding an extracurricular activity that they enjoy, and, when you can, bring your family to school events like potlucks, family nights, and service days.

TALKING TIP

Regularly ask your child about the people at school they trust. Questions like, "Who could you go to if you needed help at school?" can reinforce that school is a place of support and connection.

KEEP THEM SAFE

While community connections are important, your child's safety always comes first. Get to know the adults who spend time with your child, observe interactions when possible, and check in regularly.

It's also important to set boundaries for online interactions. You might decide, for example, that adults should not privately message or follow your child on social media without your knowledge. Talk through these boundaries with both your child and the adult so that everyone is on the same page.

TALKING TIP

Encourage your child to talk openly about the adults in their life. Ask questions like, "How was your lesson with [trusted adult]?" and remind them they should always tell you if someone makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

RESOURCES

- [Be a Trusted Adult For Young People in Your Life | National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Know! Five Ways to Strengthen Your Relationships with Youth | Prevention Action Alliance](#)
- [Ohio Festivals and Events | State of Ohio](#)
- [Family Activities, Events for Parents, and More Timely Resources \(Central Ohio\) | CAP4Kids](#)
- [Library Finder | CareerOneStop](#)
- [Friendship and Community | Sesame Workshop](#)

SOURCES

- [Developmental Relationships | Search Institute](#)
- [The power of connection and building positive relationships | Dayton Children's](#)
- [Why Your Child Needs a Support System and How to Build One | Nationwide Children's](#)
- [Community connections for children: family, friends, neighbours and local organisations | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Why School Belonging Matters | Kids Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Three ways parents and educators can build connection at school | Mental Health America](#)

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