

Being a parent

Becoming a parent is one of the most challenging and rewarding tasks in life. It's a huge responsibility that's often taken for granted.

It's important to remember that parents grow into their roles, and can't expect to have the right answers all the time!

Your feelings

As a parent you will feel all sorts of emotions. You will feel love, joy and pride, but also anger, panic, despair and frustration. Sometimes parents feel they are not appreciated by their children or valued by others.

It's normal for parents to sometimes feel tired or upset and question what it's all about. Remember you don't have to be perfect, all parents feel they make mistakes at times.

Information comes from everywhere

As a parent you can feel overwhelmed by all the information given to you. Suggestions from family and friends are often well meant, but can make you feel you are not doing a good job.

Be open to suggestions, thank people for their interest and ideas, and think about the advice given. Some suggestions might work for you.

Remember to ask for help from others when you need it but be confident about your ability as a parent.

Working parents

Work can be a major part of people's lives. Sometimes parents feel they are struggling to juggle work and family life.

Many parents:

- ◆ feel guilty about not having enough time with their children
- ◆ worry about what to do when their children are sick
- ◆ worry about what others think of them when things go wrong
- ◆ get stressed when faced with events that throw the daily routine out.

Parents should work out how to manage time so they can look after themselves as well as their children. Where two parents are involved, parents need to talk about how responsibilities will be shared. This requires planning, organising and communicating with each other.

Some things to think about:

- ◆ what is the first priority?
- ◆ who does what tasks?
- ◆ what arrangements are there for sick children / school events (who takes time off to attend or stay at home?)
- ◆ find time to spend with partner / friends
- ◆ make time for self / leisure activity
- ◆ make time for family being together
- ◆ dedicate special time to each child.

Things that might make parenting easier

- Learn about how children grow and develop
- Remember you can do things differently
- Be strong enough to say you don't know how to do some things
- Be prepared to ask for information or advice.

Accept your feelings

Understand that mixed feelings are normal. At times of stress or when things change in your family, you can be swamped with lots of emotions. It is important to reach out - speak to your partner, to your friends, to family members or to someone not caught up in the emotion.



Get support

Parenting is hard to do without help from others. If you feel alone and can't find support within your family, find someone to talk to. **Don't be afraid to ask for help - it is not a sign that you can't cope. You will find that others feel the same as you.**

Parentline 132 055

Trust yourself

Everyone has their own ideas about parenting. It's easy to become confused or feel what you're doing is not good enough. Listen to other people's ideas but do what feels right for you and your children. Trust your own judgement.

Look after yourself

Remember you are a person as well as a parent. Don't expect too much of yourself or others. Praise yourself for simple things. Don't dwell on mistakes (mistakes are for learning from, not for making you feel bad).

Try to find things to look forward to - even small things like having half an hour to yourself to read a magazine or ring a friend.

Take care of your relationship

As a parent it's important you feel loved and supported too. Your closest relationship will probably be with your husband, wife or partner, or perhaps a special friend. Make regular time for your adult relationships. Children learn about relationships from what's happening around them.



Value yourself

You are doing an important job. Be proud of the effort you put in through the day, no matter how small the achievement. Never forget how important parenting is.



Work out your own values

Clear values and beliefs are an important foundation when raising children. Try to reach an agreement with your partner if you have a difference of opinion. A clear and shared form of parenting is less confusing for your child. If you and your partner differ, try not to put each other down.

Managing anger

There are times in all parents' lives when they feel very angry. Most of the time parents manage to handle it successfully, but sometimes the anger can be in danger of getting out of control. Try to do something about whatever is causing the underlying feeling. Work out when you are most likely to lose your cool and plan to do something different at those times, e.g. when you first get home from work.

Note: If you have lost control and hurt your child or have been violent to others in your home it's important to get help.

Sorting and fixing

If you have violence in your home, money difficulties, ill health, arguments with neighbours or hassles at work, try to sort out the problem. Avoiding action is likely to make things feel worse for you. **Maybe seek advice from a professional if you can't sort it out within your family.**

If you are experiencing domestic violence, call the DoCS Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463.

Reward yourself

Do at least one thing a day that makes you feel good. Ask someone to help so you can have 'time out' to do whatever you feel like doing. Have a bubble bath, read a magazine, kick a football, go for a walk, talk to a friend.



Reminders



- Your style of parenting will shape your child's life, so make the foundation solid.
- Find out more about child development.
- Mistakes only matter if you keep repeating them.
- Plan, organise and communicate so you can balance work and family responsibilities, and meet your child's needs.
- Don't waste your time and energy feeling guilty – change what you are doing.
- If you have a problem with anger or violence, get help.
- Seek help from others when you need it but continue to believe in yourself.