

## It's a tough job

**Everyone knows that parenting is the hardest job in the world. But what makes it so tough? How can you become a better parent? And what are the rewards?**

However much you may have wanted and planned to become a parent, it's still a shock to the system when it happens. You are a parent from the moment that your child is born or you adopt them, and you remain a parent until death. There's no retirement from this role and there are no holidays either. Of course, there'll be times when your child is looked after by someone else, but that doesn't stop you being their parent.

And if the contract sounds tough, then the working conditions are worse. It's a 24/7 job. And the boss may only be small but, for the first few months at least, they can summon you at any time of the day or night... and they do!

The work is very often menial: washing, cooking, cleaning. But it is also more challenging than the Krypton Factor! Physically demanding (particularly in the early days), it is also mentally taxing and emotionally draining. From the tricky task of collapsing that incredibly complicated pushchair, through organising the social life of one (or more) tweens, to negotiating boundaries with your teenager, the challenges are never-ending.

It's a shame then that babies don't come with instruction books! And why is it that as soon as you think you are getting to grips with one phase of childhood, your offspring grows into the next stage and presents you with a whole new set of issues?

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That's why we all need help with our parenting. And the good news is that help is out there. The government is committed to supporting parents through doctors, midwives, health visitors, children's centres and schools, who will all help with specific issues. There are also heaps of books and DVDs covering different aspects of parenting to go to for advice. And, of course, you can't beat the support of other parents who are willing to share their experience with you.

That's why chatting to people at a parent and toddler group, or attending a parenting group, can be so helpful. Although your child is unique, of course, you'll probably find that other parents are dealing with similar issues to your own.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the task of parenting and your children are unlikely to thank you for it (or at least, not until they are grown up and have children of their own). But let's not forget the joy and love that children bring, and the satisfaction in raising the next generation. Yes, parenting is the hardest job in the world... but it's also the most rewarding one.

### Remember

- You are doing a great job! As far as your child is concerned you are the BEST parent in the world!
- It's good to take time for yourself occasionally. Arrange a time when you can leave your child with someone you trust for a few hours and then...relax. Everyone needs a break from time to time. This is especially important (and especially difficult) if your child has additional needs.
- There is no one perfect way of parenting - everyone needs to develop their own parenting style.
- Feeling guilty as a parent is a common experience - children are often experts at making you feel bad, particularly when you are saying 'no' to them. Try not to feel guilty, do the best that you can, and learn to have confidence in your own skills.

### What sort of parent do you want to be?

The 21st Century Parent DVD helps you to explore issues such as boundaries and discipline in just 8 short sessions.

For this and other great parenting resources visit

[www.careforthefamily.org.uk](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)  
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.

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