

Effective Parenting

Strategies for Raising Confident, Resilient, and Happy Children

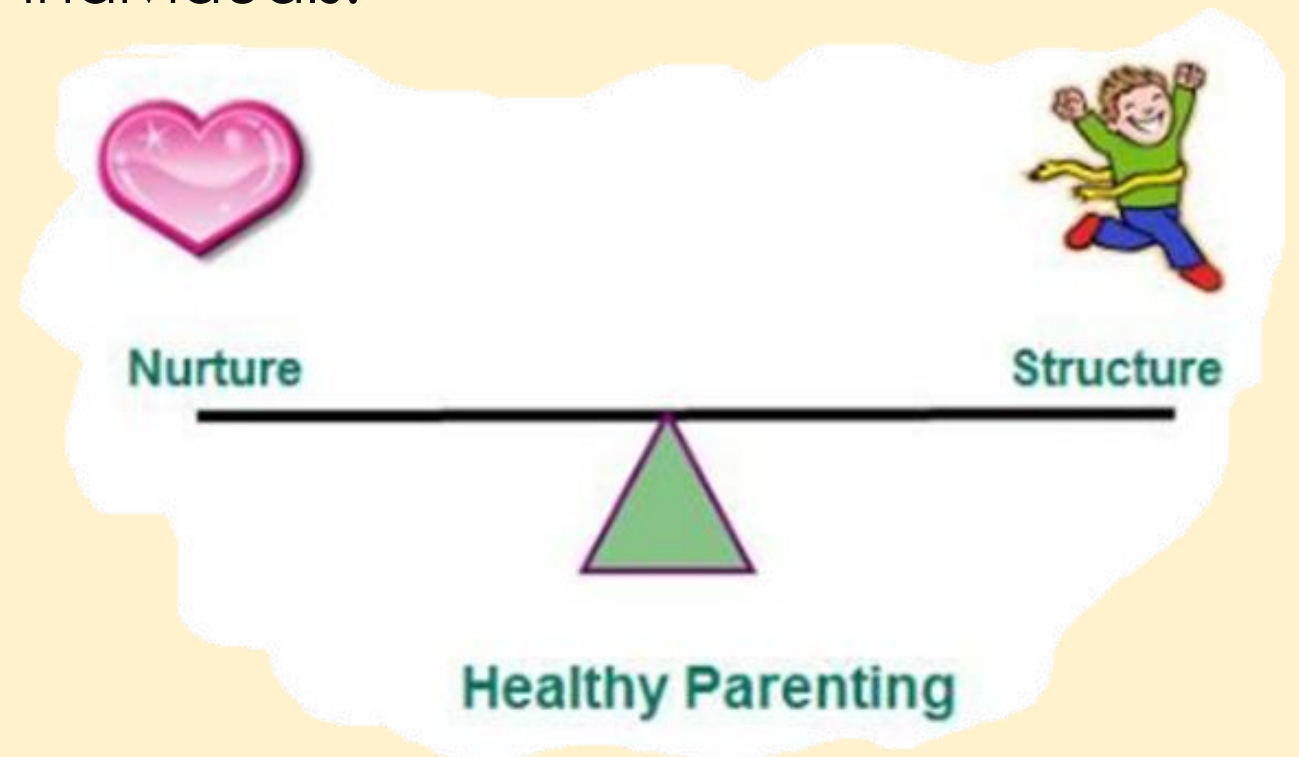


Definition: Effective parenting involves providing emotional support, guidance, structure and nurture while balancing discipline and encouragement.

Objective: To help children grow into well-rounded, confident, resilient, content, and emotionally intelligent individuals.

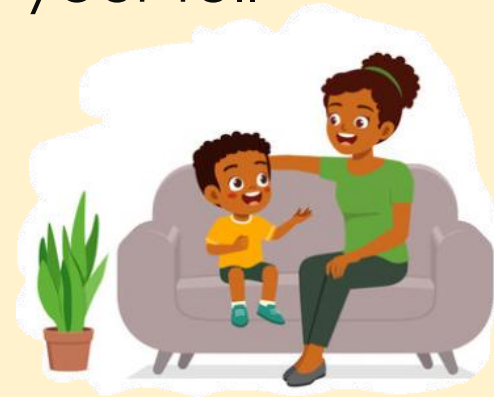
Key Areas of Focus:

- Communication
- Emotional support
- Boundaries & Consistency
- Role modelling



Building Strong Communication

- **Active Listening:** Pay full attention to your child's needs and concerns.
- **Open Conversations:** Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings.
- **Effective Feedback:** Use positive reinforcement and constructive guidance.
- **Non-verbal Communication:** Be mindful of body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice.
- **Full Attention:** When communicating with your child, give them your full attention and show them they have your full attention-
 - Phone down, relaxed, open body language, active listening.
 - Having a routine of sitting for breakfast together in the morning and/or having dinner together in the evening is an easy way to build protected quality time into the day together as an open forum for discussions.



The Importance of Emotional Support



- Validation:** Acknowledge your child's emotions and feelings.

"I can see you are sad. It's hard when we can't do what we want to do / have something we want."

- Empathy:** Understand and share your child's perspective.

"I can see why you would feel that way."

- Encouragement:** Motivate your child through praise and constructive feedback. We do not need to rush in and try to 'fix' things. It is ok for your child to feel upset/uncomfortable/angry- these are normal feelings and will build resilience and independence over time.

"You are doing really well. I'm proud of you."

- Unconditional Love:** Show your child that they are loved no matter what, whilst still standing firm on boundaries and being explicit about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Be clear about the non-negotiable whilst still offering love and kindness.

"That's unacceptable behaviour/that's not safe – we are going to do xyz instead, then we can talk."

Setting Boundaries and Being Consistent



- Clear Expectations:** Set clear rules and expectations for behaviour.

Before an activity, tell your child What will be happening and How they should behave.

- Consistency:** Keep the boundaries the same.

Children test boundaries when they are always changing. Even keeping to the same language helps- Safe, Respect, Ready – are easy for the children to understand. As most things fit into one of these categories, the message gets reinforced again and again – soon it becomes embedded and second nature.

Children feel safe when they know the adult is leading. They can have a limited choice within the plan, but ultimately, the parent is leading and looking after them.

- Positive Reinforcement:** Praise good behaviour and accomplishments.

Notice the positive and give specific praise/feedback. “I can see you were really kind and shared that toy. That made the other child feel happy. That was so thoughtful of you.” / “I can see that was a really challenging situation there. Well done, you made the right choice.”

- Natural Consequences:** Allow children to experience the natural results of their actions (when safe to do so), e.g. friendship issues- offer advice and guidance but don't rush in to 'fix' the problem or tell your child to avoid the situation. Negotiating and reaching a compromise is an important part of friendship building and will serve them well throughout their life.

Role Modelling

- **Be a Good Example:** Demonstrate the behaviours and values you want your child to adopt.
- **Respectful Communication:** Show how to resolve conflicts in a healthy and respectful manner.
- **Self-care:** Show your child the importance of taking care of their physical and mental health.



Encouraging Independence and Responsibility

- Age-appropriate Tasks:** Give children responsibilities that match their abilities. Do these together for the first few weeks to teach the skills and build their confidence.
- Decision-Making:** Allow children to make choices and experience the consequences. Providing a limited choice helps to keep the boundaries (offer two choices- you are happy with either outcome – e.g. “broccoli or carrots with dinner?”)
- Problem-Solving:** Encourage your child to solve problems independently with guidance. When you are thinking through a problem, talk it through out loud so you are modelling the process.



The Role of Positive Reinforcement

- **Catch the Good:** Notice and reinforce positive behaviour. Give process praise “I saw you step to the side so the lady could get past, that was so thoughtful.”
- **Acknowledge the feeling of Positive Choices:** “It felt good to help out today. Do you feel good too? It’s a nice feeling, isn’t it?”
- **‘When and Then’:** Demonstrate natural positive consequences – “**when** we have finished tidying, **then** we can go to the park”.
- **Growth Mindset:** Encourage effort over results and praise persistence.




Person praise leads to a 'fixed mindset', process praise leads to a 'growth mindset'. Children with growth mindsets are more resilient.

Monitoring Technology


- **Setting Boundaries for Screen Time:** Establish limits for screen time to ensure balanced activities.
- **Encourage Physical and Social Activities:** Promote outdoor activities, hobbies, and face-to-face interaction.
- **Monitoring and Guidance:** Be involved in your child's online activities.

Your Handy Guide to Cultivating Healthy Screen Use in Children

Tips on healthy screen use for your family!




Manage Your Child's Screen Use




- Consider the needs of your child when setting boundaries of screen use as a family. Discuss with your child where necessary.
- Have a plan that balances screen use with other activities.

Model Healthy Media Habits




- Review your own media habits.
- Encourage daily 'screen-free' times, especially during family meals or when interacting with one another.

Encourage Meaningful Screen Use



- Make sure your child is watching content appropriate for their age.
- Discuss with your child about what they are viewing.

< 18 months




- No screen use unless it is used for interactive video chatting.

DO NOT...

- ✗ Turn on the TV in the background.

1.5 to 6 years




- Less than 1 hour of screen use a day outside school.
- Choose educational and age-appropriate content.
- Watch content together and discuss the content with your child.

DO NOT...

- ✗ Use screens during meals and one hour before bedtime.
- ✗ Use screens just to occupy or distract your child.
- ✗ Turn on the TV in the background.

7 to 12 years



- Less than 2 hours of screen use a day, unless related to school work.
- Agree on a screen use plan or timetable.
- Use parental control settings and check content ratings to ensure content is age-appropriate.
- Talk to your child often on what they are viewing online. Offer advice regularly.

DO NOT...

- ✗ Use screens during meals and one hour before bedtime.
- ✗ Allow access to social media services.
- ✗ Give your child mobile devices with unrestricted access to the internet and applications.

Common Parenting Challenges

- **Dealing with Meltdowns:** Use strategies for remaining calm and consistent.
- **Handling Peer Pressure:** Encourage open dialogue about friendships and challenges. Don't rush in to fix the problem. Talk it through and see if the child can come up with solutions.
- **Managing Stress and Burnout:** Recognise when you need a break, and ask for support.

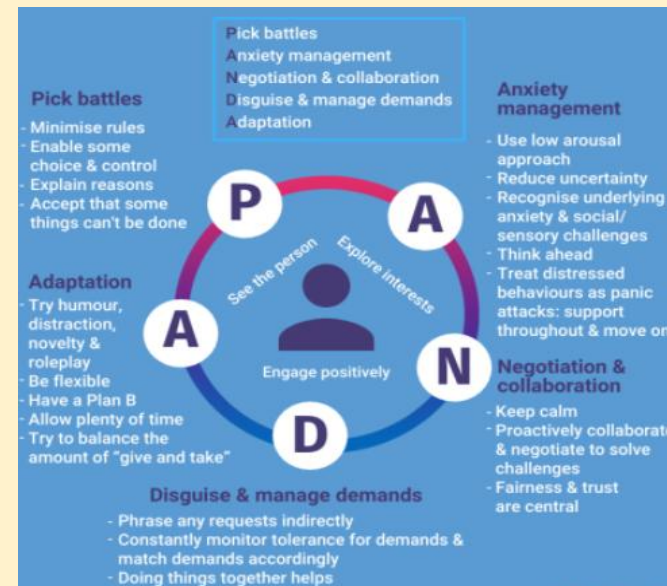
What can you do to help?

Firstly try not to judge! Meltdowns cannot be controlled and getting upset or angry will only add to their stress.

- Let them know that you are there to support them
- Avoid asking questions, giving information or instructions.
- Avoid restrictive methods, such as removing comfort items, or physical restraint. This should be avoided at all costs - unless it is absolutely the only way to keep a person safe.
- Match your energy to the person, e.g. use a firm voice if they are loud and a quiet voice if they are still.









- Give them time. It can take a while to recover from a meltdown.
- Create a calm, safe environment. Remove any objects/people/sounds that are causing sensory overload.
- Give them a sensory object to vent energy or to help them feel calm.
- Different people will have different triggers, responses and needs. Discuss this with the person when they are calm. You can agree a plan to support them during a meltdown.
- Practice strategies when the person is calm which will help them remember what to do during a meltdown.



SELF-CARE FOR TOUGH TIMES

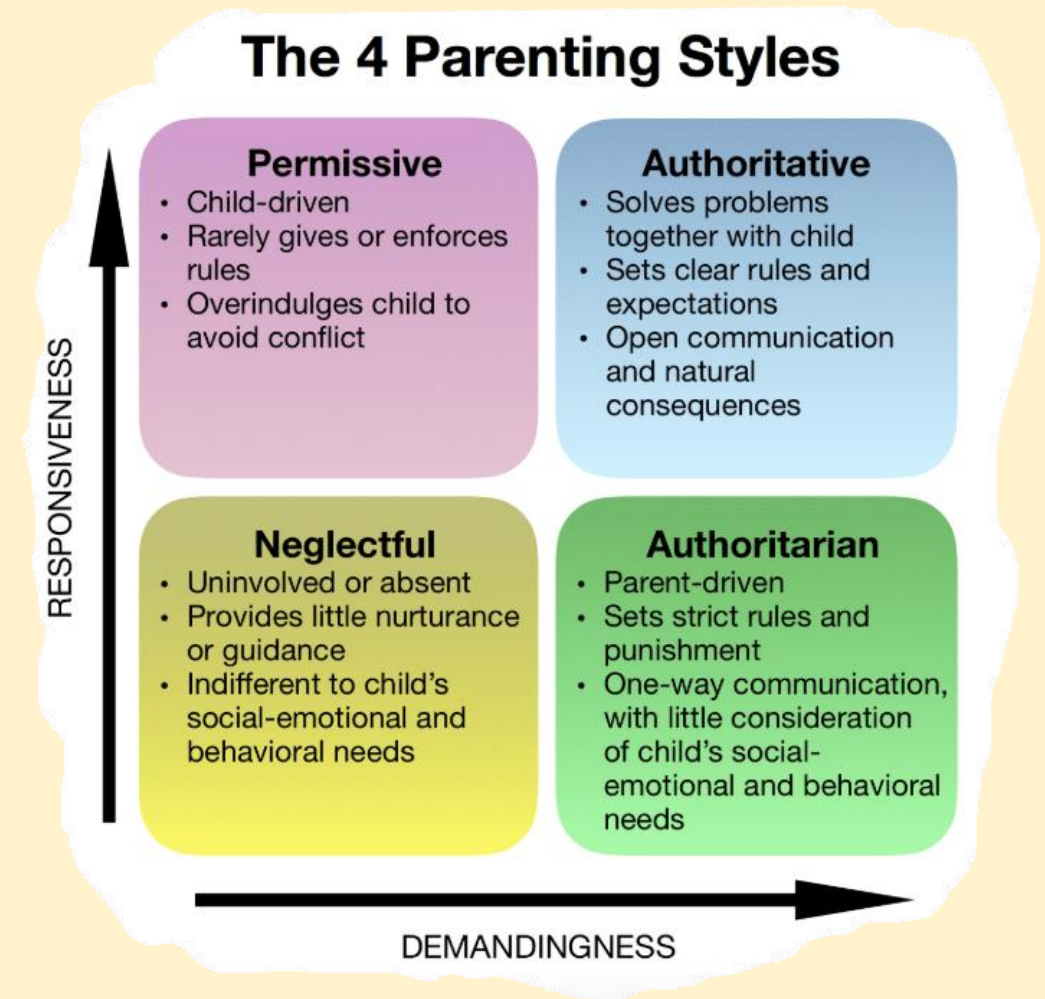
PARENT SELF-CARE



Things to check	What to do
Are they tired?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consider starting the bedtime routine much earlier. -Pace the day, plan less, build in more down time. 
Are they hungry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Offer a simple low GI food to 1) Redirect the focus 2) Top up the energy without a later dip  
Are they overstimulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide quiet time -Build time into the day to just be
Are they bored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have a bank of practical- hands-on activities you can do together initially and then your child can continue independently: <p>Soft clay, arts & craft, model making, step-by-step make and do books, den building with boxes / mini den building for cuddly toys with small boxes, get out in nature, allow your child to help you with the day to day tasks and give lots of process praise, start off role play games, work side by side- you order the shopping while they write the list next to you and plan the meals...</p>
Are they connection seeking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Draw them a timetable of the day and show them when you will be having uninterrupted quality time together (even just a 15 min window with phone turned off, dedicated to having time together is enough to have a powerful effect). -Do the request together, e.g. brush teeth side by side. 
Are they testing a boundary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be consistent -Give the same answer each time -Use the same words -Offer an alternative 
Are they avoiding a 'perceived demand' or have decision fatigue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Give limited choice, so they feel a sense of autonomy but are not overwhelmed. <p>"It's time to put your shoes on, black shoes or boots today?"</p> 

Key Takeaways:

- Effective parenting focuses on love, compassion, empathy, communication, clear boundaries, consistency and role modelling.
- Every child is unique, and parenting requires flexibility, patience, and an openness to ongoing learning.
- Help and support:



Buckinghamshire
Council

Family Information Service

Free Parenting Courses:

<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/advice-and-support/parenting/free-parenting-courses/>