

Create Daily Messages of Connection and Gratitude

By April Brown for PBS SoCal Education



You'll need:

- Fallen branch from outside with leaves or needles (bare is just fine too). If you have a bare branch, you can tie colorful pieces of ribbon or string on it so the clothespins easily attach.
- Mason jar or container to hold the branch
- Wooden clothespins
- Markers
- Sheets of construction paper
- Glue
- Container to hold the clothespins and daily prompts
- [Daily Messages of Connection and Care](#)

What to do:

- Gather a fallen branch from outside and briefly explain the parts of the branch in simple language. Tell children that a branch is made up of a stem and leaves. Elaborate that the leaves need the stem to grow. Connect this to your family by explaining that the grown-ups in your family want to make sure the children feel loved, safe and cared for. Explain to children that people sort of like the stem and the leaves will grow well if the stem has what it needs to stay healthy. We all need to feel loved, cared for and safe because we depend on each other.
- Get the wooden clothespins, markers, construction paper and glue. Support children in folding the construction paper into 16 squares. [This tutorial](#) can help! Once the paper is folded, support children in drawing a small heart on the square that's visible. Assist children in cutting the heart out (this can be a little tricky because there are many layers of paper).
- Guide kids in counting each heart one by one up to 16. This supports them in learning

the math concept of one-to-one correspondence. One-to-one correspondence is the ability to match numbers to specific quantities.

- Glue the hearts on the clothespins and provide ample time for them to dry. Once the glue is dry, put all your decorated clothespins in a container near your branch.
- Choose a time once a day to sit down as a family. This might be before or after mealtime, before bed, or early in the morning. What's important is to choose a time when you don't feel rushed or overwhelmed so you can enjoy the activity together.
- Print out the [Daily Messages of Connection and Care](#). Involve children in learning the words **care**, **love**, **safe** and **grateful** using the definitions on the sheet. If appropriate for your child's age and ability, support them in cutting out each of the prompts. Alternatively, review the words and prompts before partaking in the activity. After you're done cutting them out, place the prompts in the clothespins container.
- Invite each family member to choose a prompt or share their own each day. For example, a child might choose the prompt, "I feel cared for when ____" and share, "I feel cared for when my dad reads me a book." Once a family member has shared, place a clothespin on the branch and the prompt back in the container. Continue this process as many days as you like for each family member. Once the branch is filled up, talk about all of the messages of connection and care you thought about! This practice reminds us that there is so much to be thankful for in our daily lives.
- **Optional:** Remove the clothespins and start the practice over again if it continues to bring joy to your family.