



chapter 4

STABLE, RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



Key Messages

- There is very little information available about the nature of relationships between children and their parents or others in their lives.
- Levels of participation in daily active family activities are less than ideal.
- Most youth have someone with whom to share their private feelings and secrets. Only a minority share private feelings with immediate family members.

Children are exposed to a variety of relationships as they grow. These include relationships with immediate and extended family members, individuals in a child care environment and school setting, and with members of the community. A child's relationships can affect lifelong outcomes in emotional health, stress and immune responses, and health-related behaviours.⁶

There are key periods during early development when healthy emotional and cognitive development is shaped by responsive, dependable interaction with adults. These are also periods when chronic or extreme adversity can interrupt normal development.⁶

Despite the importance of relationships, there is very little information available about the quality of children's immediate and external relationships.

Parent-Child Activities

Healthy development is enhanced through language-rich environments and mutu-

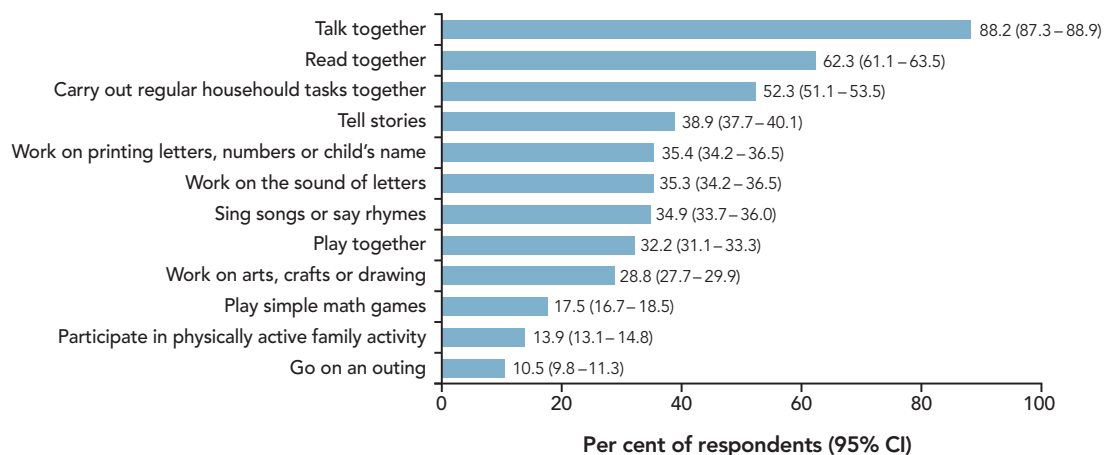
ally responsive interactions with adults.² Positive relationships between children and parents can be demonstrated through engagement in frequent, positive activities throughout the day.

Most parents indicate that they talk with their senior kindergarten child (88%), read together (62%) and carry out regular household tasks together (52%), every day (Figure 4.1). Fewer than one in five parents reported participating in physically active family activities every day, which is consistent with the high level of physical inactivity among parents noted previously (see Chapter 2, Caregiver Capacity).



Figure 4.1

Proportion of Respondents who Participated in Selected Activities with their Child Every Day, Peel, 2010



Note: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
Source: Senior Kindergarten Census 2010, Region of Peel.

Fewer than one in five Peel parents reported participating in physically active family activities every day.

Sharing Private Feelings with Parents and Others

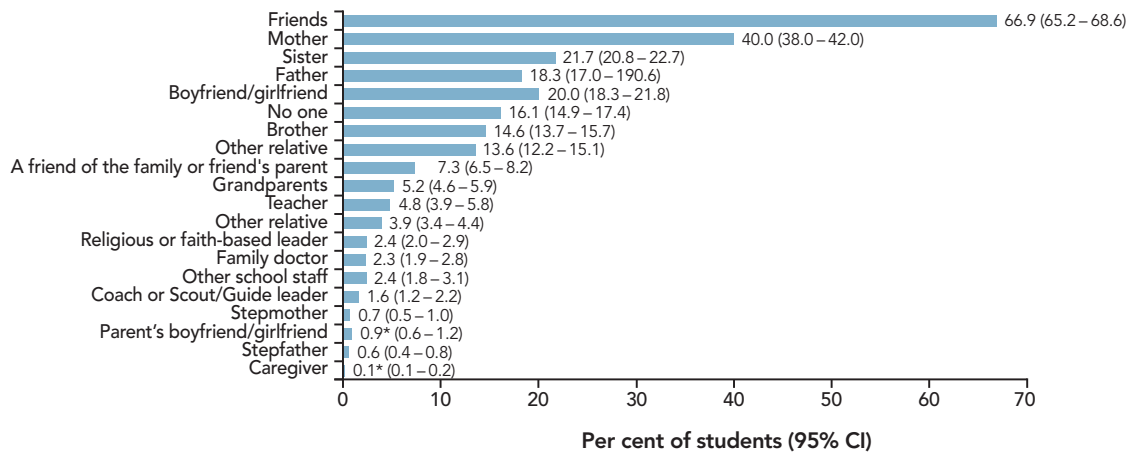
Open communication between teens and parents about private matters may be used as an indirect measure of the parent-child relationship. The majority of students in Peel have someone with whom they can talk about their feelings.^H Peel students are most likely to report talking to their friends about their secrets and private feelings, while 40% reported talking to their mother, 22% their sister and 18% their father (Figure 4.2).



! Peel Facts

Sixteen per cent of Peel students reported that they had no one to talk to about their secrets and private feelings.^H

Figure 4.2
To Whom Grade 7 to 12 Students Talk About Their Secrets and Private Feelings, Peel, 2011



* Use estimate with caution.
Notes: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
Percentages sum to more than 100% due to multiple responses.
Source: Student Health Survey 2011, Peel Public Health.