

SHOWING LOVE

by Michael Grose

In **10 Conversations you must have with your son** author Tim Hawkes suggests there are 4 ways parents show love to their children.

1. **Through words** Hawkes' writes, " A son(child) dispatched to school with a reminder that he is loved is a son(child) equipped to withstand the emotional and social attrition wrought by a world given to withering putdowns." Hawkes is so right, but 'I love you' are three simple words that can get caught in our throats.

2. **Through deeds** Hawke says, "For a parent to be congruent with their son(child), there needs to be a congruency between that which is heard and that which is seen." For some children a parent baking a cake for them is an act of love. They like the fact you made it for them more than the cake itself!

3. **Through presence** "In a time-poor society that is given to showing love through the gift of material possessions, the greatest demonstration of love a parent can give is the gift of time," writes Hawkes. Effective parenting is about choices, and choosing to be a presence in the lives of kids is an act of love that may not be appreciated at the time but can have a profound impact.

4. **Through providing** It's easy to be dismissive of the provider role that we play, but the psychologist Maslow reminded us that unless a child's basic needs - food, shelter and protection are met he will struggle to have his higher order needs such as self-esteem and a sense of belonging met. But parents need to attend to those higher needs by attending to positive values, developing a sense of purpose and developing a sense of belonging to his family through contribution.

Here's a task.

Score yourself out of ten of each of these four different ways of showing love. If the score is low in WORDS, commit to introducing more conversation into your family life.

Here are **five ideas** to get the talking going:

1. Share conversations through meals
2. Regularly talk about news items that would interest kids
3. Practise shoulder-to-shoulder parenting by talking in the car, or while you are active together
4. Text message or email your kids (if old enough), particularly if your preferred child's 'love language' is WORDS.
5. Write a letter and post it to your child.

You should reflect from time to time on the important stuff you do. Personally, I think activities like these are **Parenting Gold**.