

Relationships Australia

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THE 0 - 5 YEARS - MAKE THE MOST OF THEM!

During Families Week* Relationships Australia is highlighting the importance of nurturing children aged 0-5. These are the early childhood years that numerous studies show to be of critical importance to an individual's development.

There is a growing body of research in the fields of health, developmental psychology, neuroscience, education and criminology, of the importance of promoting positive family and community experiences for young children during the earliest years of childhood. Many clinicians and researchers argue that the greatest impact that can be made on social and mental health problems is to invest in the early pre-school years of a child's development.

The importance of early childhood and early intervention programs is based on the premise that the first few years of life of a child's development are crucial in setting the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health outcomes. Early interventions that may have a positive impact on children and families include: parenting skills training; family relationships education; family counselling and mediation; and support services for families with very young children. Activities like play groups and reading to children help stimulate brain development.

Relationships Australia, as one of Australia's leading family services organisations, fully supports parents in their efforts to nurture children's development during these early years. Making the most of the early years does not mean having to spend a lot of money. What children remember later in their lives are often the little things like cuddles, fun in the bath, playing in the park, listening to music together and role-playing. These simple activities can help stimulate children's imagination, socialise them and make them feel loved and valued.

According to Relationships Australia Acting National Director Mary Mertin-Ryan, "Children grow up fast enough and parents should make the most of these formative years. The 0-5 years are a time when a child bonds with parents, siblings and significant others. Enjoy this time; bond with your child, spend time together, take steps to reduce stress and read to your child".

"We know from the results of Relationships Australia's 2003 Relationships Indicators Survey that an increasing number of Australians find it increasingly difficult to provide an adequate work / family balance in their lives. We fully support and encourage initiatives by Australian industry and government that assist the workforce to spend more time with their children. The benefits of such policies will flow through later to our children and communities".

* National Families Week is 15-21 May 2005

ENDS

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Editor's note:

Relationships Australia is a leading provider of professional relationship support services throughout Australia. It is a not-for-profit, secular, community-based organisation with partial funding from the Federal, State and Local Governments. RA operates in 94 locations Australia-wide.

