

## Let them be involved

When possible, we can help to avoid battles by giving our children a limited choice, for example, in choosing what to eat or wear. This gives them a sense of being valued and respected and also encourages them to be cooperative and take responsibility for their own actions.

## Create traditions

Family traditions are a valuable way to create strong, lasting memories and give children a sense of belonging. Traditions don't have to be expensive, for example you may go to the park every Saturday, or create a unique way to celebrate birthdays.

## Give yourself a break

You will be a better parent when you are relaxed, content and happy. Keep ten minutes aside for yourself each day. Make sure you find time to have a normal adult conversation and chat about your feelings with someone you trust. If you have a partner, it's really important to have some time together – perhaps try to have a weekly 'date night'.



## Helping you to be an even better mum or dad



For more information and tips on family life, visit [cff.org.uk](http://cff.org.uk)

You might like to:

- Attend a local *Time Out for Parents - The Early Years* course [cff.org.uk/courses](http://cff.org.uk/courses)
- Read *The Sixty Minute Family* by Rob Parsons [cff.org.uk/shop](http://cff.org.uk/shop)
- Visit the *Parenting* section of our website [cff.org.uk/parenting](http://cff.org.uk/parenting)

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Care for the Family seeks to promote strong family relationships and help those who face family difficulties.

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# Top Tips For Parents

## The Early Years



When we become parents, we want to be the very best mum or dad that we can be, but may feel unsure of our ability. Here are some tips that will help you give your young children the strong foundations they need to thrive and develop.

## Let your child know you love them

Don't assume that because you love your child they automatically know it. Tell them that you love them and show it by doing things together. Imagine that they have an 'emotional bank account'.

All the positive things you do for them over the years are like money being put into their bank account. These are things like kind words, encouragement, listening to them, having fun together, taking an interest in them and giving them support. As long as there is enough in the bank, a child can cope with a certain amount of difficulty (payments out). Our aim as parents is to fill their bank account as full as we can.

## Make time to play with them

Play is a vital part of a child's early life as it helps to develop self-esteem, social skills, language and creativity. It is also a valuable opportunity to strengthen the relationship with your child. Discover what they most enjoy doing and set time aside to do that together.



## Appreciate their unique personality

All children are unique and have their own individual personalities and abilities. Your child may be strong-willed or easy-going, shy or adventurous, outgoing or quiet. Getting to know your child's temperament can help you understand their behaviour and respond to them in a positive way. Remember that your personality may not be the same as your child's and that what works for you or another child may not work for them.

## Let them know you're listening

Listen to your child when they are young, and they are more likely to keep talking when they are older. Stop what you are doing and give them your full attention by getting down to their eye level. Acknowledge their feelings, ask questions, and remember to be patient; young children can take a long time to tell you their story.

Encourage your child to say how they feel and be prepared to prompt them. They may want to 'act out' their feelings because they can't put them into words.

## Create routines

Routines bring stability and security to family life especially to young children. Build routines into their day, for example, choose what time they get dressed and eat their meals, and develop a consistent bedtime routine.



## Watch what you say

Words can have a huge effect on a child's self-esteem. The effects of our praise or criticism on how our child feels about themselves will last into adulthood. Don't compare them to their brothers or sisters and always assume that they are listening.

## Give them boundaries

Boundaries are important. They teach children about self-control, acceptable behaviour and respect for others. When they are consistent, boundaries help children feel safe and secure. Pick your battles, and make sure your expectations are realistic for their age and maturity. Encourage good behaviour by using rewards and praise. Discourage bad behaviour through distraction, time outs and giving choices and consequences.

If you can work out the reason for your child's behaviour you can handle it better. Try not to react immediately to their misbehaviour, but rather ask yourself why they might be acting that way, for example, they may be tired and need a nap.

When you've had to discipline your child, they need to know you did not like their behaviour, but you still love them. Be willing to say sorry if you've got it wrong.