

Tips for Parents of Young Children



Make time to look after yourself and manage stress

Being a parent is the most wonderful and possibly the most difficult role you will have. It isn't always easy and sometimes it can prove challenging. That's why it's important to look after yourself as well as your children. It can feel harder if you're tired, stressed and unhappy.



Try to set aside time for yourself

Getting a break may help you cope with everything. Don't spend time feeling guilty about the jobs that "should be done" when your child is asleep. Use some of this time to relax and do something you enjoy.

Try to eat well

This can be difficult for busy parents but **Change4Life** (change4lifewales.org.uk) has lots of ideas for simple and quick recipes and tips to stay fit and healthy.

Get together with other parents and their children

Your child will have fun, enjoy the company of another child and you will enjoy some adult conversation. Your Family Information Service will be able to tell you what's on in your area. Call on 0300 123 7777.

Anger

Most parents have times when they feel tested to their limits. They may feel stressed about personal, medical or financial problems. Learning to manage your anger will be beneficial to your health and your relationship with your child.

The part of the brain which helps your child control or calm feelings like anger is not well developed before the age of three. A lot of the behaviour you find difficult may be perfectly normal for your child's age and stage of development. Sometimes we expect more of a child than they can actually give us at those ages.

Getting angry, yelling and smacking can turn things into a major battle.

When you shout at your child it triggers cortisol – a stress hormone. This makes it much harder for them to listen and learn.

Try to get to know your own body's signals for when anger is building up.

These might be: clenched jaw; fists tensed; pounding heart and feeling hotter.

If you feel anger getting the better of you it may help to:

- **Stop and count to 10 or even sing before you act.** Counting and singing engages a different part of your brain from the 'anger reflex'. It diffuses tension so you can 'reset' your emotions.
- **Try to breathe out the tension.** Try to breathe out longer than your breathe in.
- **Take some time out.** Leave the room briefly, phone a friend, play your favourite music. Ask a friend or family member to care for your baby or child for a while so you can have time to yourself.
- **Work it off.** Exercise can help you deal with stress-related anger. You could put your child in their pushchair and go for a walk to let off steam.
- **Ask yourself.** "Is it really worth getting angry about?" Is it about what your child has done or is it about me feeling stressed?
- **Think it through.** Are there some things that wind you up more than others? Are there ways of avoiding those situations?
- **Think whether there are some underlying feelings making you angry.** If you feel angry in spite of everything you have tried, it may be worth getting some advice. It may help talking it through with a counsellor or getting some advice on managing your anger.

Alternatively you may find these helplines useful:

C.A.L.L. Helpline (callhelpline.org.uk) 0800 132 737 (24 hour service) – **Community Advice and Listening Line** – or text 'help' to text 81066.

Samaritans (samaritans.org) – call FREE on 116 123 (confidential 24 hour service),
Email: jo@samaritans.org.

It's OK to ask for help

Nobody gets it right all the time. If you are worried about feeling stressed, low or depressed talk with your health visitor or GP. By getting help, you will be doing the best thing for your child, your family and yourself.

For more helpful tips on your child's development and on positive parenting techniques, visit: **gov.wales/giveittime**