

What is family time?

FOR PROFESSIONALS



Family time refers to contact between kids and their biological parents, siblings, and extended family members. This contact is very important for kids in out-of-home care to maintain family connection. Family time is sometimes called family contact, visits, or access. It often occurs face-to-face, but can be facilitated through:

- phone calls
- video calls
- texts
- letters
- emails
- social media platforms

Kids in out-of-home care may experience anxiety, trauma, guilt, grief, and loss. In addition, believing that they don't belong to a family may leave them feeling hopeless, depressed, and without a strong identity. Family time can help kids develop a sense of belonging and ease their emotional and psychological distress.

Kids who have frequent contact with their biological parents show better mental health outcomes, including fewer internalising and externalising behaviour problems. Quality family time can:

- ease emotional and psychological symptoms
- reduce the pain of loss and separation
- help maintain relationships with family
- maintain or build attachment
- support restoration
- support healing and recovery from trauma
- build individual and cultural identity
- reduce a sense of abandonment
- enable relationship building in a safe and supportive environment
- reassure kids of their family's well-being
- allow kids to have more realistic views of family, reducing idealisation of parents

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- help build appropriate expectations of their family and relationships
- help to develop a support system for after care

With planning and support, family time can help birth parents and kids heal their relationships. Remember that family time is about building, repairing and maintaining positive family connections.