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Family Communications, Inc.
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Fred Rogers with Hedda Sharapan

Love notes

There are many ways to say I love you...singing, cooking, cleaning, drawing, being understanding..." That message from our Neighborhood song runs all through the week of Neighborhood programs about LOVE which we've scheduled to be broadcast around Valentine's Day. Children who hear that they are loved in many different ways, are likely to find their own ways to say it to the people they love -- all through their lives.

A while ago, a mother shared with me a treasured letter that was written by her daughter who was in her twenties: "Dear Mom, I really appreciate all the help you've given me lately....I now know that life isn't easy, and I understand what you must have gone through when I was little and what you meant when you told me, for example, 'clean your room'...I only hope that if I ever have a child, I can be as good a mother to him or her as you are to me. Thanks again! I love you."



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Telling someone "I love you" is important. There's an added dimension to that message when it's in writing. The link between love and letters starts early in childhood. In fact, it's love that often generates a child's first urges to write. The first letters children form are often those of their own name. The next words they try to write are usually the names of those closest to them -- Mom, Dad, brothers or sisters, grandparents, maybe even a family pet. For many children, their first written sentence is, "I love you." And imagine how special it is for children to be able to read that message written for them by a loving adult!

There's something else about writing. It's quiet. When words are spoken, they're in competition with all the other noises in the world -- including angry words and complaints that are part of the natural tensions in families. Caring words can get lost or drowned out. The silence of the written word can often be more lasting than those that are spoken. So when you leave those loving notes in a child's backpack or lunchbox or on a pillow, you're giving your child something powerful ...something very real to hold on to...something that may come back years later to warm your own heart.

word count: 397





Photo: Ornithologist David Ford gives loving care to the birds at the Aviary on February 11th. By presenting such guests, Fred Rogers is helping children want to grow into caring adults themselves. (photo: Richard Kelly)

LOVE week at a glance:

Feb. 10 #1661: How people make stuffed bears

Feb. 11 #1662 Trip to the aviary

Feb. 12 #1663 Love and angry feelings

Feb. 13 #1664 It can help to talk about feelings

Feb. 14 #1665 Filipino chef

Bullet points:

Try to spend one-on-one time with your child, even just a little bit every day.

Help your child know that parents and children sometimes get angry with each other, but that doesn't make the love go away.

Set aside some "alone time" for yourself somewhere in the day. You're the most important person in your child's life, and if you nourish yourself, you'll have more energy for nourishing your child.





Now and then, write simple "I-love-you" notes for your child. Even if children can't read, they treasure written messages.

Quote: A person can grow to his or her fullest capacity only in mutually caring relationships with other human beings.

Activity: A Word Box

materials:

shoe box or small carton

strips of paper

marker

Children tend to be interested in words that have personal meaning to them -- their own names, names of people they care about, things they like. Start

It's probably best to

with a few words that your child wants to see. Write each word on a separate strip of paper. If your child wants a phrase like "I love you," you could put each word on a separate strip and let your child see how those words go together. Now and then, you could add new words to the box.





Children might even want to use the words to make their own caring messages -- for Valentine's Day or any day.

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