

## Mealtime battlegrounds



**In an ideal world, mealtimes would be a relaxing opportunity to sit down and enjoy the company of your children over a delicious home-cooked feast. In most homes with toddlers, however, they become the major battleground, causing more frustration and temper tantrums than any other part of the day. Here are my top tips for coming out victorious!**

**🍴 Pick the battles you CAN win**  
It is almost impossible for a parent to force a child to eat something they don't want to. (Believe me, my husband has tried). However, you can refuse to allow them to eat anything else. Don't be tempted to substitute fatty, salty or sugary convenience foods the moment they reject the healthy, nutritionally-balanced meal you have cooked.

**🍴 Your child will NOT starve to death**  
Always keep a drink and a piece of fruit in your bag to offer if you are late getting back for a meal. Break the end off a French Stick to keep them occupied in the supermarket trolley rather than grabbing a packet of sweets.

**🍴 NEVER surrender**  
Gentle persistence works best. Continue to offer new foods (or even ones which they rejected a few months ago), being positive about new tastes and rewarding a willingness to taste a mouthful. It may take years but will be more productive than losing your temper.

**🍴 Know when to RETREAT**  
If you do cook something truly inedible then don't inflict it on the children! When a teaspoon of cumin was mistaken for a tablespoon recently it could have put my children off curry for life. As my husband sweated over the masala which had become vindaloo, I hastily cooked some fishfingers and peas to go with the rice for the kids!

**🍴 The TROJAN HORSE**  
Many children object to eating vegetables but they can be cunningly hidden. I continue to use a hand blender in my Bolognese sauce to 'remove' the onion. It is also possible to buy baked beans with hidden veg. For ideas on disguising veg, look at [www.kidsandnutrition.co.uk/EncouragingToddlersEatVeg.html](http://www.kidsandnutrition.co.uk/EncouragingToddlersEatVeg.html)

**🍴 The HUNDRED YEARS' WAR**  
Be encouraged. I don't know of any mealtime battles which have lasted this long!

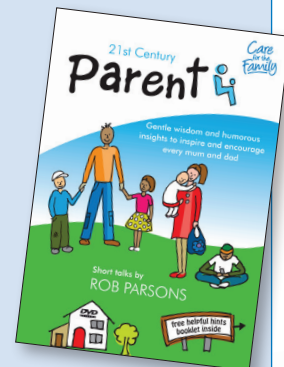
Fiona Burt, Playtime Co-ordinator,  
Care for the Family



### 21st Century Parent

Parenting is the toughest job in the world. Whilst there isn't a magic formula, we can learn a lot from each other. Ask your toddler group leader about parenting resources. These are a great way to gain support, encouragement and learn bright ideas.

Care for the Family has produced an eight-session DVD called *21st Century Parent*, which includes discussion starters and useful tips.



Order your copy at [www.careforthefamily.org.uk/21CFamily](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/21CFamily) or call Care for the Family on (029) 2081 0800

### Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

The information in this handout is supplied in good faith, but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations or websites.

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