

**NSPCC**

..... NEED-TO-KNOW GUIDES .....

# **Positive Parenting**

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



# What's inside

Understanding your child's needs	03
How can I set boundaries?	05
Rewards and discipline	07
Keeping your cool	09
Building positive relationships	11
Who can I talk to?	13

We know how challenging it can be to balance all the demands parents and carers have to cope with. That's why we've put together some tips to help. All children need boundaries and discipline, and this guide helps you develop what works for you and your child.

EVERY FAMILY IS DIFFERENT, SO MAKE THIS GUIDE YOUR OWN. You can make notes on it, customise it – whatever works for you.

Positive parenting uses techniques that work well for every child. These techniques will help you build and strengthen your relationship with your child, leading to them being happier, along with less stress for you.

All parents can come under pressure or stress from time to time, and it can even lead to them wanting to smack their children – although many parents regret it later. But evidence shows that it is not an effective way to discipline your children.

In Scotland and Jersey (and, from March 2022, in Wales), the law no longer permits any type of physical punishment of children.

## Remember

Positive parenting techniques are much more likely to work and leave you feeling more positive about your parenting.

# Understanding

Babies behave as they do to get their

## your child's needs

cry they're trying to tell you that they need something – maybe they're

Children's needs and behaviours change as they

get older, and understanding these needs will help you better understand your child. A lot has been written about the needs of children and cover some of the key areas here. If you'd like more detailed advice you can talk to the NSPCC helpline.

like a 'stubborn streak' – spitting out food or wriggling away from a nappy change. All they are doing is trying to express their likes and dislikes in the only way they can. advice for parents, and we

When you're stressed you may feel your baby is being 'deliberately naughty' or trying to provoke you.

For more resources, see our Look, Say, Sing, Play information: [nspcc.org.uk/looksayingplay](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/looksayingplay)

needs met. For example, when they



hungry, need their nappy changed or feel tired.

Older babies may show what appears to be a 'stubborn streak' – spitting out food or wriggling away from a nappy change. All they are doing is trying to express their likes and dislikes in the only way they can.

advice for parents, and we

When you're stressed you may feel your baby is being 'deliberately

This is not possible. Remember you should never shout at, scream at, hit, shake or smack a baby.

All toddlers test limits and have tantrums. Research shows that a child's brain is still developing during this period, so there are limits to how much they're able to control their emotions. Remember that behaviour in toddlers which is often seen as naughty is actually quite normal and part of growing up.

School-age children are constantly learning and exploring their world. They may have lots of questions as they start to form their own views on issues. As they move towards being more independent they may seem to push boundaries and become more challenging. This is a necessary part of growing up.

#### 4. Teenagers

As children continue to develop their own identities in their teenage years, they might become more challenging – sometimes seeming ‘moody’ or withdrawn, or not as talkative and open as their parents would like. They might be more inclined to disagree with their parents, or choose different views. Friends (and celebrities) will become a bigger influence and your child may not always do what you would like.

03

As children get older, they can experience difficult emotions. Some children find it hard to talk to their parents about feelings and may want to speak to Childline **0800 1111, [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)**

04



# How can I set boundaries?

and consistent.

All children need love, guidance and to have rules you don't want them to, clearly and boundaries. Rules and boundaries help explain what you want them to do instead. families to understand how to behave towards • Be available and make time for your each other, and what's OK and not OK. But the child, so they will come to you when they feel something is wrong best way to go about this will vary based or they are upset. on your child's age and stage of development.

All children are different and develop and reach your child even if at times it feels like a challenge. Start listening milestones at different rates. from a very early age and set

You can find more UK-wide information at • Review family rules as your child [nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development) gets older and recognise the different needs of children living

- Introduce boundaries from an early age.

## Top tips...

**for all ages**

- Keep guidance simple
- If your child is behaving in a way
- Be available
- Keep talking and listening to
- Review family rules as your child
- Start listening milestones
- a pattern for life.
- at home. For example, you shouldn't expect the same from

**for babies – toddlers**

**for school age – teenagers**

- Reflect to your child that you know how they may be feeling – for example, saying “I know you’re frustrated,” if your child is struggling to do something.
- Share your own feelings if you find it helps to relieve your stress – for example, “I know you’re tired but I’m tired too.”
- Try to avoid using orders and ultimatums.

- Be willing and give your child opportunities to show they can be trusted.
- Avoid criticism wherever possible. If your child has done something wrong, explain that it is the action and not them that you’re unhappy with.
- Try to avoid getting trapped in petty arguments. There are rarely any winners!
- Consider ways to negotiate or offer choices as your child gets older.

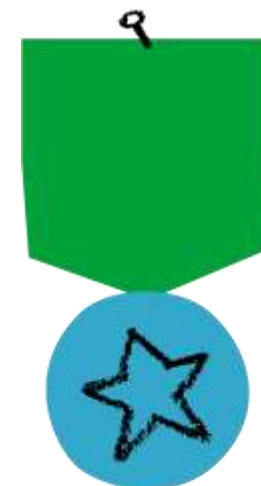
## Rewards and discipline

Different parents will have different views about the best ways to encourage children to adapt their behaviour. While some younger children may respond well to incentives like reward charts, and

your 12-year-old as you would from your four-year-old.

- Get support from friends and try any good ideas they have found helpful.
- If you are struggling and feel things are getting out of hand, get advice from your GP, a health visitor, or your child’s teacher.

some older children may respond to the offer of being allowed to stay out a bit later, other children won’t.



06

07

**Only you will know what works for your child but here are some helpful points to think about.**

- Praise children whenever possible for all they do.
- Reward positive behaviour and consider asking what would be a good reward.
- Avoid making rash decisions when you’re angry.



Smacking is never a good idea

Ideas on bringing up children have more about the effects of smacking. – making them resentful and angry, and damaging the relationship parenting and discipline harder in the children. get out of control.

This also comes back to being a role this is acceptable behaviour

Children may avoid being smacked by changed, and we now know a lot may become withdrawn – not Smacking can hurt children’s feelings

Please note, in Scotland and Jersey between parent and child. This makes (and, from March 2022, in Wales), the law no longer permits any type long run, not easier. Smacking can of physical punishment of

Finding the right balance of model. If you smack your child, they rewards and discipline is a key part may think of positive parenting. and treat other people in the same way.



08

# Keeping your cool

It’s important to find ways to relieve your stress and manage if you’re feeling upset or angry. Lots of things, not only children’s behaviour, can make us feel stressed – from family relationships to managing a work-life balance, health, housing, poverty, unemployment and much more. You want to be the best parent you can, but being stressed is stressful!

09

When stress takes over, it can make you lose your temper and say or do things you later regret. You might find yourself saying something hurtful or smacking your child. Living in a stressful home can also impact on your child’s feelings and healthy development. But you can avoid this by managing stress and anger.

- **Be as prepared as possible**
- **Accept support** Parenting can of course be

This may be from your family, a stressful at certain times, so

friend or by using online forums. consider ways of dealing with this Knowing that there are other in advance. For example, if your parents in the same situation child gets bored and irritable on can be a great encouragement. long journeys, or waiting for

things like doctor's appointments, take a couple of books or

- **Make time for yourself** activities to keep them busy.

This may involve doing things like exercising or listening to music. It can be as simple as

for something difficult, be proud a walk. If you live with a partner, of what you've achieved. agree a way to make sure you Celebrate your children's both get time off. successes too.

- **Don't overlook success** a long soak in the bath,

If you have coped well with watching a film or going

- **Get help**

This is a positive step to take and not a sign of weakness. If you're Being a parent or carer is so important. feeling stressed and anxious all While it's common to feel less needed the time, seek some outside as children get older, or to feel more advice. A range of difficulties may like a taxi driver or cleaner, you are the get in the way of being a parent person your child will look to for help. and it's important to get help.

Finding time for yourself is something Talk to your GP or health visitor, you shouldn't overlook or feel guilty or call the NSPCC helpline on about. It may take planning but having

**0808 800 5000.**

a break can help you to be the best parent you can be.

### Look after yourself

### Top five tips:

- Show your child you're interested in what they like. Think of enjoyable activities you can do together.
- Think of times when you have seen
  - Don't give up or be too hard on a positive change in your child's yourself if things don't immediately behaviour and anything you could change. Focus on small steps and learn from that experience. achievable goals.
- Ask your child for their views and be
  - Be prepared to compromise and willing to listen. This can help you to admit you've been wrong, and see things from their perspective. sometimes make mistakes yourself.

10

## Building positive relationships

If parent-child relationships become damaged, it can affect the way a child feels or behaves. Finding ways to show unconditional love and affection to your child is important. But this can be easier said than done, especially when you're tired or juggling different needs.

Spend time with your child and learn together. This can help increase your child's confidence, strengthen your bond and also help you to better understand their needs.

11

### Try this:

Now that you've read our top tips, why not add some notes of your own?

Every family is different, so use this page to make this guide your own.



FUN THINGS YOU CAN DO TOGETHER:



Blank yellow rectangular area for writing.

POSITIVE THINGS YOUR CHILD HAS STARTED TO DO:



Blank yellow rectangular area for writing.

HOW CAN YOU REACH THE PLACE YOU WANT TO BE?



Blank yellow rectangular area for writing.

# Who can I talk to?

All parents can feel stressed or unsure from (Northern Ireland)

0808 8020 400

time to time, or just need someone to talk to. But Family information services in

don't worry, there are lots of places where you can get different kinds of help. information, support of places where you can children and young people's

services. Search: [gov.wales/children-families](http://gov.wales/children-families)

We've put together a list of the different you might find also [giveittime.gov.wales](http://giveittime.gov.wales)

talk to your GP, health visitor or your child's school nurse. seven days a week, 9am-10pm. 08451 228669

[cry-sis.org.uk](http://cry-sis.org.uk)

ParentClub Scotland is the Scottish Government's advice hub for parents in Scotland. Family Lives provides help and support on all aspects of parenting on and family life, and runs Parentline. Citizens Advice can advise things like employment, housing and income issues which can cause stress in families.

Parentline Scotland (Children 1st)  
0800 028 2233 [children1st.org.uk](http://children1st.org.uk)

[citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)

13

Worried about a child?

# We're here for you, every day of the year

If you have any questions or worries, feel free to get in touch with us.

Our trained experts at the NSPCC helpline can listen to any worries you have about looking after your child, or any tough decisions you're facing.



Reading this guide may have also made you think about other children. Contact us if you're worried about any aspect of their safety, and we can help.

Call **0808 800 5000**

Email **[help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)**

Or talk to us online at **[nspcc.org.uk/help](https://nspcc.org.uk/help)**



Together we can help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

We change the law. We visit schools across the country, helping children understand what abuse is. And, through our Childline service, we give young people a voice when no one else will listen.

But all this is only possible with your support. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will help make sure we can fight for every childhood.

**[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)**

**EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

All information is current and accurate at the time of printing. ©2020 NSPCC, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Registered charity England and Wales 216401, Scotland SC037717 and Jersey 384. J20211066.