



**Family Maintenance,
Care, and Repair**

A Toolkit for Families



**FAMILY
SERVICE
ONTARIO**

We're stronger together

In family life, love is the oil that eases friction, the cement that binds closer together, and the music that brings harmony.
Friedrich Nietzsche

This toolkit was developed to celebrate families in recognition of Family Day 2023.

Meaningful connections, such as families, play an important role in the health and well-being of adults and children. For this reason we are committed to supporting strength and resilience in families as they navigate the many challenges and transitions.

This toolkit would not be complete without the contribution of Family Service Ontario's student, Samantha Shore from Wilfrid Laurier University, Master of Social Work program, who conducted the research and designed the toolkit with the support of Susan Somogyi Wells, chief executive officer of Family Service Ontario.

If you or your family are experiencing challenges that go beyond your toolkit of coping strategies, family service agencies are here to help.

Go to Ontario Counselling Finder to find a family service agency near you.

[Click here](#)



**ontario
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A Healthy Family Starts With You!

Giving yourself the time and permission to recharge your own battery is at the foundation of a strong family unit.

To connect with our loved ones, it is essential for us to stay connected with ourselves.

It's easy to get caught up in everyday tasks and forget to take a moment for yourself. Prioritizing your own well-being is not only essential for you, but for your family as well!

Self-maintenance requires self-care through finding ways to relax, recharge, and to promote your overall physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness.



The 7 Pillars of Self-Care

Each method of self-care fits into one of the seven pillars.

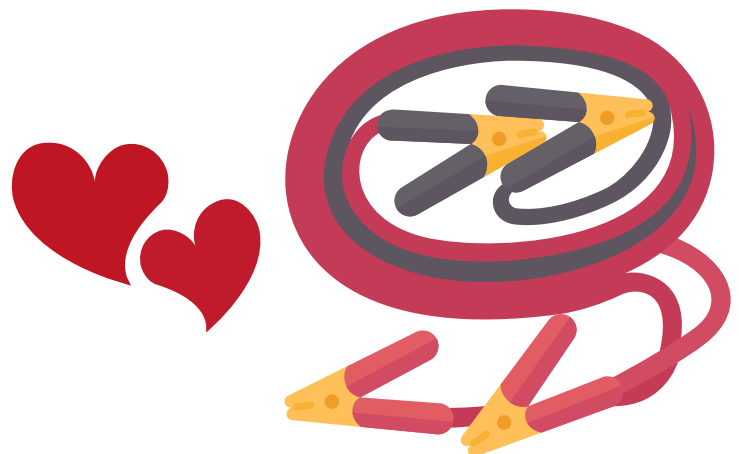
- ♥ **Mental** - Engage in activities that stimulate your mind. Read, tinker, or practice mindfulness.
- ♥ **Emotional** - Find a healthy way to manage your emotions. Journal, talk to a friend or therapist, go for a hike, or do whatever works to help calm your emotions.
- ♥ **Physical** - Take care of your body through exercise, healthy eating, and adequate sleep. This can have great benefit to our mental and emotional health.
- ♥ **Environmental** - It's important to feel good about your space, and to care for it as a way of caring for yourself. Make your bed, water your plants, or fix that squeaky door that has been on your mind.
- ♥ **Spiritual** - Everyone experiences spirituality differently, through religion, nature, or meditation. Find a way to connect with a higher power or sense of purpose.
- ♥ **Recreational** - Engage in activities that bring you pleasure, joy, and relaxation. Play on a sports team, do a craft, build something, or try a new hobby. It is a way to reduce stress, improve mood, and boost overall well-being.
- ♥ **Social** - Maintain healthy relationships and social connections. Meet up with friends, join a club or group, or volunteer.





Maintaining a strong and deep connection with your partner is essential to the overall well-being of your family as a unit.

- Communication is key!
- Learn to appreciate each other's differences.
- Have fun with each other without the kids.
- When life gets too busy, try to find brief moments for a positive connection.
- Understand your partner's love language as well as your own.



Plug Into Your Love Languages

The five love languages were developed by Dr. Gary Chapman to describe how people give and receive love in relationships, as he noticed in his practice that many couples misunderstand each other's needs.

Acts of Service

A thoughtful actions to show love and appreciation, such as helping out with household chores, or bringing your partner a cup of tea.

Physical Touch

Showing affection and connecting though physical contact like hugs, kisses, holding hands, or a massage after a long day.

Words of Affirmation

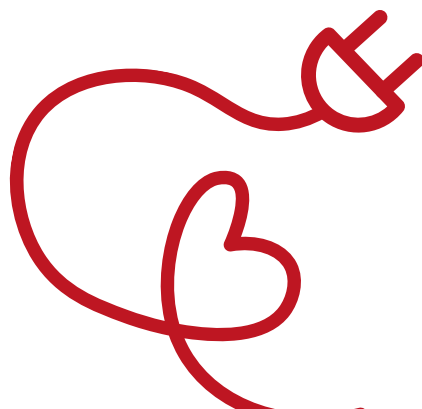
Expressing appreciation, admiration, and validation for your partner with words or in writing.

Giving/ Receiving Gifts

Are expressions of love that show thoughtfulness and care towards one another. People who enjoy receiving gifts as part of their primary love language do not necessarily expect large or expensive presents; it's more the effort and thoughtfulness behind the gift that counts.

Quality Time

Spending time unplugged with each other without any distractions, allowing you to focus on strengthening your relationship, such as going out for a walk, or spending time doing an activity you both enjoy.



Plugging Into Little Sparks

Meaningful connection is an important tool for your child's healthy development.



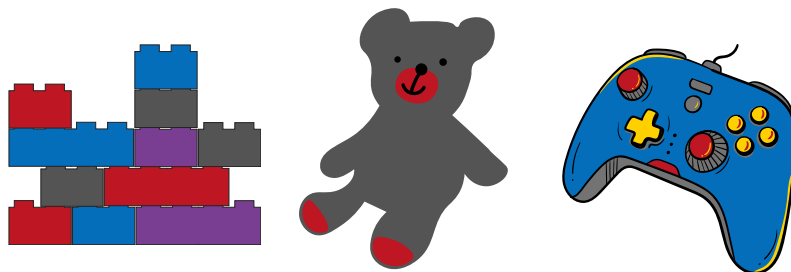
Let go! Be silly, play a game, and just let go. Learning through play is extremely beneficial to a child's overall well-being and development.

Take interest. Children can have special interests or hobbies that we may not personally relate to, but getting involved in what they enjoy is a great way of forming meaningful connections.

Make a mess! Children learn so much through their senses and can sometimes benefit from using other senses during play, even if it can be messy. Some examples of sensory play are: using sense of touch with water play, sand, or yes... even dirt!

Welcome emotion. Kids can have big emotions, and few tools to express them. This can be tough to navigate as a parent or caregiver, but just like you and I, children need to express themselves. It's important to provide a safe space for them to share their thoughts and feelings with you.

Communicate. Validate and listen to their feelings while also teaching them how to regulate and manage them in healthy ways.



Family Alignment

Every family has their own unique way of connecting and maintaining alignment. Some families connect through sharing a meal, others like to watch a movie or play a game. What's important, no matter which activity you choose, is being present and in the moment.

Set aside time

Make it a priority to spend time together as a family on a regular basis, whether it's a weekly dinner or a monthly outing.

Communicate openly

Encourage family members to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas with one another.

Show appreciation

Recognize and appreciate the efforts and contributions of each family member.

Share common interests and hobbies

Find activities that everyone enjoys and make time to do them together.

Be supportive

Be there for each other in times of need, and celebrate each other's successes.

Respect and value differences

Recognize and appreciate the unique qualities and strengths of each family member.

Show gratitude

Express gratitude towards your family members and let them know you are grateful to have them in your life.

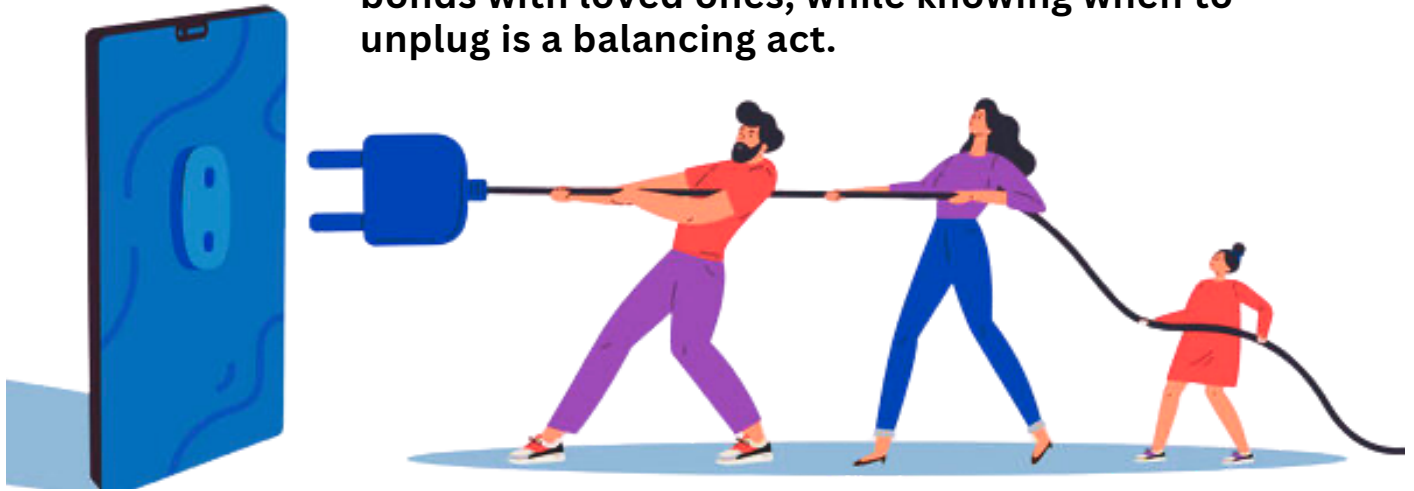
Have fun together

Laugh and enjoy each other's company, whether through games, movies, or other shared experiences.



Navigating Family Time in the Digital Age

Using technology to enhance your life and your bonds with loved ones, while knowing when to unplug is a balancing act.



The 'Digital Detox'

Engaging in a 'digital detox' or a scheduled break that can be done individually, or as a family is a great way for you to take a break from the electronic world and focus on being present in the moment.

- ♥ **Set time limits:** Establish specific times of day when technology and social media use are allowed and stick to them.
- ♥ **Create technology-free zones:** Designate certain areas of your home, such as the dinner table, as a technology-free zone.
- ♥ **Encourage other activities:** Encourage your family members to engage in other activities such as sports, hobbies, or spending time with friends and family.
- ♥ **Lead by example:** Be a positive role model by setting a good example of how to use technology and social media in a balanced way.
- ♥ **Have open and honest conversations:** Talk to your family members about the potential negative effects of excessive technology and social media use, and encourage them to be aware of their own habits.

Technology as a Tool

Technology can be used as a great way for family members to stay connected, even if they are physically apart. Below are some ways in which technology can be used to strengthen the family bond.

Video calls and chats: Use video conferencing apps or video chat to stay in touch with family members who live far away.

Shared calendars and task lists: Use a shared calendar to keep track of family events and appointments, and use a shared task list to assign and keep track of household responsibilities.

Social media groups: Create a private social media group for the family to share updates, photos, and videos, and stay connected even when you're not together.

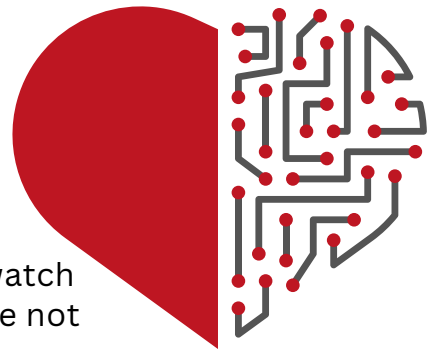
Online games and quizzes: Play online games or take quizzes together as a family to bond and have fun.

Virtual tours and experiences: Take virtual tours of museums or historical sites, or participate in virtual experiences together as a family.

Movie or TV show nights: Use streaming services to watch a movie or TV show together as a family, even if you're not in the same location.

Online learning: Take an online class or workshop together as a family to learn a new skill or hobby.

It's important to find a way to use technology and social media to enhance rather than detract from family relationships. The benefits and limitations of technology are unique to each family.



Repair and Reconnect

Repairing relationships with your family can be a challenging task, but it is worth the effort!

Accountability

Taking responsibility for your actions is an important tool for conflict repair. This means acknowledging mistakes. No one is perfect, and it's okay to make mistakes; it's how you repair them that counts.

Active listening

Try to understand the other person's position. Keep an open mind and be willing to see things from a different perspective.

Communication

Regularly set aside time to talk and listen to each other. Be open, honest, and respectful in your conversations.

Problem-solving

Learn to approach conflicts and problems as a team, working together to find solutions. This will require listening and a willingness to compromise.

Forgiveness

Learn to forgive each other for mistakes and misunderstandings. Holding grudges can damage a relationship.

Honesty

Be honest and transparent with each other. Trust is a vital part of a strong family connection.

Shared experiences

Create shared experiences that bring you closer together as a family, such as shared hobbies such or favorite activities.

Sense of humour

Laugh together and find the humour in every situation. Laughing together will help you bond and create positive memories.

