Connection

Children with close ties to family, friends, school, and community are more likely to have a solid sense of security that produces strong values and prevents them from seeking destructive alternatives. Family is the central force in any child's life, but connections to civic, educational, religious, and athletic groups can also increase a young person's sense of belonging to a wider world and being safe within it.

Some questions to ponder when considering how connected your child is to family and the broader world include:

- Do we build a sense of physical safety and emotional security within our home?
- Does my child know that I am absolutely crazy in love with him?
- Do I understand that the challenges my child will put me through on his path towards independence are normal developmental phases or will I take them so personally that our relationship will be harmed?
- Do I allow my child to have and express all types of emotions or do I suppress unpleasant feelings? Is he learning that going to other people for emotional support during difficult times is productive or shameful?
- Do we do everything to address conflict within our family and work to resolve problems rather than let them fester?
- Do we have a television and entertainment center in almost every room or do we create a common space where our family shares time together?
- Do I encourage my child to take pride in the various ethnic, religious, or cultural groups to which we belong?
- Do I jealously guard my child from developing close relationships with others or do I foster healthy relationships that I know will reinforce my positive messages?
- Do I protect my friends' and neighbors' children, just as I hope they will protect mine?