

What can help make life easier for parents?

Parenting

Who can help make life easier?  
Who can support you?



becoming a  
parent

# becoming a parent

Becoming a parent can be a really wonderful experience but for most people there will be times when they feel frustrated, completely stressed out and tired. Most of us have never received any training in parenting skills. Often, what we know has been learnt from our own personal experience of being parented as a child. So, when we become parents ourselves we may feel excited but at the same time unsure as to how to deal with problems and difficulties. We may at times question just how good we really are as parents.

Successful parenting involves:

- Learning about how children grow
- Showing your love for your child
- Spending time with your child and giving your full attention
- Seeing mistakes and times when things go wrong as opportunities to grow
- Being consistent and democratic in discipline
- Being willing to explore new ways to parent
- Being a good listener
- Allowing your child to talk openly about how they are feeling
- Taking care of yourself
- Asking for advice or information when you feel stuck
- Acknowledging and learning to cope with change in your life

The most important thing to remember is that you cannot expect to be perfect. All parents make mistakes and worry about whether they are doing things the 'right' way. A parent should aim to be 'good enough'.

Being a 'good enough parent' means that you do not have to get it all right all of the time to raise well-balanced children capable of having fulfilling lives. You just need to be good enough and to provide enough support and encouragement to allow your child to find their own way in the world.

## What can help make life easier for parents?

Taking care of your own needs

Being a parent means spending a lot of time caring for the needs of other people. Sometimes we can get so caught up in this that our own needs are neglected without us even noticing. It's easy to forget that being a parent is just one aspect of who we are. Taking care of your needs is vital to successful parenting. From your example your child will learn the importance of self worth and self care. You can make your life easier if you try the following:

- **Prioritise taking time out for yourself away from your child** – ask for help with this, maybe there is a friend or family member who can look after your child for short periods during the week.
- **Don't neglect your relationships with other adults** – It is important to spend enjoyable time in adult company. As well as support, being with your friends and family can be relaxing and can renew your energy.
- **Try to make time for your own hobbies and interests** – When you feel that you are continually growing and developing as a person you will be less likely to experience feelings of resentment that can sometimes accompany parenting.
- **Do one little thing for yourself each day that pampers you** – Take a warm bath, listen to some favourite music, watch a good movie, go to bed early or buy yourself some flowers!

### Managing stress

Stress is a normal part of modern living. However, if we are constantly feeling stressed our emotional and physical health can be affected. Common signs of stress include; headaches, nervous stomach, irritability, skin rashes, feeling anxious, depressed and overwhelmed, crying, nightmares, loss of appetite. While we cannot escape totally from stress we can learn to manage it.

### Simple techniques for managing stress include:

- Taking deep breathes for five-ten minutes each day and at any time you begin to feel anxious
- Using a relaxation tape or CD that guides you through relaxation
- Yoga or meditation
- Exercising – this can be as simple as taking a walk
- Avoiding too much caffeine or alcohol
- Using a diary to remember important dates and events
- Planning your day in advance
- Talking to friends and family who are supportive and with whom you feel comfortable
- Joining a support group or interest group



## Depression

Events and changes in our life can often leave us feeling alone and upset. As time passes we may come to terms with what has happened and feel better. Depression on the other hand is a longer lasting experience of distress. The most common experience of depression is called reactive depression or depression that is a reaction to an external event such as a bereavement, unemployment or separation. Often this type of depression is treated with counselling and support. Clinical depression is a depression caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain and is often treated with a combination of medication and counselling. If you are struggling with depression it is really important to ask for help. You can talk to your GP, public health nurse, social worker or counsellor.

The following organisations can also help:

- Aware – Helping to Defeat Depression  
Tel: 1890 30 33 02  
Web: [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)
- Grow  
Tel: 1890 47 44 74  
Email: [info@grow.ie](mailto:info@grow.ie)  
Web: [www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)
- The Samaritans  
Tel: 1850 60 90 90  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
Web: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- Mental Health Ireland  
Tel: 01 284 1166  
Email: [information@mentalhealthireland.ie](mailto:information@mentalhealthireland.ie)  
Web: [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

## Developing your support network

Each of us needs a support system of at least two or three close friends. A close friend is someone in whom you can deeply trust and confide. It is someone that you are comfortable with and who supports you in your life choices. When we get upset or in times of crisis, we can forget who is available to help us.

### Who can support you?

Make a list of people who can help you out in an emergency, and people with whom you can discuss issues. This is an important part of getting organised. You might call on family, friends, neighbours, school or crèche, or your childminder. Have their phone numbers to hand.

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### Parent and child groups

Meeting other parents can be a great opportunity to exchange information and get support. Parent and child groups can offer you a chance to socialise with other parents while the children enjoy an active play session. Details of local parent and child groups are often found in local papers, your nearest Family Resource Centre, local parish halls, schools and supermarket notice boards.

### Parenting classes

Being a parent is an ongoing process of discovery and something that you will learn together with your child. A lot of what you will learn can only be gained through making mistakes, trying out different approaches and really getting to know your child. However, there are some basic principles to parenting that can really help in making life as a parent easier and more enjoyable. Attending a class can give you more confidence as a parent and also can be a great way of meeting other parents. Classes are often divided into two categories; classes for parents with children 0–12 and classes for parents of teenagers (13–18 years).

### Classes focusing on younger children often cover topics such as:

- The stages of child development
- Listening and communicating with your child
- Behaviour management
- Play
- Building your child's self-esteem
- Dealing with bullying

### Parenting classes focusing on young people (13–18 years) often include:

- Emotional and physical development in adolescence
- Talking about sex and relationships
- Alcohol and addictions

The cost of parenting classes varies depending on where you attend. Community and voluntary organisations may offer courses that are free or at a low cost. Generally, parenting courses offered by private centres or colleges can range in cost from €55–120 for an 8–10 week course of classes.

### To find a parent and child group or a parenting class near you contact:

- Your public health nurse or contact your local health centre
- Your Family Resource Centre. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the *Support for Families Directory* contact the Family Support Agency Tel: 01 611 4100

- Barnardos, who offer a range of family support services throughout Ireland. They also operate five National Children's Resource Centres throughout Ireland providing information on all aspects of childhood.

Tel: 01 453 0355

Callsave: 1850 22 23 00

Email: [info@barnardos.ie](mailto:info@barnardos.ie)

Web: [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

- Local schools, who often run parenting courses
- Qualifax: The National Educational Database is an internet listing of all full-time, part-time, evening and adult education courses throughout the country. Some parenting courses are listed. Web: [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)
- [www.nightcourses.com](http://www.nightcourses.com) also offers a facility to check for parenting courses
- Your locally based community and voluntary organisations. Some offer parenting courses. If you are in a Partnership area you can contact the Partnership for further details. To find out if there is one in your area contact Pobal. Tel: 01 240 0700  
Email: [enquiries@pobal.ie](mailto:enquiries@pobal.ie)  
Web: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)

# Contacts:

## Barnardos National Children's Resource Centre

Library and information service for the public on child related issues.

Tel: 01 453 0355

Email: [info@barnardos.ie](mailto:info@barnardos.ie)

Web: [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

## Children in Hospital Ireland

A voluntary organisation that promotes the welfare of children in hospital.

Tel: 01 878 0448

Email: [info@childreninhospital.ie](mailto:info@childreninhospital.ie)

Web: [www.childreninhospital.ie](http://www.childreninhospital.ie)

## Community Mothers

Community Mothers is a support service provided by local women for parents living in their community. Parents are visited in their own home and support, guidance and information is offered. Talk to your public health nurse to find out if the service is available in your area.

## Family Resource Centres

Offer support, information and special services for those in need of extra family support. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the *Support for Families Directory* contact the Family Support Agency .

Tel: 01 611 4100

## One Family

Provides positive parenting courses to adult members of one-parent families in Cherish House, Dublin 2.

**askonefamily** – The National Helpline for all one-parent families can provide information on how to find parenting courses in your area.

Tel: 1890 66 22 12

Email: [support@onefamily.ie](mailto:support@onefamily.ie)

Web: [www.onefamily.ie](http://www.onefamily.ie)

## Parentline

Helpline for parents experiencing difficulty or stress.

Tel: 01 873 3500/1890 92 72 77

Email: [parentline@eircom.net](mailto:parentline@eircom.net)

Web: [www.parentline.ie](http://www.parentline.ie)



This leaflet has been produced by One Family as part of the **Positive Options** campaign.

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