

# They're watching

Next time you are running yourself ragged making sure your child has all the stimulation needed to best develop their gross and fine motor skills – along with their verbal and social skills – stop and think for a moment; are you also providing your children with the skills to be successful life partners?

Experts have described the parental relationship as a “child’s blueprint for intimacy” because they observe how we handle this area of our life in order to learn how to do it ourselves.

In fact, the best gift you can give your child is the chance to observe a positive partnership between you and your partner.

Do the two of you back each other up? Do your children know that you feel lucky that their mum or dad is your mate? Do they see that the two of you make efforts not to let the other down? Do they experience the two of you having fun times together? Do they observe you sticking at things even when the going gets tough?

Positive parent relationships show children how to work things out when conflict arises, and the importance of mutual trust and respect.

By seeing parents resolve conflict, children learn that differences can be negotiated. By observing a thriving parental relationship, children also learn about standards. And they are less likely to settle for second-best relationships in adulthood.

Giving the message to your children that your partner is important to you is also an excellent bit of relationship role modelling.

So how do you achieve this positive parental relationship for your children to observe? It is easy to overlook the most vital thing in the “busy-ness” of our lives...the need to invest time in our couple relationship.

Because we all want to do the best for our children, sometimes we become too child-focused and forget about our own needs, to the detriment of our adult relationship.

Sometimes people are so focused on creating the perfect home for children, perhaps because their own childhood home was less than wonderful, that the parental relationship needs get ignored, and sadly the result is that the happy home they wanted eludes them.

Prioritising the couple relationship and working together as a team is immensely important to the emotional health of your children and your relationship.

So make sure you plan couple time for yourselves.

## Survival tips

- **Children need the example of a positive parental couple relationship**
- **Don't focus on the children's needs to the extent there is not time for the couple relationship**
- **Children learn relationship standards and good conflict resolution from observing parents who do it well.**