

5 ways to show a parent you care

Raising kids can be lonely, overwhelming and just plain challenging at times. And that's why each and every caregiver can use a little love.

Valentine's Day may be over, but anytime is a good time to show a parent you care. Including today. Your small efforts could touch the heart of a mom or dad at the moment he or she needs it most.

Here are a few ideas to show the caregivers in your life that you love and care about them.

Just say it.

You probably assume that everyone in your life knows that you care. But the truth is, people may not know it unless you say it.

Take a few minutes to send a card, an email or a text. Explicitly telling a parent how much you care can go a long way. And knowing this can be a huge relief for a parent in the trenches.

Ask how she's doing. And then listen.

When you talk to a parent, it's pretty easy to stay at surface-level. Day-to-day life gives moms and dads plenty of fodder for the occasional "How are you doing?" question.

But if you really listen to the answer, you may hear what's just below the surface - challenges they may need to talk about.

- "I'm so busy - just running the kids from activity to activity."
- "The baby is still not sleeping through the night."
- "Teenagers - you know how they are."

You may not be able to solve any of the problems in one short conversation, but you can ask more questions and listen for as long as you are needed. Listening can be a gift for many parents - who often feel invisible.



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Look for small ways to lighten their load.

The truth is that it's challenging to ask for help. Most parents don't want to complain or even admit that they could use a little backup.

But you can still find ways to lighten their load. After you've asked how they are doing (and listened) - you may have ideas. But here are a few to get you started:

- Ask when would be a good time to bring over dinner. (Seriously. There's not a single parent out there who will turn down a night to skip cooking.)
- Plan a babysitting date to allow parents to go out (or even run errands) in peace.
- Offer to bring coffee, go for a walk or grab lunch. Sometimes, parents just need a little time to connect.

Give your support.

You can provide your support and encouragement to all caregivers - even those you may not know personally.

- See a mom dealing with a tantrum in the aisle three? Try a kind and encouraging word instead of a look of scorn.
- Notice a dad in a minivan full of kids behind you in the drive-through lane? Pick up the tab on his coffee. He may have been up all night with sick kids.

These don't have to be grand gestures. But just a small bit of effort can go a long way.

Leave your judgements at the door.

Today, parents feel constantly judged for their decisions. They can't scroll their Facebook feed without being bombarded with all the mistakes they are making while raising their kids. This can lead to shame and guilt.

But that can stop with you.

Unless your friend asks for your opinion (or you believe the safety of the child or parent is at risk), you don't have to share every single belief you have.

now what? Keep Loving.

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Instead, try saying one of the following:

- "You are doing an awesome job."
- "Your kids are so lucky to have you."
- "I'm so inspired by the way you _____."
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Words are so powerful. And while we can't shut down all the judgements online, we can stop them from coming out of our mouths.

now what? | **KEEP LOVING.**

All parents could use a little love. And it doesn't have to be a lot of work or money to show you care. The truth is, we all make up a community - a village. And as part of this community, we can truly lift up caregivers to help them feel cared for, loved, and noticed. When we do this, both caregivers and their children are winners.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 2/28/18. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

now what? Keep Loving.