



# HOW TO...

## encourage love, play, talk with families in FTD

Watch the [recording](#) of the Practical Workshop hosted by Sikunye, discussing how you can encourage Love, Play, Talk with families in your church who have children in the First Thousand Days (FTD). Here you can listen to how we can Love, Play and Talk with our children first and be an example in our actions to parents in the FTD to Love, Play and Talk to their child #LovePlayTalk #mychildisasomebody

### what is love, play, talk?

In 2015, [Ilifa Labantwana](#) launched a campaign called #LovePlayTalk which was aimed at encouraging a close child-parent relationship by talking to, loving and playing with baby while it's still in utero and keeping the conversation going after they are born.

**love** By love we mean that this baby is welcomed with warmth and care into a relationship with mom and the family. Love means that mom always keeps her baby in mind, listens and responds to her baby's needs. Mom communicates love through her voice, touch, gaze, and attention to her baby's need. Her care is communicated in direct response to communication from her baby – there is two-way communication Watch this video that speaks about [why a mother's love is so important](#)

*"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples when you love each other."*

**John 13: 35 – 35**

### Ideas to encourage love with families in your church in FTD

- Speak about love in your church and actively love those in and outside your church
- Be the example to parents, so that they can be an example to their children. We are called to love others, as parents we can model God's love for us to our children, so that they know God's love and grow up loving others

- Express support to parent; give unconditional acceptance to families; smile, talk softly and show a beautiful face to families entering your church
- Be a peacemaker – Ephesians 6: 4 tells parents to not infuriate or make your children angry – as children grow up, they start to feel big feelings and may throw tantrums – remember to also speak to dads through a fatherhood programme (and other adult caregivers in the household) about how to respond in love to the frustrations their child experiences
- Children come innocently, speak freely, love unabashedly and trust unconditionally. Encourage parents to encourage their children to come to God like that by praying with them and for them in a manner that is like a child

**play** refers to the actions caregivers take to interact with baby that are not focused solely on the practical care tasks. Play refers to moments of shared joy between caregivers and the baby, when the two of them are engaged in simply enjoying being in each other's company. The interaction is equally positive for the adult and the baby. It is about caregivers getting to know and experiencing baby as a person with characteristics that make this baby a special and unique person

Watch this video about the [importance of Play in the FTD](#)

#### **Ideas to encourage play with families in your church in FTD**

- Play date in the park – invite families in FTD to a local park or church garden to play
- Host moms and baby's groups during the week where you can play for a day
- Host **Flourish** antenatal and postnatal classes in your venue – during the classes, moms learn how to play with baby and make toys and books for baby. Or train someone in your church to be a Flourish host
- In a Sunday service, have a room for parents to engage in play with baby – encourage this by having simple and colourful toys available (e.g., rattles, shakers, colourful string; for older children sing songs and give them pots and spoons to bang along to the song; encourage dancing; have paper and crayons for mom and dad to draw and name
- Create a WhatsApp group for the parents in your community and regularly send encouragements on [Love, Play, Talk](#)

**talk** refers to verbalising, expressing, and communicating with baby using language.

Language is vital in two ways: First, language is a core building block developing young baby's brain for learning. Secondly, the way language and tone are used also communicates emotions to baby. The aim of encouraging talk is to use language to strengthen the relationship between baby and mom. This is achieved through pointing out the positive characteristics of both caregiver and baby and encouraging a positive view of baby in their minds and in their words and tone.

Watch this video about [baby talk](#)

### **Ideas to encourage talk with families in your church in FTD**

- Train someone in your church community in [book-sharing](#) to teach parents how to share a book with their child – have a library at church that parents can borrow books, or a book club for babies
- Look at the newspaper for [Nal'ibali](#) story inserts – they also have free books, audio, and multilingual books online
- Set up a WhatsApp group and share links to resources that encourage talking to baby
  - [Book Dash](#) – which is data free
  - [African story books](#) – data free and storybooks in the languages of Africa
- Encourage parents to reduce distractions (e.g.TV, cell phone) and talk to their baby. Notice what their child is interested in, ask question or make a comment
- Encourage parents to watch the way they talk to other people – because children will learn to talk by how you communicate to others – if we talk in a positive way, our children will learn to speak positively to others
- As leaders in the church, play games, sing, and read (with love) with parents and baby
- Encourage babies to pray – and pray over babies
- Remind parents to start talking to babies from the very beginning – even in the womb

**Remember** to look at [Sikunye's Home-visiting](#) training as a way to surround moms with babies in the First Thousand Days whilst encouraging Love, Play and Talk. And speak to us if this is something you would like to do in your church.