

Playful Connection

Filling Your Child's Emotional Cup

Over the years, healthy connection levels between parents and children have decreased, leading to more challenging behaviors from children. Today's modern lifestyle has interfered with the opportunity for the parent-child **bond** to grow. This vital aspect of a child's life is essential for their emotional cup to be full, giving them healthy self-worth and self-esteem. To fill their cup, children need quality connection time with their parents every day. When they receive this, children will develop healthy self-worth and self-esteem and, therefore, approach the world with more kindness and compassion.

The "emotional cup" metaphor created by Upbility, publishers of therapy resources, asks that you imagine children have a cup that needs to be filled with attention, affection, and security. When this cup doesn't get filled, misbehaviors, arguments, and aggressive **behaviors** may be exhibited. The cup can also be emptied by stress, loneliness, and punishments. Children need positive **emotional** fuel to get through their day in the most successful way possible. But when their emotional needs aren't met, they will misbehave to get the attention they are seeking from their parents. Implementing ways to keep their cup full will lead to more positive **behaviors** because children feel secure.

One of the easiest ways to connect to a child and fill their emotional cup is through play. As Lawrence J. Cohen, author of "Playful Parenting," stated, "The single most important skill parents can acquire is playing." When children are babies, **parents** do just about anything silly to get them to laugh. But as children get older and can occupy themselves, playtime with parents is rare, if at all. Since play is the language of children, **parents** must learn to play again. Hide and seek, roughhouse and chase are just a few of the types of playtime connection children seek the most. The laughter that comes with this fills their emotional cup and reduces the chances for unwanted behaviors.

To help parents fill their children's emotional cups, the **SKILLZ** Child Development Centers created the Parent SKILLZ curriculum. In this program, eight skills were developed based on research in the areas of science and psychology. The first skill in the 8-part series involves connection. This quality time is easily implemented and nurtures the parent-child bond. Since a connection is a biological and emotional need that all humans have, being proactive in the approach to fulfilling it will benefit everyone. The release of **endorphins** and **oxytocin** during playful connection fills the emotional cup, optimizes brain development, and creates positive neural connections.

As children grow and develop, parents need to continue nurturing the bond they have with their children even as they get older. This continual filling of the emotional cup will help children learn that they are loved, and they will learn to love others. Providing children with quality playtime connection is a **proactive** approach to parenting that will not only reduce negative, **attachment-seeking** behaviors but will foster healthy **self-worth**.