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The Parenting Puzzle
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Look after yourself!

Top tips

😊 When we are very busy it can be hard to find a moment for ourselves, and it’s all too easy to put our own needs at the end of the list.

😊 If we neglect ourselves we become exhausted and stressed, and then it’s much harder to enjoy family life.

😊 We owe it to ourselves to recharge our batteries, and our families will benefit too.

A recharged battery means a family full of energy

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The power of play

Children do most of their learning through play.

Play can be messy but it's very important.

We need to give time to let children play by themselves and also to join in with them sometimes.

Playtime is their chance to be in charge – and it’s fun for us and for them!

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Understanding our own feelings

Feelings are signposts

Being aware of our own feelings and accepting all of them (even the difficult ones) is a positive and healthy thing to do.

Feelings are never bad in themselves – it’s how we deal with them that counts.

Children learn from what they see us do. If we can express our feelings appropriately, they will learn how to do this too.
Understanding our children’s feelings and behaviour

Noticing our children’s feelings is important – tuning in to their excitement and distress (and everything in between!).

Responding helpfully often prevents explosive behaviour.

It takes years to learn to manage our feelings. Many behaviours (such as tantrums) are a natural stage of development – so don’t expect too much too soon.
Listening to our children

One of the greatest gifts we can give each other is to listen. In our busy lives it isn’t always easy to stop what we are doing so we can listen closely to our children and value what they say – but it’s worth it.

Taking time to listen to our children builds trust and honesty.

If we listen to our children they will learn to listen to us and to each other.

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Praise is magic!

Helpful praise

Look Dad, I got a star for my picture at school. My teacher said it was really good. It’s my best one ever!

How exciting! Let me see. What great colours you’ve chosen. What do you like best?

I like the clouds because they look quite real.

I like them too. You deserve to feel proud of yourself for drawing and colouring so well.

I like making pictures. I think I’ll do another one later.

Top tips

😊 Praise helps children feel good about themselves, so they are more likely to behave well.

😊 Praise helps us to notice all the good things about our children, rather than mostly focusing on their faults.

😊 Praise helps children to remember what we’d like them to do.

😊 Praise helps us to feel good, too – it’s no fun having to tell children off all the time.

PRAISE WORKS WONDERS!

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Using rewards

Children like to please us, but some of the ways we want them to behave aren’t easy for them to learn.

It’s easier to learn a new behaviour if something nice happens when we remember it.

Reward effort as well as achievement.

Reward little and often, and remember that our time, pleasure and attention are the best rewards of all.

Top tips

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Diverting and distracting

Unhelpful

Stop banging that cup, you're making a real mess – that's naughty!

Helpful

Here's a wooden spoon. Let's see what noise it makes.

Top tips

😊 Young children easily switch their attention to something else that interests them.

😊 By offering a different object or activity, we can often avoid difficult situations without mentioning any unwanted behaviour.

😊 If you are going out it can be helpful to take some small toys or everyday objects for children to play with.

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Creating boundaries

We all want our children to grow up confident, independent and responsible. Developing clear, fair, consistent boundaries helps them to do this.

Children need to test the boundaries in order to feel safe. When they do, we need to be firm without being harsh.

Boundaries are a family affair – everyone needs to agree them and be prepared to stick to them.

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Time to calm down

When emotions are running high, a cooling-off time gives everyone the chance to calm down.

Allowing time to calm down helps us to hold on to clear boundaries without nagging or adding our own angry outbursts.

Sometimes our children will need to release their frustration or anger safely before they can calm down.

Top tips

I see you two need to let off steam.

Now you’re feeling calmer let’s go back and play.

It’s so nice when you share your toys and have fun together.

It's so nice when you share your toys and have fun together.

We all need time to calm down

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Giving children choices

We all want to feel that we are in charge of our own lives – though it’s not always easy!

It is helpful for children gradually to learn to make choices for themselves. We can offer them a choice many times during the day.

The choices we offer children need to be ones we’re happy to provide – and can describe to them clearly.

Top tips

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Celebrating family life

Top tips

😊 Family life is like a treasure hunt – full of hazards, adventures and discoveries to make along the way.

😊 If we keep using the skills we have discovered we will face the hazards more confidently.

😊 When family life seems like a struggle it can be hard to find the energy to keep going. Making sure our own batteries are charged up will give us the boost we need.

There’s no time like the present, and no present like time!