

understanding childhood

key stages in your child's
emotional development
from birth to adulthood



The
Child
Psychotherapy
Trust

What is 'normal' development? Each child's situation is unique and there is no one 'ideal' environment that leads to normal healthy emotional development.

Children grow up to be healthy adults in all sorts of different situations – as an only child, in a one-parent family, in a large extended family, with two parents who both work full time, in a foster home or residential home. Family structures differ, both within and between cultures, and children develop healthily in many different environments. What, then, are the *key* emotional needs that must be met for children to develop healthily? What kind of developmental steps or stumbles can we expect a child to take on the way to an independent adult life? These are the sorts of questions this booklet will try to answer.

This booklet is about understanding stages in ordinary emotional development. We hope it helps parents and those who work with children and families to make sense of children's behaviour and give parents and other carers greater confidence in their own resources.



Note

In the interests of clarity, there are occasions where the word 'he' is used to refer to the child. This can, of course, be read as 'he' or 'she'. Similarly, the author may use the word 'she' to refer to the carer, realising that the carer may be male.

key stages

It is important for those who live and work with children not to expect emotional development to go smoothly, or to run in a straight line.

The path to independent adult life is usually a bumpy one, with plenty of struggles along the way. It's not a competition or race. There are no first prizes, and sometimes the child who, for example, shows signs of anxiety at being left alone, may in fact be developing quite normally and behaving quite appropriately at that particular stage. It is also quite normal for a child to go back to an earlier stage when under stress – an example is the two or three year old, previously clean and dry, who goes back to needing a nappy when a new sibling is born. It helps if parents understand that this is to be expected when the child is adjusting to change.

It will become clear in the booklet that it is more helpful to think in terms of stages, rather than ages. There will inevitably be a variation in the age at which a child reaches a given stage, depending on that child's particular situation. The one year old who has had a settled and comforting first year in a stable family is likely to be at a different stage of emotional development from the one year old who has had a lot of changes.

Different life experiences can delay or hinder development.

Different life experiences can delay or hinder development. Many children grow up in environments that present very real external difficulties and disadvantages: poverty, neglect, abuse, persecution or racism. Parents can't always protect children from

trauma, and traumatic life events may interfere with the parents' ability to attend to their child. They may not be able to protect the child from adults who exploit or abuse them for their own ends. Part of the job of parenting is to give children the equipment to deal with the complexities of the society in which they grow up, and to give them strategies to cope. Parents themselves may be disadvantaged and have to manage with difficulties from their own childhood.

Often without realising it, they may repeat poor parenting patterns that have been passed down from generation to generation. An unhealthy cycle may be established whereby children who have received inadequate parenting go on to become poor parents themselves.

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Sadly, it has to be acknowledged that some environments *are* unhealthy and that adults sometimes do fail to meet their children's needs. In some situations,



There is nothing inevitable about a child's development.

through the child's own personality, the complexities of the family, or the particular experiences of trauma or abusive behaviour, children are not able to develop healthy emotional responses. Recent research into early brain development has shown that both the lack of nurturing experience and too much exposure to trauma, such as violence, may alter the developing central nervous system possibly predisposing that child to develop into a more impulsive and violent individual.

However, it is important to remember that there is nothing inevitable about a child's development. Cycles *can* be broken by supportive interventions, particularly preventive measures in the early stages of development. Parents can often find their own way of managing well if helped by consistent and appropriate help. What is important for development is that parents have the opportunity to think about the *meaning* of particular life experiences for them and for the individual child. Parents need the opportunity to think about and acknowledge how a child might feel about his own situation and what he's gone through. Then there is a chance that the child can come to terms with what he has experienced. It is not so much adversity that presents a stumbling block to development but the way in which adversity is met and worked through.

Parents need the opportunity to think about and acknowledge how a child might feel about his own situation and what he's gone through.

The Child Psychotherapy Trust publishes a leaflet series called 'Understanding Childhood', which expands upon the ideas presented in this booklet; relevant leaflets from this series are suggested at the end of each section of this booklet (see page 16 for full listing). Selected further reading which reflects the approach of this booklet is listed on page 17.

newborn

the first stage of the

Becoming a parent stirs up hidden feelings, hopes and fears that can take mothers and fathers by surprise.

At birth, a baby has to leave the warm and comfortable environment of the womb and enter an unknown world. For a baby, it is the first experience of separation, the first of a long line of steps. Babies have a range of strong feelings from birth, including joy, sadness, anxiety and rage. These emotions are normal for all of us – not just babies.

Every mother approaches the birth with her own history and her own fears and hopes. The experience of the birth itself varies and feelings about the birth may be mixed. A mother has to adjust to letting go of the baby who has been inside her and facing the demands and needs of a separate person. Fathers also have strong feelings at this time: for example, feeling left out and envious of the baby. Becoming a parent stirs up hidden feelings, hopes and fears that can take mothers and fathers by surprise. For both parents, it is important to be able to talk about these feelings.

Fathers can play a crucial supportive role, and in some families may play an equal part in caring for the baby. In certain circumstances, the father may take over the primary care of the baby. The support and sensitive understanding the mother receives from those around her – her partner, parents and friends, as well as her health visitor and GP can make a huge difference at this time. If people around her think about how she's feeling then she is more likely to be able to concentrate on the task in hand: providing both the physical and emotional nurture and care her baby needs.

In the early weeks a baby develops emotionally as well as physically from having his needs attended to very closely. Security comes from not having to wait too long to be comforted, fed or cuddled. Babies need their mothers to be preoccupied by them, and to enjoy them. In the early weeks, the mother's liveliness and receptiveness to his needs are crucial to the baby's emotional and mental development. A baby's brain needs the

stimulus of attentive care. That is more important than a mobile in the cot!

Babies are not a blank page. They

come into the world with strong emotions and abilities and are geared for development. The more closely the mother gets to know her baby and can tune in to his needs, the more likely he is to thrive.

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But all babies are different. Some are peaceful, easily satisfied and contented, while others may be jumpy, fretful and demanding. Premature babies, who may

have spent some time in a Special Care Baby Unit, away from their mother, may experience their early weeks as traumatic and need extra-sensitive handling. Babies with special needs, perhaps with a chronic illness or disability, are also likely

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to be more emotionally challenging. Some babies, for no obvious reason, tend to show more anxiety than others and this is communicated to the mother. In the early weeks the baby relies totally on the mother to sort out his unhappiness and comfort, and he needs his mother's presence and reassurance. With some

babies, this can put an enormous strain on the mother, who can find herself pushed to the limit of her patience and endurance.

Mothers vary too. Some are calm and relaxed, while others are uncertain and vulnerable. Sometimes mothers have mixed feelings towards the baby and the task of mothering or may even become depressed. The parenting a baby needs at this stage doesn't have to be provided either continuously or exclusively by the mother. Fathers have a unique contribution to make to their baby's development by interacting with the baby from the start. Grandparents, siblings and others can also assist in providing the loving attention and care that is essential for development. The balance of care in families differs; in some families, the father, grandmother or older sibling may provide the primary care.

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Adoptive and foster parents have a doubly difficult task. They have not only to provide the loving care and attention the baby needs, but also to acknowledge and take into account the emotional experience, for them and for the baby, of an earlier separation from the birth mother. It is important that the resources of the whole family are geared towards supporting the primary carer in this important task of easing the baby's way into the world. It is important too that the resources of the wider community offer the support and understanding the whole family unit needs, to provide a secure base for the developing baby. Only then will he be ready to move on to the next stage.

Mothers of young babies are likely to have particular queries and problems:

'Why does my baby cry so much?'

'What can I do to get my baby to sleep?'

'How do I cope if I get depressed?'

These and other questions are addressed in the following leaflets, which offer a more detailed understanding of this stage of development:

- o *Your new baby, your family and you*
- o *Crying and sleeping in the first months of life*
- o *Postnatal Depression*

becoming separate

the infant in the family

Each baby discovers the world at his own pace.

This next stage involves the baby becoming more of a separate human being. The baby has to let the mother go, to an extent, and adjust to a world that contains many other important people. This represents another transition to a new, more complicated world but needs to be seen as a gradual process, not a

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sudden jump. The process of the baby becoming separate has in fact been under way from birth. In some cultures, the period of close attachment will be extended beyond the first year, but, usually some time during the second half of the first year, mother and baby have to adjust to a greater degree of separation. At whatever age this happens, a baby gradually learns to tolerate being part of a wider community, where the needs of partners, other children, and of the mother herself have to be met. Both the mother and the baby gradually have to learn to become separate beings, to let go of that very special closeness of mother and newborn. For some mothers, it can be a relief to let go of the very dependent 'baby' stage. For others this transition presents more of a hurdle.

However, it *is* necessary at some point for the mother to let go, to begin to say 'no' to the thriving baby.



The father, or another supporting adult, can play an important part at this stage, particularly if he has developed his own relationship with the baby. He can give the mother moral support when she has to set limits on her availability. Developing relationships with grandparents, older siblings, babysitters and friends also helps to enrich the experience of the growing baby. What is more, they provide him with substitute parents and people who can act as positive role models, factors which contribute to the emotional resilience of the developing child.

Some babies find it much harder than others to love and let go, to accept that they have no absolute control over the mother who holds and comforts them, and have to share her. This stage can provoke a range of powerful feelings, both for mother

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and baby: anger, rage, sadness and guilt. It is important for mothers to recognise and admit to these feelings, in themselves as well as in the baby, rather than to pretend they're not there.

Separation can be painful and stressful, but it is crucial for development.

Some mothers and their babies find this stage exciting, but for others it's simply hard work. Mothers have the difficult task of being reassuring and sympathetic at the same time as setting firm boundaries. They have to think carefully about

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the pace of change. Is the baby who spits out solid food, refusing to take anything but the breast or bottle, simply putting up a powerful protest? Or is he not ready to make this leap and to move

on to the next stage? Mothers have to judge whether the baby is simply 'making a fuss' about doing something new and uncomfortable, which he'd really rather not do, or whether he's not yet settled and secure enough for the emotional challenge of the weaning process.

Many mothers will return to work at around this time. Others will have had to, or chosen to, return a lot earlier. Whenever it happens, mothers have to manage the very particular separation experiences this involves. Often strong feelings and anxieties are aroused in both mother and baby. Planning for the parting and the coming back together is important, as these transition times can be difficult. Rituals and games can help in coming to terms with the separating, allowing both sides to get used to the comings and goings in a light-hearted way.

Whatever childcare arrangement parents choose, they need to be assured that their child's emotional as well as physical needs are being met. Whatever their own feelings might be about handing over their child's care to others, parents do need to look for a situation where their child can form an attachment to a consistent caregiver. Parents need to be assured that their child has someone, to whom he can relate, who is able to be receptive and responsive to his needs. Children who, in the first year of life, are able to establish a secure attachment to their parents, or, in a care situation, to a substitute parent or parental figure, are more resilient, and better able to manage stressful events later in life.

The following leaflet offers a detailed description of this stage of development:

◦ *Separations and changes in the early years*

early childhood

from toddler to young

Each developmental stage presents a challenge for the parents as well as the child. They too have to adapt and develop.

Depending on their own personal history, one stage may be more problematical for some parents than others. Why has *this* stage in early childhood come to be known as the *terrible twos*? Is it that for many parents the little child whom they could manage has suddenly become a personality to be reckoned with, a separate human being who can't be *made* to eat one more fish finger, who can and does say 'no' and can seem to be utterly unbudgeable? Parents can easily get into a 'battling' frame of mind. They can begin to see their demanding child, who seems to behave like a tyrant, as out to 'make life difficult' for them, as being *deliberately* naughty.

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But the two year old who seems so powerful is in fact struggling with a range of confusing feelings, including frequently feeling little, helpless, and dependent. The child who fusses about clothes and food is desperately trying to control the only bit of life that he *can* feel in control of. The young child who bites and kicks may be frightened of losing his mum forever to the new baby. If we can put ourselves in the shoes of that young child, our task as parent or carer may begin to feel less impossible and frustrating. What the child needs above all is a loving and tolerant parent or parental figure. He needs someone who understands that for every three steps forward there are likely to be two steps back. He needs sympathetic adults to guide him through this minefield of experiences and emotions. It's bound to be hard work, but it can also be a very exciting and joyful time for the parent who can rise to the challenge and not just experience this stage as a terrible battle.

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Young children play, experiment, explore and imitate. They will at the same time be learning a range of new skills, completing developmental tasks, and sorting out complicated feelings about themselves and others. There is bound to be a struggle between their intellectual understanding and their feelings. A good nursery environment, for those under fives who are ready for the informal group setting, can be an invaluable aid in helping to clarify the intellectual and emotional tasks facing the young child at this stage. While playing and learning at the nursery, three and four year olds will

both find ways of understanding themselves and the world, at the same time as preparing themselves for the next step, entering the more formal world of primary school.

At this stage, young children become very preoccupied by their bodies and the differences between them. They begin to develop a sense of identity with their own sex. Both girls and boys benefit in different ways from a growing relationship with their father, but it is particularly helpful for a young boy's development if there is a significant male in their life to whom they can relate. If there is no father, or significant male nursery worker or teacher, then a close male family friend or uncle can play a very important role.

The development of a sense of *cultural* identity is also an important issue for the developing child. Children need to have a carer or role model with whom they can identify and who has an understanding of the child's cultural and ethnic background.



This stage raises particular problems and queries, often to do with management:

'What can I do with a bossy two year old?'

'How should I manage a temper tantrum?'

The following leaflet takes a more detailed look at these and other problems of this stage:

c Tempers and tears in the twos and threes

starting school and beyond

one foot in the wider

starting school



Starting school represents the next big step in the separation process for the young child. The transition from home to school involves crossing a boundary from early childhood, where the focus is primarily on the home and parents, to a wider world where the child will have relationships and interests independent of the parents.

Children are ready for this step at different ages. Some children have older siblings, or have led a social early life, have been to nursery, and may be ready at around four for other children, books, learning and play offered in the structured setting of school. Other children will have led a more sheltered life, and may not be ready until much older.

Children often find this transition difficult, even when it is sensitively handled with appropriate settling procedures. Anxiety may be expressed through a range of behaviours. Some children cry and cling, or return to thumb-sucking, bed-wetting or 'accidents' at school, tantrums and baby language. Parents can also have mixed feelings about the separation. They may be sad or jealous, unwilling to let go and move on. They may be unaware that they are failing to give an encouraging signal to their child which would allow him to move on confidently.

It is very common, both at home and at school to see a big difference in a child's moods; sometimes dependent, sometimes independent; a little baby one minute and a bold four year old the next. Sometimes parents are amazed to hear how confidently their child is managing at school when what they see is a demanding 'little' child at home.

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the total emotional picture: a child who is preoccupied with worries and anxieties connected with home won't feel ready to take in all the new learning experiences of school. Sensitive teachers in the early years of school will understand the nature of the task, realising that many children in these years need easing into the demands of school, and that

if a good partnership is established with the parents the child is more likely to do well. The child who has had a good experience of nursery schooling is likely to have benefited both intellectually and emotionally.

During this time at school, the child will have a lot to manage; learning to master new skills and interests and to manage his emotions in a large group, often with

only one adult to attend to the needs of many. This is likely to be frustrating and disappointing at times. He's also likely to come up against the hard truth that he is not as all powerful or as important to others as he perhaps thought he was.



The schoolchild will be moving towards independence, but he still needs to touch base at home. He has a continuing need for love, support, encouragement and empathy from the people at home, those who love him most. But parents also have to take a step back as they watch their children make their own friends and try to find their place in the social group. The task of making and sustaining friendships can be a painful business. It's sometimes hard for parents to sit by as they hear tales of apparent cruelty and spitefulness; their child has been excluded from the group, or been told, 'you're not my friend'. But, apart from the instances where serious bullying, violence or racism is involved and demands adult intervention, children develop and mature through sorting their way through the rough and tumble of school friendships.

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The children who cause most concern to the parents and teachers of primary school age tend to be those who act in provocative ways. Some children cannot tell us in words what is the matter and say how they are feeling, but have to show us by their behaviour. These children often cannot settle or concentrate, irritate other children and the teacher, demand attention, but don't seem to be able to take things in. Because they behave in immature ways, we often don't know what to make of them. These children may be from homes where they appear to have had every advantage, but whose parents have been in some way preoccupied or distracted. They may be children who have been looked

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after by the local authority, and had the disadvantage of being moved from foster home to foster home. They may have suffered loss, had multiple care-takers, or have been in some way neglected or abused.

The child may not have experienced that level of attentive care and responsiveness that in turn enables him to respond to new educational and social demands. With thoughtful and appropriate intervention, such children can be helped to make good what they have missed. With help, they can understand and come to terms with past experiences that for one reason or another have not encouraged healthy development, and can develop more thoughtful ways.

The following leaflets take a more detailed look at the problems and difficulties associated with this stage of development:

- c *Attending to difficult behaviour*
- c *Children at school* (leaflet in progress)

puberty and early adolescence

the turbulent years

Children reach puberty at very different ages, which can be difficult for the children themselves, as well as for their parents and teachers.



Most children will have to manage a significant change, from small primary school to big secondary somewhere around the age of 11. They often experience this as going from being a 'big fish in a small pond' to being a 'little kid' again. They move from a secure environment where they are known, and surrounded by a group of friends, to a large and maybe frightening place, with gangs and big kids. Teachers may seem unfriendly, and demand that they conform to new, perhaps tougher, school rules.

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As well as trying to sort out where they might 'fit' in this new world, children at this stage are changing in other ways. Somewhere around this time physical and hormonal changes trigger a whole range of emotional changes. It can be a time of feeling very alone, particularly difficult when the peer group at school don't seem to have the same worries. A developing 11 year old who is self-conscious about her womanly figure may feel she's surrounded by a class full of little girls. Being different, in whatever way, can feel like a problem. Emotions become much more intense. The young adolescent may well wonder: 'How do I look? Am I normal? How do I come across to others?' It is normal to be self-doubting and self-absorbed.

Adults are often more aware of the problems faced by teenage girls than of those faced by boys. Girls tend to talk more amongst themselves and to support each other. They air their problems in teenage magazines and with sympathetic adults. Teenage years can be tougher for boys who are often expected by parents, peer group and school to put a brave face on things whatever they're feeling inside. They're less likely to talk with their friends about emotional issues, or to put their

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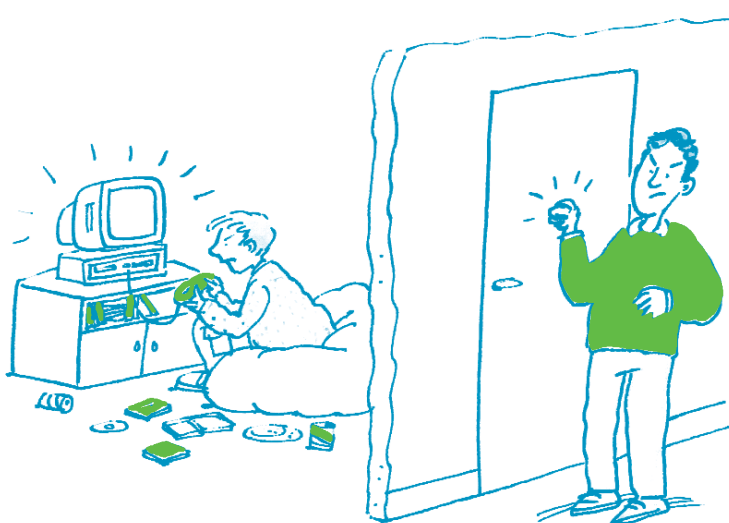
feelings into words with adults. Parents and teachers need to be particularly aware of the emotional life of boys and young men, and to be there for them. Boys can be equally sensitive to problems like bullying and feeling unfairly treated but may not feel they can be as open as girls about these sorts of difficulties and their frustration may come out in a different way, like being sullen, rude, and hostile. They find it hard to cry and show their vulnerability. In fact, it's a very vulnerable time for everybody.

Parents can experience their children's adolescence as very threatening.

Parents can experience their children's adolescence as very threatening. Doubts and insecurities about their own sexuality, beliefs and the choices they have made in life, are stirred up as they come under fire from their children. Young people provoke, demand, and argue, and can push parents to the limits of their endurance. Parents need to keep a cool head in this line of fire, to stick to firm boundaries and guidelines. At the same time, they do need to try and adapt to the changing needs of their children. They have to try and relate to them in a different way, without forgetting that they still need to *be* parents and to exercise good parental authority.

Unfortunately, there are no simple answers to the kinds of questions that tend to worry parents most: 'What's the right line to take on drinking, taking drugs, and underage sex? When is it all right for them to stay out all night? What should I do if they get into trouble at school, or with the police?' Parents need to respect and nurture their child's growing independence, and this does involve gradually allowing them to make choices, experiment, and make their own mistakes. But parents also need to keep a firm grasp on their own sense

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of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. An authoritarian and controlling parent is likely to produce a young person without a clear sense of their own identity, who may be left floundering later on when it comes to leading a more independent life. Too permissive a style of parenting also produces problems, leaving the young person feeling uncertain and unsafe. It's a delicate balancing act, and just as adolescents struggle, so too will parents as they pick their way through this minefield. There is no way of avoiding angry

confrontations for the majority of parents at this stage. It has to be remembered, though, that it's not all agony and anger. Living with teenagers is challenging, but it can also be very stimulating and exciting.

The following leaflet takes a more detailed look at the difficulties and queries parents have at this stage of a young person's development:

o *Adolescence* (leaflet in progress)

late adolescence

on the brink

At this transition time, between childhood and adulthood, between school and the working world, both children and parents have to make a dramatic developmental leap: they have to let go, and move on.

For many young people, this process of transition is helped by an actual physical separation: they may go out to work and set up home elsewhere, they may go off travelling, or go away to study. Young people prepare for that move when they begin to ask questions and make choices:

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What do I really want to do with my life? Do I want to work, study, or travel first? Do I want to live with my girlfriend? How important is it for me to get a job and earn money straight away? What *can* I do with my life? Will I be *able* to get a job?

Parents have the difficult job of being supportive and giving advice, without putting too much of themselves, their hopes, fears and dreams, into their children's decisions. Parents have to watch as their children ignore their good advice: young people *can* leave school at 16 and set up home. They *can* have a baby. The teenager may want more independence than parents think they're ready for and parents may have to accept that they're powerless to change the situation. They can't protect the young adult from pain, and from making mistakes. But what they can do is keep offering support, and keep the lines of communication open.

But what happens when older adolescents *don't* move away? For many families, the big issue is money. Adolescents may be living at home out of necessity, not out of choice. This situation can be hard for everybody. Many battles between parent and child are over money. How can the parents bear sharing the house with and supporting someone who used to be a child

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and is now an adult? Other factors may be involved. Does the child or parent feel he 'hasn't made the grade'? Is there a feeling of hopelessness around, where a parent may be out of work, ill or disabled and was hoping for their child to be the main breadwinner? Many families go through difficult times at this stage: frail grandparents can take up a lot of the parents' time and energy, parents are made redundant, and marriages break up. With external strains, young adults who are still uncertain of their direction can be very vulnerable. They can feel demoralised,

frustrated and uncertain if their plans don't work out and they can't afford to move out. Parents need to go on being encouraging and supportive. They need

They need to be there for their children through the moods and the dramas. They need not to retaliate or themselves be rejecting, even when they feel their parenting is being rejected.

to be there for their children through the moods and the dramas. They need not to retaliate or themselves be rejecting, even when they feel their parenting is being rejected.

Of course, the parenting doesn't stop here. Young people move away, for work or study, to lead their own lives, but they usually continue to come and go. They will still be testing out and learning to manage independently, hopefully with support from friends and other parental figures. Home will still provide a constant point, but it will gradually stop being the *central* focus of that young person's life. Parents too need to make a shift, to let go of the 'child', face the empty nest, and move on themselves. However daunting, it can be a creative time for everyone concerned.

Parents too need to make a shift, to let go of the 'child', face the empty nest, and move on themselves.



The child, the family and the outside world, D. W. Winnicott (1964).
Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

Emotional milestones from birth to adulthood: a psychodynamic approach,
Ruth Schmidt Neven (1996). London: Jessica Kingsley

Saying no: why it's important for you and your child, Asha Phillips (1999).
London: Faber and Faber

Through the night: helping parents and sleepless infants, Dilys Daws (1989).
London: Free Association Books

Understanding your child, Elsie Osbourne, series editor (1992-5). London:
The Tavistock Clinic/Rosendale Press
Series of books written professional staff of the Tavistock Clinic, to describe
ordinary development from infancy to teenage years

Tuning into children, Dorothy Selleck and Libby Purves (1999). BBC Radio 4
and the National Children's Bureau

Understanding Childhood

This booklet provides the framework for a series of CPT leaflets written by experienced child psychotherapists for parents and others in contact with children and families. The series aims to promote awareness of children's emotional health and development. Please see below for full listing of titles.

- *Your new baby, your family and you*
- *Crying and sleeping in the first months of life*
- *Temper and tears in the twos and threes*
- *Separations and changes in the early years*
- *Sibling rivalry: growing up with a new brother or sister*
- *Attending to difficult behaviour*
- *Children at school: age 4-11*
- *Divorce and separation*
- *The early teenage years*
- *Bereavement: helping parents and children cope when someone close dies*
- *Postnatal depression: a problem for all the family*

Also available are posters on understanding children's emotional development.

Forthcoming leaflets include *Fathers and Grandparents*.

Contact the Trust (see details on page 19) for a publications list and order form.



Advisory Centre for Education

Advice, information and support to parents of children in state-maintained schools.
Advice line 020 7354 8321

Association for Post-natal Illness

Helpline and local support groups
020 7386 0868

Child Psychotherapy Trust

Helpline for parents and professionals
020 7485 5510

Childline

24 hour helpline for children and young people in danger or distress
Freephone 0800 1111

Contact A Family

Help for families who care for children with any disability or special need
020 7383 3555

Maternity Alliance

Advice line 020 7588 8582

Meet-a-Mum Association (MAMA)

Support for all mothers and mothers to be and support for those suffering post-natal illness.
Helpline (7pm-10pm Mon-Fri and 10am-1pm Mon and Wed) and local support groups
020 8768 0123

MIND

National association for mental health
Information Line 020 8522 1728

National Childbirth Trust

Support and information on pregnancy, birth and parenting including local antenatal classes and parent and baby groups.
020 8992 8637

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health

Provide counselling service on 0800 169 4398
General enquiries 028 9032 8474

NSPCC – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

24 hour Child Protection – available to adults and children
Helpline: Freephone 0800 800 500 (Textphone 0800 056 0566)
(in Northern Ireland 028 9035 1135)

One Parent Families

Lone Parent Helpline

Freephone 0800 018 5026 (Mon-Fri 9.15am-5.15pm)

Parenting Education and Support Forum

Details of local parenting classes

020 7284 8370

Parentline

National parenting helpline

Freephone 0808 8002222 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm; Sat 9.30am-5pm;

Sun 10am-3pm)

Relate

National marriage guidance

01788 573241

(in Northern Ireland 028 9032 3454)

**Serene, incorporating The Cry-sis Helpline**

Support for families with excessively crying, sleepless and demanding children

020 7404 5011

Young Minds – The National Association for Child and Family Mental Health

Parents Information Service

Freephone 0800 0182138 (Mon, Fri 10am-1pm; Tues-Thurs 1-4pm)

Local child guidance, psychiatric and psychological services for children, young people and their families (details available from your local Health Authority/NHS Trust Information Service or Young Minds)

The Child Psychotherapy Trust works to increase access to effective local child and adolescent psychotherapy services for young people in need.

Child psychotherapy is based on a set of ideas which help us understand how children develop and thrive emotionally. These ideas bring together a theoretical understanding of psychoanalysis, clinical experience and research. Key elements to this approach to understanding child development are:

- c All behaviour has meaning – a child's behaviour is a communication between the child and the parent, or the child and other people around them
- c The events surrounding our infancy and childhood, particularly the dynamic influences of parents and other primary carers, shape our future, how we relate to other people and how we view the world around us.

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First published 1999, reprinted 2001 by
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ISBN 1 900870 16 9

This publication is funded by the Department of Health and the National Lottery Charities Board as part of the Trust's 'Understanding childhood: professional call-back advice line' project.

The Child Psychotherapy Trust would like to thank the many child psychotherapists, health and social care professionals and voluntary organisations who contributed to the development of this booklet.

