



Social Support

Build Supportive Relationships
Within and Outside Family

Relationship with Your Parenting Partner

A parenting partner is someone who you can discuss the joys and challenges of parenting. Your parenting partner may be your spouse, family member, or close friend. Support, physical or emotional, from your parenting partner can be very helpful, especially when you feel stress. Your parenting partner may be able to help you take care of your child, prepare meals, or do laundry.

Communication plays an important role in building a supportive relationship with your parenting partner. Here are some tips for good communication with your parenting partner.

More Communication Tips

- Express your feelings clearly, using “I” statements. For example, “I get so mad when I come home and the dishes are not done.”
- Bring up problems without blame, judgment, and criticism.
- Talk about problems when both of you are feeling good.
- Focus on the positive.
- Use humor.

Call it a clan,
call it a network,
call it a tribe,
call it a family.
Whatever you call it,
whoever you are,
you need one.

- Jane Howard

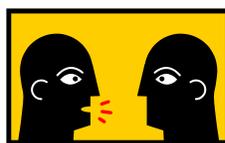


Friendship

Friends are as important as family members in your life. Friends share experiences, interests, and values. Close, quality friendships can bring you emotional support, information, and help on a daily basis and in time of trouble. Marriage or having a child sometimes makes it difficult to keep in touch with your friends. Schedule a time to get together with your friends on a regular basis. If you find it hard to meet or you want more contacts, try technology to stay close to your friends. Technology easily connects you with someone to talk to. Examples of technology are provided on the next page.

Communication Tips

- Share joys and frustrations of your day.
- Find the best time for chatting with your partner.
- Try to understand your partner’s feelings and point of view.
- Listen carefully to your partner’s ideas and concerns.



Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow.

- Swedish Proverb



A friend is one of the nicest things you can have, and one of the best things you can be.

- Douglas Pagels

Reach Out to Your Community

Making new friends is another way to build supportive relationships. In a community, there are various places to meet new people. You may join a church, a social club, a civic group, a volunteer organization, or a support group. Parenting programs in your community offer you opportunities to meet other parents.

You could build long-term, close friendships with those new friends in the community. They may be able to become your parenting partner. Technology may help you communicate with your friends on a regular basis.

Look for the handout, *Community Resources*, to find resources in North Carolina.

Technology for Communication

▪ **Instant Messaging (IM)**

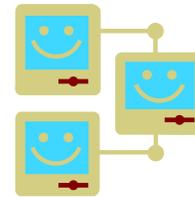
Even when you do not have time to meet your friends, you can “talk”, real-time, with friends through computer. IM also allows you to chat with a group of friends at the same time.

- AOL Instant Messenger (AIM): <http://dashboard.aim.com/aim>
- Windows Live Messenger (MSN): <http://windowslive.com/Desktop/messenger>
- Yahoo! Messenger: <http://messenger.yahoo.com/>

▪ **Social Networking Websites**

You can communicate through home pages and see pictures of each other on social networking websites. It makes it easy to keep up with your friends’ recent happenings and interests.

- Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/>
- MySpace
<http://www.myspace.com/>



▪ **Videoconferencing**

Videoconferencing enables you to talk to your friends real-time and face-to-face, even if they live miles away. You and your friend can enjoy spending time together just like when you meet in person. Also, you can see each others’ children when you use your web cameras.

- Skype
<http://www.skype.com/getconnected/>

You may use these technologies with your friends, and also with your family members who live far away, such as siblings, parents, and cousins.