

# *Family Connections*

A resource booklet about building strength  
in families based on Inunnguiniq teachings

## In this issue:

- ❖ Preparing for Family
- ❖ Bonding and Attachment
- ❖ Strength in Relationships
- ❖ Becoming the Parent Your Child Needs





# How Was This Resource Developed?

This series of resources is designed to help parents and families find strength in these roles according to Inuit teachings outlined in *inunnguiniq* – making capable human beings. To find other resources in this series, see the back cover.

Many people contributed to the content of this resource, primarily Elders. They shared their stories and experiences as

well as the teachings and practices of ancestors that ground this information in *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health ([nccih.ca](http://nccih.ca)) and the Aqqiumavvik Society ([aqqiumavvik.com](http://aqqiumavvik.com)) would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this resource, especially the Elders who live on through their wise words.

## Elders:

- ❖ Rhoda Karetak
- ❖ Atuat Akittirq
- ❖ Louis Angalik
- ❖ Miriam Aglukark
- ❖ Mark Kalluak
- ❖ Peter Paniaq
- ❖ Qinuayuaq Pudlat
- ❖ Donald Uluadluak

## Aqqiumavvik Society Staff:

- ❖ Joe Karetak
- ❖ Emma Kreuger
- ❖ Shelton Nipisar
- ❖ Kukik Baker
- ❖ Shirley Tagalik

## NCCIH Staff:

- ❖ Margo Greenwood
- ❖ Donna Atkinson
- ❖ Roberta Stout
- ❖ Regine Halseth

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First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness



National Collaborating Centre  
for Indigenous Health



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QAUJIGIARTIIT



Margaret & Wallace McCain  
Family Foundation



The Early Years  
A Martin Family Initiative

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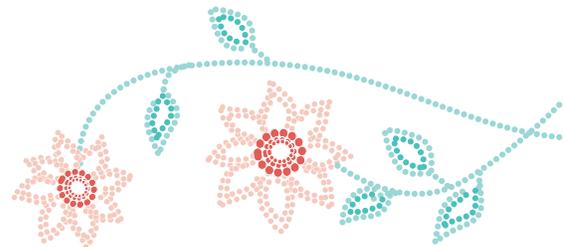
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*All Inuit are being affected by [colonization]. We are now in a state of disaster, and we need to pull ourselves out of this situation. We need to find a way to instill Inuit's moral values and beliefs back into our children. The IQ principles support making a human being, and if we provide that information and promote it, maybe they will be able to find their own way back.*

*-Atuat Akittirq*

# Introduction



This resource will help you learn about the very important role you have in creating a strong family that supports a healthy future for your children. It is grounded in the cultural teachings and experiences of Inuit Elders and in the practices of *inunnguiniq* – making a capable human being. It will remind you of the cultural strengths which have always served to support Inuit. It will provide advice for how to focus on what are important things to consider as you plan for the big step of establishing your own family.

Understanding these things and developing more parenting skills will help you take on your role in the family that leads to providing a good life and future for your child.

*What is key for us has been what needs to be taught and how it needs to be taught – the learning came from the family and it came within the context of a solid family.*

*-Mariano Aupilaarjuq*



*While we were growing up, there were principles applied in our instruction. Inuit children were treated very similarly because the training was based on the Inuit cultural beliefs. These beliefs were highly valued and so we were taught with very strict expectations. What happens in childhood is carried throughout life, and so we have to be very careful what we expose children to and how we care for children now. When a child is hurt, it will be very hard to let go of that hurt and to heal. It will stay with them into later life if someone is not careful to help resolve the issue with the child through healing. There are things that cannot be done alone, and learning to forgive is one of those. Learning to forgive others and resolving conflict is something that is also taught early in life.*

*-Peter Paniaq*

# Preparing for Family

Continually planning and preparing for the future is a high expectation among Inuit. Teaching children how to reach goals is an important part of the *inunnguiniq* process. Young people were prepared for parenthood and family life very intentionally. Being able to meet your roles and responsibilities as a family member, and eventually as a spouse and parent, were part of *pilimmaqsarniq* – becoming skilled.

*Some might think that Inuit never plan for the future. They sometimes think that we lived from day to day with no plan. We are here today because our ancestors were the ones who made sure that we could survive. They did not live one day at a time. We were made to become human beings right from birth. They taught us how to live a good life and what to do in difficult situations.*

*-Mark Kalluak*

The leaders are important to act as guides through any kind of situation. Our success today is based on good leaders who did their best to establish peace within the family and camp. We learn from listening to Elders talk. This is a part of healing because we learn and can become more aware of mistakes we may have made and how to correct them.

*Today, we do not have much of this life anymore. I get my family together once in a while and apologize to them for not teaching what they should have known from the past. Being honest within the family and speaking openly is very important. This is key to maintaining peace. We need to confront problems right away. We need to seek them out and be careful to sense when someone is having difficulty or the family harmony is slipping away. Following the rules, such as sharing your catch, is very important to this. It is essential for healing to obey these ways of living a good life. Healing needs to start from home. Young people are always eager to learn, so it is important for the parents to have good communication so that there is openness and trust right from the beginning. You can teach good life expectations through teaching good hunting skills etc. Through cultural teaching, the beliefs and values are revealed.*

*-Tommy Etuksamajaq*

## Key Inunnguiniq Concepts

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### *Respect & Responsibility*

- ❖ Being in respectful and trusting relationships is important.
- ❖ Trust is developed when you are seen to be reliable, true to your word, and willing to take on responsibilities for yourself and others.
- ❖ Family is the foundation for all relationships.
- ❖ Building a strong family unit begins with building a loving and supportive relationship with your partner.

### *Open Communication*

- ❖ Sharing and caring for others requires that you seek to be understood and try to understand others – listen with an open heart.
- ❖ Speaking about issues and feelings as they arise is important; talking directly to a person is the expected way of dealing with conflict.
- ❖ Anger was never an option and children were taught to manage anger at a very early age. Today, we need to enter into our conversations with our anger under control so that we can effectively reach a better place.
- ❖ Open and respectful communication forms the basis for meaningful relationships .

### *Pijitsirniq & Caring for Others*

- ❖ Being open and continually showing love, concern and care is *pijitsirniq*.
- ❖ *Pijitsirniq* requires a commitment to supporting the well-being of others, especially through meeting the needs of your partner/family.
- ❖ Practicing *pijitsirniq* means putting the needs of others ahead of you.
- ❖ Caring for others is who we are as Inuit.

### *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq & Creating a Welcoming Home Environment*

- ❖ We are all part of a greater collective and need to be contributing members who support the common good.
- ❖ Children need to be raised in a safe and welcoming environment.
- ❖ Family and our networks of relationships are important supports in life for us and for our children. These need to be welcomed.
- ❖ Children raised with love and trust will be able to meet many challenges in life, and know the good ways to show love.
- ❖ Being able to manage emotions and strong feelings often requires going through healing. Most of us require healing at some point in our lives.



*Children need to be welcomed in their place, they need to be fed healthy foods, be given water to drink. Watch them carefully so they do not put their lives in danger if they try to do things on their own because they are not yet fully skilled.*

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*I've forgotten some of the things I've been told but there are some things I remember as clearly as one can remember. They had to do with living as a family. [I was told] that the most important thing in a family was communication, that one should always express one's feelings in order to be understood, that to misunderstand would only create unnecessary problems. If one did not communicate, and if misunderstandings occurred, it would grow and grow until there was separation. With good communication, things could be patched up and it would result in a better situation all around. People don't talk to one another and this is not good. It must be kept in mind that to talk to one another is not what creates problems. It helps people to express themselves. This is what has to be taught to our children today. We have to pass on what we know to our children.*

*-Donald Suluk*



# Strength in Relationships

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Inuit Elders say life is all about maintaining strong relationships and living respectfully with one another. Relationship begins in family. Strong families require a strong partnership between parents. How we connect with our spouse affects the kind of home and family environment we can provide for our children.

Every child is a gift to be loved unconditionally. Inuit were very careful to ensure that each child was supported by a varied network of relationships that would give them the greatest amount of success. A child was linked to many networks of support from birth. This included the network of *avvaq* relationships, family and kinship relationships, *pirqaigtiit* relationships, and then other negotiated relationships that centred around hunting/sharing.

These relationships carried very special bonds and obligations. A child who grows up without an understanding of the networks of relationship around naming, kinship, and extended family may face many challenges.

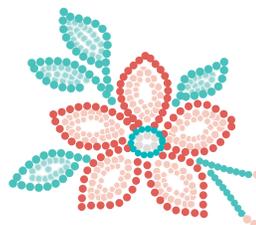
Every child should:

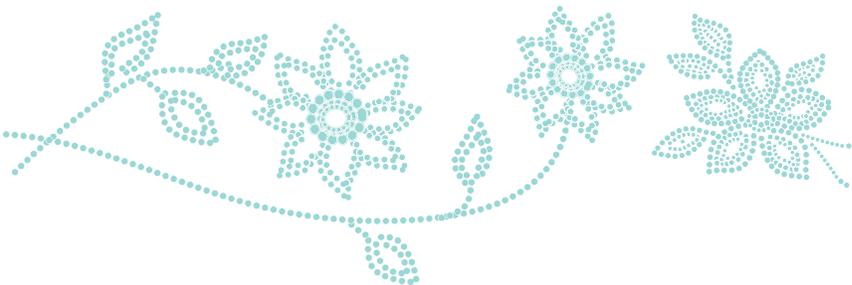
- ❖ Receive blessings at birth from the special people in their life and understand the significance of those.
- ❖ Know about their namesake and connections to others through the name.
- ❖ Use kinship terms for relations.
- ❖ Have a special Elder and relatives (Aunties and Uncles) in their life.



*The man did not have to be the head of the family. Back then, the husband came to agreement with his wife (aajiiqatigiingniq). The man may have appeared like he was the head of the family because he was able to travel and hunt for his family and his wife could not. The husband was the one hunting and supporting the family by providing food and a warm place to stay; the wife was responsible for raising the children. He could hunt because she had made warm clothing for him and because he did not have to worry that she was capable of maintaining the home while he was away. Back then, husband and wife were very close and helped each other a lot more than today. Back then, life was tough, and because of that, husband and wife had to fully agree with each other to move forward.*

**-Qinuayuaq Pudlat**





*All of us have Inuktitut names and naming a child was very important.*

*This should be carefully planned out by the family. Our leaders knew where a person came from just by recognizing the name. The government has changed the way we have been named. This is easier for paperwork, but it has contributed to why we are losing our identity. Increasingly, we are made to use Qallunaat names rather than our Inuktitut names.*

*This is true also with our Inuktitut place names - these names carry significance and have come to us from our ancestors. Having an Inuktitut name is very important to keep. Now many children/grandchildren have brand new names that we cannot even pronounce. When I meet someone with an Inuktitut name, I will immediately know where they are from and how I might be connected to them. This is something to think about for our children and the next generation. It was important to our parents and ancestors and must remain important to us because it is part of our identity.*

*-Peter Paniaq*

Inuit childrearing should be one of our top priorities and this knowledge should be passed on to others as it was never formally documented in the past. Childrearing is changing so fast and some of our children are falling through the cracks between two systems. Children who are raised respectfully are attentive to others and learn faster. The ones who are raised with a parent shouting at them or neglecting them will have very low self-esteem. We should not tell our child that someone is better than them or more obedient than them. We need to be very careful with what we say to a child.

## *Naming*

- ❖ Preparing to name your child is very significant because the name will connect the child to support networks throughout life.
- ❖ A name brings expectations, blessings and character traits with it as well as potential areas of skill and ability.
- ❖ A name will help set a child on a good path in life and secure a strong sense of identity.
- ❖ A name that comes through a dream must always be used.
- ❖ Naming a child after a loved one keeps that person – their abilities, wisdom and connections – with the family.

# Bonding and Attachment

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A child bonds with the important people in their life during pregnancy and in the first days of life. Talking to the child during pregnancy will link them to the voices of those people who will be most important to them. After they are born, caressing, holding them, and using personal *aqausiit* and kinship terms build this bond. Inuit carry their babies close to their skin until they are toddlers or older. This early bond is strengthened throughout life and establishes a foundation of love for the child based on a growing sense of attachment. This helps to set a path for a child in life and provides a sense of belonging and identity. It will give a child confidence.

*You will know when a little child is raised with love and respect by the way they act. They will be happy and respectful of others.*

**-Rhoda Karetak**

*A child develops trust – confidence, eager to experience, attentive to people and understands the principles of love, developed through many loving relationships. This happens early in life as a child is embraced by their family and connections. From this also comes respect as a child learns to embrace the expectations of these people.*

**-Joe Karetak**





## *Respond to your child*

- ❖ Observe your child closely and begin to understand their unique personality.
- ❖ Understand the cues your child uses to tell you what they need and then respond right away.
- ❖ Play, stimulate, challenge and talk continually to the child.
- ❖ Make face time real – avoid being distracted and focus on the child directly.

Help your child develop trust and a sense of security.

## *Be close and connected*

- ❖ Carry the child in an amautik to provide a sense of closeness and security.
- ❖ Model patience, kindness and love – teach respectfulness.
- ❖ Use your special nickname, kinship term or aqausirq for the child often.
- ❖ Comfort, caress, kunik and show how you cherish your child.

Help your child to make connections, see cause and effect, observe everything closely and understand their world.

## *Continually interact*

- ❖ Continually teach so that the child learns through love.
- ❖ Set clear expectations, routines and boundaries.
- ❖ Help your child to become accountable for behaviours and positive relationships.
- ❖ Involve your child in activities/tasks as soon as they are able to participate.
- ❖ Spend time together – continually modelling how to live well.
- ❖ Teach about emotions/feelings and how to identify and manage these positively.
- ❖ Challenge your child to think deeply and seek solutions to his/her own concerns.

Share personal stories, experiences, cultural teachings and stories that can be useful in life.



# Becoming the Parent Your Child Needs

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Inuit say well-being requires living a balanced life where physical, emotional, spiritual and social aspects are interconnected and equally valued. Our ability to feel, think and connect with others keeps us grounded in respectful relationships. The strength of these relationships is what enables us to face difficulties and rise above challenges. We are able to make good choices in life when we have been raised with the confidence we develop through supportive families.

Respectful parenting will build protective factors into the heart of a child that will sustain that child through life. The teachings that a parent continually gives a child will always come back to them when they are needed.

Respectful parents are those people who were prepared and made to understand the roles and responsibilities of becoming parents. It is never too early to ground children in the IQ concepts about becoming a capable human being and living a good life. Parenting support that comes from extended relatives, and even from those who are not relatives, will help create peer pressure in a positive way.

As young people get older, they are told more specific details about childrearing, well before they started having children. The young mothers-to-be are instructed in many ways about how to take proper care of a child and there are guidelines to both parents-to-be about this. As new parents, it is hard to know the right things to do when under pressure. They need parenting support. With infants, it is absolutely critical to know how to care well for an infant because the impacts stay with a child throughout life. What a parent is able to provide for a child will enable the child's well-being.

We are always learning and even when we make mistakes, we can learn from that. We learn by being instructed, by observing what we see going on around us, and when we hear about things we did not even see. We can use these learnings to become better parents.

## *Healing*

Inuit society has experienced disruption from many sources. Inuit systems have been replaced by Qallunaat systems which do not easily meet the needs of people in our communities. Many Inuit are unaware of the trauma

experienced by older generations at the time of colonial impact. Often a person will experience intergenerational trauma without knowing the source or having background information to explain it. Perhaps what has been most significantly impacted was *inunnguiniq* – how Inuit parented and prepared children for a good life. Reclaiming this knowledge and becoming aware of the impacts of trauma on your abilities to parent well is important to understand.

## *Self-care*

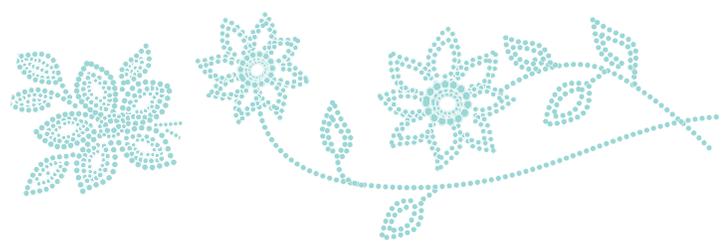
Being able to love others begins with a healthy sense of personal identity and loving experiences. The networks of support which were so important to Inuit are still available to us today, but they may not be so obvious or so easy to connect with. Many young people are not ever aware of who their relatives may be or which Elders may be part of their circles of support. Find out who can become part of your support network and take the time to reconnect with them. It is important to have supports in order to look after yourself well through pregnancy and into parenthood.

## *Getting help*

Shared caring was always central in Inuit culture. As a result, many people shared the responsibility for supporting each other and especially for rearing children to become capable through collective nurturing and cherishing. Unfortunately, many parents today express a sense of isolation within their community. Supports are available, so seek out those who can help. When you get the help you need, parenting will become the joy it was intended to be.

## *Postpartum depression*

Many women experience postpartum depression after giving birth. You may feel tired, overwhelmed, irritable and sad. Depression is very difficult to manage at the best of times, but after a pregnancy when you want to be enjoying your baby, the depression can be deepened by a sense of guilt. Usually these “blues” last a few weeks. As your body adjusts to a post-pregnant state, you find ways to cope with new sleeping patterns and the demands of parenting. Inuit advise women to take time for themselves and use that time to get back to doing normal things. It is especially encouraged to get out on the land, spend time with friends



and extended family, and find projects you have always enjoyed. Women are also advised to sleep when the baby sleeps and sleep with the baby near so that you develop a

sense of each other. If these feelings persist more than a few weeks, you may want to seek additional help.

*Some people, even though they love their children, don't think enough about how to prepare them to do things for themselves. They just let them have their own way and hardly ever give them any advice the whole time they're growing up.*

**-Donald Suluk**



*I do not recall being told how to do things. I recall being asked to do something and if I was not able to do it right away because I did not know how, without being told, I was expected to try and figure out how to get it done. Parents made sure that most tasks I was given were things I was capable of doing, so my self-esteem was being protected by my grandparents by only setting me tasks which I could succeed if I used some effort and initiative. Whether I knew it or not, when I saw my parents and grandparents doing day to day things, I was learning by seeing how things were done. In this way, they prepared me for the time when I could take on a task.*

*Proper life skills must be properly developed early in a child's life to ensure the child will carry within them the IQ principle concepts and knowledge. These were considered to be survival skills. One of the best ways to learn is learn from your mistakes – being continually encouraged to improve and become more able.*

*-Louis Angalik*





### *Things to do as a parent:*

- ❖ Only model the behaviours, language, and emotions that you want your child to follow.
- ❖ Monitor/observe your child carefully to come to know them and to provide security.
- ❖ Go out on the land with the children, spend time in the tent with them, let them watch preparing and drying meat, let them watch when you cook meat outdoors, see some small birds, and listen to their songs, introduce them to nature and teach them that they need to treat the environment with respect.
- ❖ Include children in family activities to build a sense of belonging.
- ❖ Do not take the child's side when there is a difficulty. Help your child to find ways to resolve issues on their own.
- ❖ Tell children to treat others well, so they will be treated well too.

- ❖ The father and the mother should never argue in front of the child; both parents have love for the child, both are helping the child's growth to have a good attitude.
- ❖ Children do not need to be constantly scolded. Those who are constantly scolded tend to not listen anymore and do not seem to hear their parents.
- ❖ Do not let the child take things that do not belong to them; encourage them to give things back to the person. Train the child to always put things away properly and to care for equipment and possessions.

A child knows what he wants when he needs to eat and when he gets hungry. At an early age, introduce the child to strong foods and to develop a taste for country foods.



# What You Can Do

## *Planning for pregnancy*

- ❖ Begin preparing for pregnancy as soon as you hope to become pregnant.
- ❖ Your child's health depends on your health. Think carefully about your diet, exercise and substance use. Get fresh air and be active.
- ❖ Find the people in your life who can support you through the changes of pregnancy.

Share all your feelings, changes and needs with your partner. He is an important part of having a healthy pregnancy.

## *Supporting healthy pregnancy*

- ❖ Your baby begins to develop a personality and a relationship with others from conception. Closely observe how the baby is developing so you will get to know each other.
- ❖ Help to reduce any stress the mother might be encountering.

- ❖ Have your stomach rubbed and your muscles gently massaged.
- ❖ Move the baby around so that it remains active as well.
- ❖ Partners should help a pregnant woman manage her emotions and cope with her other responsibilities, especially older children. Talk openly.
- ❖ Make sure the diet is rich in iron and calcium. Consume organ meat, bone marrow and rich broth.
- ❖ Spend time communicating with the baby so your voice and touch are familiar.
- ❖ Reflect on the name you want your baby to carry and seek the advice of Elders in your family. If you dream about a departed person during your pregnancy, that person is wishing to be named.

*"Do not go backwards through a door because it will lead to a difficult labour." This was always said, but the wisdom behind it is not always shared. Going backwards out a door could cause a fall or bumping into something. Keeping the pregnant woman safe was always at issue.*

***"A midwife is to know everything about a mother right from the start of pregnancy. She will make sure that the mother is active and moving around most of the time; she will take a walk and not lay on one side too much when resting or sleeping. She will make sure that the unborn child is shifted now and then. Today we see some women who are not following this advice. That was not the way we were taught by our parents."***

***-Rhoda Karetak***



## The First 6 Months

From 0-6 months, babies are becoming aware of their bodies, other people and their environment. It is a time of great learning. Parents must be very present with a newborn to guide these experiences. When babies are born, they are already conscious the minute they open their eyes. The child longs to be held or be held upright and to connect with the people around them.

- ❖ Speak to the child continuously. Make eye contact.
- ❖ Sing, chant, use word games, *aqqaq* and challenge their voices and muscles.
- ❖ Caress and touch the child a lot.
- ❖ Respond quickly to the needs of a newborn so they will feel secure.
- ❖ Encourage them to copy faces, movements and sounds.
- ❖ Have real conversations so they learn the sounds of real language.

Every child is unique. Parents need to observe a child closely to get to know the character and personality of the child:

- ❖ A baby who scares easily or engages slowly will need lots of encouragement.
- ❖ Babies who are determined and persistent need challenges.
- ❖ Babies need a lot of stimulation. Some will want to try new things all the time.

Babies are developing muscles and interacting with their environment by reaching, grasping, pulling themselves along. Provide a safe environment that promotes exploration.



*Babies are usually ready to experience food around 5-6 months. When you are eating, give the child small pieces, so they will get used to it. Watch carefully to make sure the food is moving through the mouth. Do not feed anything that is fermented or too hard, since the child might choke on it. When the baby takes a nap, check to see if they have anything in their mouth. Provide foods that are healthy and help a child develop a taste for a wide variety of foods – especially all country foods.*

-Alice Ayalik

*From the start we tried to make the child aware of wetness and to notice as soon as they became restless or felt the need to wet. During the day, a child did not wear a diaper, except in the amautik. When a child needed to pee, they would be held over a spot for this and the child would be repeatedly told to “haahaa”. You have to start doing it right away and they learn quite quickly what is expected of them. When you do that, they tend to let you know when they feel like going, even though they cannot speak yet. Usually by the time a child was still crawling, they were able to let me know when they felt like going. Inuit children were potty trained before they began walking.*

*-Miriam Aglukkaq*

## 7-12 Months

Babies are very engaged in communicating and building relationships with the people around them. Babies also start to make friends and learn to play with others, often modelling behaviours and movements very well. They develop a sense of closeness through the sounds of loving voices, as they *tutik* with others and recognize their distinctive smells and ways of using *aqqaq* or special names for the child. Huge developmental strides are taking place in communication, mobility and connecting.

- ❖ Observe and notice the baby's special interests.
- ❖ Respond immediately to any verbal and non-verbal communications.
- ❖ Encourage close interaction.
- ❖ Encourage only a few special toys that promote creative play. Too many toys and distractions like TV desensitize the child.
- ❖ Provide loose and comfortable clothing that allows the child to move.
- ❖ Establish routines to help build a sense of security and good habits.
- ❖ Children will learn to walk at their own pace. If they fall, do not get to them right away; they need to learn to do it by themselves.
- ❖ Support their positive social development by encouraging sharing and being caring towards others. Teach them to apologize if they harm another. Encourage accountability.
- ❖ This is a time to give your child a special nickname that reflects their emerging personality such as “the one who likes to climb” or “the one who makes noise”.

- ❖ Use words like “aittaa” to let them know if something is dangerous or dirty. Provide them with an alternative that is a better choice.

Children like putting things into their mouths, when they are able to hold things. You need to monitor what is around all the time and be watchful for anything that might cause choking.

A parent needs to monitor a child carefully. Children can be exposed to new experiences – what they have not seen and heard of yet. Children will just follow the parents' way. They just copy others because they want to be part of us. However, they are not thinking the way adults think, and so we must be careful to set limits when needed. All the child thinks about is play and of happiness. This is a time to protect those feelings in our children.



## Age 1 - 2

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This is a period of huge development for children. It is marked by exploration and awareness of things happening around them. They want to be active and will test their independence. It is also a time when they test their relationships and build both trust and respect. This is a critical period in the life of a child when good habits are established, when clear expectations are laid out, and when a parent begins very intentional teaching that will equip a child for the future.

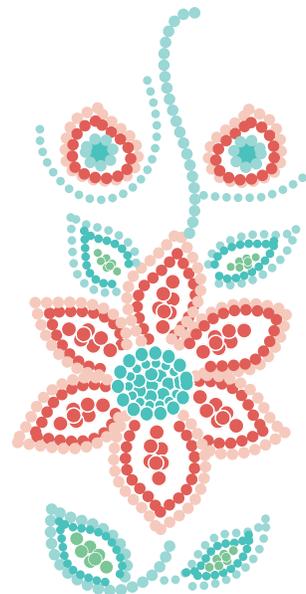
### *The parents' role:*

- ❖ Monitor your child and keep them away from dangers.
- ❖ Encourage interactions with others and use these times to teach the values of sharing, respect, helping and communicating continually.
- ❖ Teach your child how to use everyday objects safely and how to care for them and put them away properly.
- ❖ Teach accountability so that if they make another child cry, they know how to apologize and rebuild a friendship.
- ❖ Give children tasks which they are capable of doing so that they experience success and want to keep trying harder things. Celebrate these successes.
- ❖ Provide your child with clothing that is easy to put on by themselves and is appropriate for the weather.
- ❖ Help your child to become aware of the skills they are building and to know that you admire practice in doing new things. Provide lots of opportunities for your child to develop new skills.
- ❖ Encourage the use of kinship terms and visit often with relations so that your child has a strong network of kin.
- ❖ Communicate your age-specific expectations clearly and let your child know why you expect these things. Consider consequences that motivate your child to meet your expectations. Stick to your rules.

Children will cry or become frustrated when things do not go their way. Soothe your child, then use distraction to move them beyond the problem. You encourage resilience and solution-seeking by focusing on their strengths.



*Children at this age are persistent. If they ask a question, they will not give up until they have an understanding. Stop what you are doing and pay attention to them. Always use the truth because you need to be the most trusted person in your child's life. Tell them if you don't have the answer they want and find ways to find that answer together or explain what you believe to be true according to what you were taught.*



## Age 2 - 3

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This is a period for developing independence. Encourage this independence while keeping your child safe and providing opportunities for them with positive experiences. Set clear rules, such as not going outside without telling someone or not touching certain things that might be dangerous. Use the *inutsiaqpagutit* teachings to encourage your child's proper development such as "If you want a friend, you have to be a friend" or "If you fail to share what you have now, you will not have things to share in the future." These words will become written in the heart of your child and serve them throughout life.

This is also an important time to teach about emotions and feelings and how to deal with them in life. Help your child to learn the proper terms for emotions so they can communicate these feelings. Provide advice about how to deal with them, "We each become angry at times, but we can think before we speak or act out in anger. There is always a better way."

A child has many questions still at this age. Begin to have your child think and suggest the answers themselves rather than expecting you to provide them. This is the beginning of developing *qanuqturanganiq* – deep thinking.

### *Parents can:*

- ❖ Encourage your child to work with you at whatever you are doing. Give them small tasks they can handle and don't be quick to jump in to help them. Learning comes from making mistakes.
- ❖ Expect your child to listen and respond. Expect your child to respect your words.
- ❖ Expect your child to begin taking responsibility for small tasks.
- ❖ Promote *ilirkusiniq* – setting good habits for life.
- ❖ Provide social activities with other children, family members and those outside family.
- ❖ Encourage your child to learn through observation and reflect on what they see, and also to try things alone under your supervision.



*Children should not be exposed to things before they are ready for them. We need to observe children and watch for their readiness to learn – this we need to learn how to do. Learning for Inuit is holistic – the learning needs to relate to the big picture.*

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## Age 3 - 4

At this age, your child should be learning core values and beliefs – learning the rules for life, how to have good relationships, and how to become a contributing member of the family. They need lots of opportunities for independent and creative play. Too many toys hamper their imagination, as does too much screen time. Inuit believe that balance in all things is important. Children need to spend time outside to learn about the natural world, time with friends to practice building relationships, and time with grandparents/ Elders who can share knowledge such as “every rock belongs to the Creator and must be cared for” or how to respect and care for small animals and insects.

*The child needs to know their relatives at this age and to find ways to show love for them. Children enjoy playing. A little girl may play with girly things, such as dolls, pretending to be a mother. She may enjoy things like carrying dolls on her back pouch, watching and imitating her mother as she does her chores. She is learning women’s responsibilities, as they are her ways too. Tell her she is just like her mother when she pretends to be like her. She will be proud and try harder to be just like her mother. Boys may want to be busy doing boy things and spend a lot of time with their fathers. By watching, they are learning new responsibilities. Children can learn both male and female roles; both are very useful and helped to keep families strong.*

### *Children at this age need:*

- ❖ Active teaching about stories, values, beliefs and ways to behave well
- ❖ Active skill building opportunities — such as from doing chores and small tasks as soon as they become capable
- ❖ Expectations for close observation of the world and thinking about those details
- ❖ Strategies for managing emotions and becoming a peace seeker with others. “What would you do if someone hit you for no reason?”
- ❖ Knowing how to behave respectfully in the world and talking about ethical responsibility. “What would you do if you see someone hurting a baby bird?”
- ❖ Becoming resilient in order to seek solutions when faced with a difficulty. “What would you do if you were alone in the store and couldn’t find me?”
- ❖ Opportunities to serve and care for others and to make an active contribution to the well-being of others through their chores and caring for younger siblings.





## Age 4 - 5

A child of this age is becoming very independent. This is an important step to prepare them for leaving home and going into the school system where the child will have to rely on their own abilities and feelings to face new situations. This may be a time of insecurity for the child. A parent needs to build confidence and talk about ways the child can cope with these changes. It is very important at this age to spend quality time with your child so that you are available to help them navigate these changes.

It is also important to provide opportunities for your child to spend time outside of a building since school is so much restricted time in a classroom. Find ways to promote fresh air, exercise and activity. It is a good time to spend on the land, learning the names of plants, insects, small animals, and their habits and uses. It is a time to teach children about the relationship they have with nature and how to show respect and care for these things. Tell the stories and teach the games that help to provide this understanding.

### *Teach:*

- ❖ Respect, talking respectfully, showing respect for nature, being respectful to others, being respectful of property and belongings
- ❖ Helpfulness and quick action to take on tasks that need to be done
- ❖ Dealing with feelings and emotions in positive ways and taking responsibility for their own behaviours
- ❖ Thinking ahead to avoid difficulties; being safe so as not to cause worry to others
- ❖ Resolving conflict by themselves; learning how to maintain good relationships

Parents are responsible for their child's behaviour. Children do not have to live life without parental involvement because they do not know everything yet. Children gain wisdom through advice and teachings from others. As parents, we have to be aware – we set the path for our children's future. It is important to consider carefully what we want our children to learn and be able to do. Children today spend more time at the school, but as parents we have to teach them as well. We do not have to just give up our children to the school. We will always be responsible for who they become in life.



## Age 5 - 6

Our role as parents is to prepare our children to live a good life and be successful. In order to do this, children need clear boundaries within which they can grow safely and thrive as they encounter new experiences. This is a critical age to teach social skills, such as being a good sport, supporting others and taking responsibility. Setting the expectation for your child to notice the needs of others, to show compassion and share what they have, results in strong relationships and will prevent bullying and teasing.

It is important to get to know your child's friends because they will begin to have an influence. Communicate openly and often about what your child is encountering with friends. Help to suggest ways they can influence positive interactions to change the behaviours of peers rather than to become a victim of unwanted behaviours. Help your child to find good friends to spend time with.

### *Teach:*

- ❖ How to build and maintain respectful relationships
- ❖ How to take responsibility for their actions/words
- ❖ How to complete tasks well and help those around them
- ❖ How to learn through closely observing and discovering new things through doing/experiencing
- ❖ How to discover one's unique self through exploring one's interests and abilities

Teach your children to be good to others so they will be treated well too. Teach them not to bother or tease others. Give good advice often so they will not forget it. Expect them to follow the rules you set out. This includes always letting you know where they are so you can find them at all times.

We were told not to judge others because their circumstances were different from ours. We were told to always be aware that we are part of a family, so we should not participate in something our family would not do.

I was always told if someone was mean to me, to just move away and avoid the confrontation. When that person notices that you always leave when they are mean, they will know that it doesn't get to you.



# How You Can Learn More

Being a parent is an important responsibility. It begins at conception and lasts as long as you live. Inuit say you do not stop being a parent until the day you die because you can continually shape and support your child in every stage of life.

The most important aspect of parenting is the time you spend as a family and the quality of the experiences you share. It also is critical to establish open, trusted and ongoing communications so that your relationship with your child can support every difficulty in life. As parents, one of the main supports we provide for our children is in helping them to build self-esteem and a strong knowledge of who they are. This requires that we impart the values and beliefs and teachings that will help them become heart centred. We also need to create the opportunities to develop critical

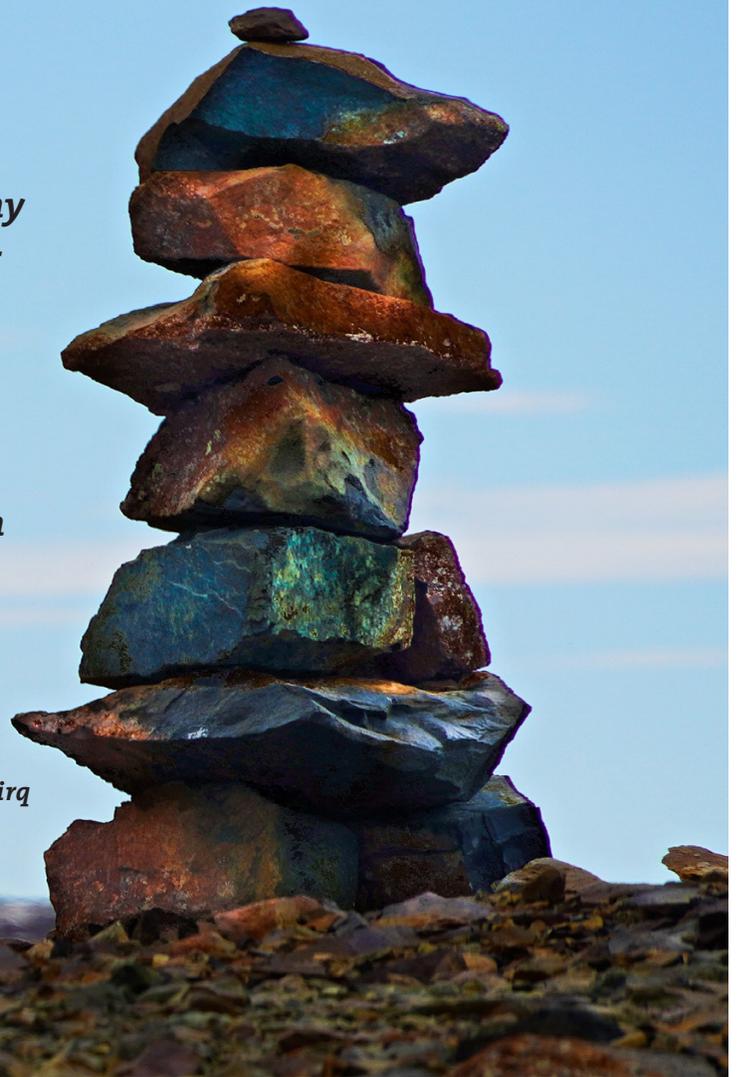
and deep-thinking skills so that they can respond well to whatever challenges or difficulties they might have to face. We are also responsible for ensuring that every child is able to become highly skilled in a way that allows them to contribute those skills to improving the lives of others. Inunnguiniq stresses these ways of child-rearing through *pijitsirniq*, *qanuqtururanganiq* and *pilimmaqsarniq*. As parents, our role is to meet the expectations for equipping our children to become capable and contributing human beings.

Look for programs in your community. Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre ([qhrc.ca](http://qhrc.ca)) trains people from communities across Nunavut to offer the *Inunnguiniq Parenting Program*. Find out when this program is offered in your community.



***The way I was taught was that I and my husband were to work closely together when it comes to children. Problems will arise if the mother is the only one teaching her children. It would be the same for the father if he were to take full responsibility to raise the children in his own way. I think both parents should be responsible to teach their children by working together. I think this is the Inuit way of teaching.***

***-Atuat Akittirq***



## ***Supporting Your Partner***

Strong children come from strong families and strong families begin with strong partnerships. Building a strong partnership requires a lot of love, attention and dedication. Elders are often willing to share from their own experiences to help you with advice. In many communities, there are also family support programs that offer workshops to help build positive relationships. Check with your local Family Services representatives or your early childcare programs.



## ***Managing Feelings***

Today, many people share their personal difficulties in managing feelings and emotions. In the past, this was an area that *inunnguiniq* paid special attention to. Children were carefully instructed in recognizing and naming emotions and feelings, in understanding the cause and how to manage them so as not to damage relationships. Children were trained early in conflict management, showing restraint, and looking for ways to resolve personal issues. If we are to support our children in developing these skills, we need to model these behaviours ourselves. Anger management counselling is often available through community programs. Seek this help if you are having challenges in this area.



*Children learn through experiencing life/silaturniq and then from being able to reflect on those experiences and make meaning of them/ tukisiumaniq. A parent needs to provide opportunities for a child to do this. Giving children an answer is not as important as creating the opportunity so that children learn to discover answers themselves. The most important things we can do as parents is to teach our children to learn so that in the future, they will be able to find the answers they need to live life well.*

## *Healing Supports*

All Inuit have experienced trauma resulting from colonization and its impacts. Often the result is deep hurt that is difficult to overcome. Again, community healing programs can be very effective in helping you work through these issues.

## *Parenting Supports*

Parenting workshops and supports are usually available through the early childcare programs in your community or through wellness centres. Elders are also a valuable support to young families and are often happy to be asked for this advice.



If you are having difficulty finding resources in any of these areas and would like more information, please look at the following websites:

**Pirurvik Centre**

[www.pirurvik.ca](http://www.pirurvik.ca)

**National Collaborating  
Centre for Indigenous Health**

[www.nccih.ca](http://www.nccih.ca)

**Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit  
Children, Youth and Families**

[www.inuuqatigiit.ca](http://www.inuuqatigiit.ca)

**Qaujigiartiit Health Research  
Centre**

[www.qhrc.ca](http://www.qhrc.ca)

**Tungasuvvingat Inuit**

[www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca](http://www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca)

**Aqqiumavvik Society**

[www.aqqiumavvik.com](http://www.aqqiumavvik.com)

**Mamisarvik Healing Centre**

[www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca](http://www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca)

