

It Takes a Village to Raise a Family

Why Community Matters for You and Your Child

Two-thirds of parents report that the demands of parenthood sometimes or frequently leave them feeling isolated and lonely. Nearly 40% feel they have no one to support them in their [parenting role](#). Meanwhile, parental burnout has reached alarming levels, with [studies showing](#) that between 57% and 65% of parents now report being burned out. Add the pervasive interference of screens—more than we often care to acknowledge—and it's no wonder so many parents feel they're going it alone.

But here's what the research tells us: **you're not meant to raise children alone, and your children aren't meant to grow up with just one or two adults in their world.**

The Science of Support

One of the most compelling studies on child resilience comes from sociologist Emmy Werner's [groundbreaking research](#) on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Werner followed nearly 700 children born into poverty, many facing significant adversity—parental mental illness, family conflict, or absent caregivers. Remarkably, about one-third of these high-risk children developed into competent, confident adults.

What made the difference? A single constant emerged: **every resilient child had at least one stable, caring adult outside their immediate family**—a grandparent, neighbour, teacher, or family friend who took genuine interest in them. These children didn't need perfect parents or ideal circumstances. They needed a village.

Why Multiple Relationships Matter

Children thrive when they have several supportive adults in their lives. These relationships provide varied social experiences, helping young children learn empathy, cooperation, and [emotional regulation](#). They discover that the world contains *many* caring people, which builds fundamental trust and security. Different adults model different ways of solving problems, expressing emotions, and treating others kindly—lessons that become the foundation for healthy friendships and social confidence.

For parents, having a village reduces stress, provides practical help, and offers the reassuring reminder that you're not alone in this exhausting, beautiful work. [Research shows](#) that parents with strong social support experience lower parenting stress and greater satisfaction in their role. Even a brief chat with another parent can restore perspective and patience after a difficult day.

Building Your Village: What Actually Works

Creating a supportive community doesn't require grand gestures. Here's what makes a real difference:

Connect Locally and Consistently Join playgroups, library storytimes, or parent-child classes. The magic isn't in the activity itself—it's in the repetition. Seeing the same families weekly builds genuine relationships for both you and your child.

Share Care Reciprocally Organise babysitting swaps with another family. Even small exchanges—a neighbour watching your toddler for thirty minutes while you prepare dinner—build connection and model interdependence for children. You're teaching them that asking for and offering help is normal, not shameful.

Invite Intergenerational Connection Grandparents, aunts, uncles, or older neighbours can read stories, bake together, or simply play. These interactions enrich your child's world whilst building relationships across generations. Children who know multiple generations develop richer perspective-taking abilities and greater respect for others.

Model Cooperation Visibly Children learn from watching adults work together. Carpooling, helping a neighbour carry groceries, or organising a joint family outing teaches empathy and teamwork far more powerfully than any lecture about "being kind."

Create Meaningful Rituals Belonging grows through consistent, predictable interactions: Tuesday morning storytime with grandparents, Saturday park visits with the same playgroup, or waving to your neighbour each morning at 8:15. These small rituals anchor children, reinforcing that multiple caring adults are reliably available.

The Parent Benefit

Having a village is good for children— but it's essential for parents. Raising young children is relentlessly demanding, and supportive adults provide practical help, emotional reassurance, and perspective when you're too exhausted to find it yourself. Knowing you're not alone allows you to respond to your children more calmly and patiently. Sharing the load doesn't mean you're failing; it means you're building a stronger, more resilient family network.

Werner's Kauai study reminds us that children don't need perfect circumstances to thrive. They need connection—not just to you, but to a broader community of caring adults who see them, value them, and show up consistently.

Your challenge: This week, identify one person outside your immediate family who could become part of your child's village. Invite them for a simple shared activity—a walk, a playdate, or afternoon tea. Small steps build lasting networks.

For more parenting help, grab a copy of my book [What Your Child Needs From You](#).



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