

FAMILY LIFE IS COMPLICATED



Parentline_{plus}

Because instructions aren't included

FAMILY LIFE IS COMPLICATED

Watching your children grow up can be the greatest thing in the world, but sometimes it's not the easiest of jobs. You'll feel every emotion bringing them up – love, pride, joy and occasionally despair, fear, rage, grief and confusion.

Things happen in life – birth, death, marriage, changing schools, divorce, moving house, leaving home, changing jobs. Any change to the routine way of life can be confusing and scary and lead people to question whether they're any good or if they're doing the right thing. Simple everyday things like when to eat or how to take the children to school can become problems.

A MIND OF THEIR OWN

There's a danger that we believe we can control what our children are thinking, feeling and doing. We can't. They have their own minds and often do what they want. It can be a great thing watching and learning from them but at the same time it can be a huge test – to guide them without putting them down.

We have to give children lots of love, security and encouragement so they grow up to be the best they can be. A loving relationship between adult and child needs to be worked on with both sides giving and taking.



FREE HELPLINE
0808 800 2222

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

FREE TEXTPHONE 0800 783 6783

KEEPING IN TOUCH

If family members are not living with you there are lots of ways of staying involved.

Parentline Plus tips

- The telephone lets you talk when meeting isn't possible.
- E-mails or text messages are a good way to let people know that you're thinking of them.
- Letters, cards, postcards are good ways of letting them know what you're up to.

SORTING PROBLEMS

Changes in behaviour are often triggered by a change in routine or ritual. Often problems like this can be sorted out by talking, listening and being understanding.

Parentline Plus tips

- Try to find out what others are thinking and feeling.
- Find out what they want and let them know what you want as well.
- Before you talk, think about what you'd give up before you ask others to do the same.
- Explain that sometimes not everyone will be happy with the final decision but that everyone should be prepared to give in a little.
- Be honest and realistic. Don't try to change a person's personality. This isn't an option and would make them feel unloved and criticised.

TALKING AND LISTENING TO CHILDREN

- Try to see things through your child's eyes. Sometimes it'll be easier for you to deal with the problem if you understand why they're behaving in such a way.
- Encourage them to speak about their feelings – even if what they say may be difficult to hear.
- Get support and help for both of you if what you're hearing is difficult or upsetting.
- Try to be honest and fair. Don't make promises (or threats) that you can't stick to.
- Ask your child their point of view on family decisions. It's important that they feel they are listened to.
- If you can't do something their way, explain why. It'll help them understand your decision.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Stepparents, grandparents, family friends and many others are involved in giving love, support, guidance and care to children and young people. In difficult times, these people can be a very important source of help.

Don't be afraid to ask for help in difficult times. Asking for help shows you're taking your responsibilities as a parent seriously. It shows you're not a weak person. Talk to a friend about what help you may need.

You may feel that you are unable to speak to other family members. If so, try calling the Parentline Plus free helpline. You can talk to us in confidence about your worries.

WHY PEOPLE CALL PARENTLINE PLUS

People looking after children ring us about lots of different worries:

- Teenagers – rebellious, aggressive, withdrawn behaviour. Mixing with the ‘wrong’ group of friends.
- Schooling – bullying, unhappiness, truancy, exclusion, not doing homework.
- Babies and young children – lack of sleep, lack of time, tantrums, food problems, jealousy of other children.

Parents call us because they want to talk about:

- Disagreements with their partner or ex-partner who’s no longer living with them.
- Ill health, disability, low incomes.
- Feeling alone, lonely and isolated.
- The feeling that the people they usually talk to (GP’s and teachers) don’t really understand their problem or the fact that they might judge them and blame them for their child’s behaviour.

- Many just want to talk aloud about what they’re feeling and they want to do this anonymously and confidentially.

FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

If you’re a grandparent, friend, relative, health worker or new partner you can help parents in a number of ways:

- By talking and listening. Be prepared to hear about anger and unhappiness as well as joy.
- By encouraging a parent or stepparent to see the children’s point of view.
- By asking how you could help them.
- By offering practical help such as babysitting, cooking a meal, shopping, but making sure you don’t take over.
- By pointing out what they’ve done well. Don’t judge or criticise or they’ll be less likely to ask for help in the future.



Parentline Plus: 520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town, London NWS 1TL
Free helpline: 0800 800 2222 Free textphone (for people with a speech or hearing impairment): 0800 783 6783
Email: contact@parentlineplus.org.uk