**Helping us helping you!**



**Parents Handbook**

**Ghyllgrove Primary School Basildon**

Everyone is an expert on parenting until they have children of their own. All parents make mistakes even if their intentions and motivation are good. When gorgeous babies become tricky toddlers and troublesome teenagers, it is more difficult to get advice and support that really helps. Badly behaved children make themselves and their parents unhappy. If the problems go unaddressed they can damage a child’s life chances in adulthood. That is why it is worth the effort - and the pain – of putting things right.



The aim of this handbook is to help parents with one of the most difficult jobs in the world - managing their children’s behaviour and meeting their emotional needs. We hope it will provide you with some advice, some useful tips and access to people who can help.

**Attachment**

John Bowlby’s was a British developmental psychologist who did extensive research with parents, by exploring different sorts of attachment. He showed how from the early years children who had a secure attachment to their mother were more ready to go off exploring the world. Other research showed that children brought up in an orphanage did not thrive, because they did not form bonds except for one group of children who were frequently cuddled by a member of staff.

Children need encouragement, direction and love!

By the age of two the child has established physiological responses to stress, neural pathways in the brain and patterns in the production of neurotransmitters. This means that a child will have a tendency to produce certain chemicals connected with good and not so good feelings.

• the more of each the child is accustomed to producing, the more easily the associated feelings and chemicals are produced.

• a happy baby learns to be happy;

• a sad baby learns to be sad.

• what babies (and all children) need is "relaxed responsiveness" which a confident parent tends to have

• not over anxious fussing or being ignored.

Research shows that children who are securely "attached", who know deep down that they are loved and accepted for who they are, tend to have higher self-esteem and get on better in life. They may make mistakes and get things wrong but they have a basic desire to please their parents and will try to act in the ways that do this.

**So what can be done if you feel your relationship is more distant than you would like?**

• Praise whenever possible. Praise what the child does, praise effort and persistence.

• Have routines in place so that the child’s day is predictable. This helps him to feel safe and keeps the chances of conflict down to a minimum.

• If your relationship is very stretched, make rebuilding it a priority. Choose your battles rather than having conflict over every little thing. Make small promises and keep them rather than big ones that are difficult to keep.

• Express your love for your child in a way that is natural to you. As long as your child knows the "language" you use he will understand it. Children do need to be touched in a caring way. Even if you are not naturally affectionate in that way try to find the way that works for you. Brushing hair, smoothing clothes, shoulder rubs and head massages are all great for children. Rough and tumble play for boys is a classic way for the boy to satisfy the hunger to be touched and also helps them learn to manage the aggressive impulse.

• Photographs, scrapbooks of special events, notes to your child are all really helpful. Any way of treasuring memories will build up the child’s attachment to the family and senses of significance in the world.

Rituals - things the family do in their own way- are a great way of keeping attachments strong. Celebrating birthdays; any excuse for a celebration is good.

• Tell your child about your own childhood. Encourage grandparents to do the same. Children love these stories and they help them know who they are.

• If your child has a big difficulty with behaviour, make the time to sit down regularly and reassure them that you do love them, although you don’t like what they do when they get angry. “ I love you but I do not like your behaviour”

• Show them that you see this as a problem for them as well and that you want to work together with them to solve it. ”when you behaved like that I felt sad . How did you feel?”

• Listening to the child can work wonders. Be alert to when the child is ready to talk about something important and give them all your attention some of the time. This is a big part of "relaxed responsiveness." Make sure you make child level eye contact.

• Fun is great for building strong attachments. Play with your child, have fun together. Cook, garden, share a book, look at old photos, go on treasure hunts.

• Respect the ways in which the child is different from you. Every child is unique and he may or may not share your interests. He needs encouragement for his particular gifts even if they are not the ones you would prefer him to have.

• If you make a mistake, set a good example and tell the child you are sorry. It is impossible to get everything right and everyone loses their temper or makes a hasty decision that they regret. The child will respect you more if you can acknowledge this.

Even when your child is acting in an outrageous way, keep up your belief that essentially the child wants to be a good person and have a good life.

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**Tips for making your child feel better about themselves**

• The better you feel about yourself the better you can help your child to feel.

• Focus on every attempt by your child to do something right, however small, and praise the effort. “ thank you for bringing your plate to the kitchen”

• Notice attempts to avoid or lessen poor behaviour and praise them. “I like the way you stopped and thought about taking the TV remote from your sister.”

• Acknowledge the child as a separate person- his feelings are acceptable even if his behaviour is not.

• Celebrate birthdays and keep photos and mementos of significant occasions.

• Discuss issues with the child around setting rules. You are the authority and make the decisions but the child’s views are worth listening to. Have ‘home rules’ set by the whole family.

• Love for children is spelt TIME. Let them share your time especially when you are doing something you enjoy.

• Encourage them to think things through. Give them time out, brain breaks, thinking time, a place to think.

• Let them take responsibility for things that are appropriate for their age. Get them to set the table for dinner or let them pick up all the toys.

• Encourage them to set small goals for themselves. School work, hobbies, organizing an event is all good for this. Achievement is great for self esteem. With your encouragement the effort is great as well, regardless of the outcome.

• Ask them what they think of their own behaviour. Self esteem starts out being based a great deal on what other people think- parents especially; eventually children make their own judgements about themselves and the more you can be aware of these the more you can help. “ what could you have done when……”

• A child with emotional and behavioural difficulties has an extra hard time feeling good about themselves, or just feeling good! Watch out for things that help your child feel good and even if they are a little strange or don’t seem quite right for their age allow them to experience those things (within reason).

Having clear rules and ways of doing things helps a child to feel valued.

• Be the best role model you can and when you make a mistake take responsibility for it.

• Showing your child that you enjoy his company whenever you possibly can is a major source of self esteem for children.

• Use your own memories of being a child- how did you feel when you saw your mother’s eyes light up when she saw you after school/ work etc? What else felt good or helped you to know you mattered in your family?

• If your own experience was not so great, what was missing that would have made a difference and can you give that to your child now?

• The greatest gift a parent can give a child is to believe that the child is lovable even if they are not behaving in a lovable way. Look below the surface and see that if the child is misbehaving it is probably some sort of cry for help.

It does not mean you have failed as a parent.

• Nobody has to be perfect to be worthwhile or feel good about themselves and everyone makes mistakes.

• Help your child to learn from their mistakes and then they are well prepared for life.

It is hard to resist pressure from children. Everything in a child’s life has to be NOW NOW NOW!

**When to say ‘YES’ and how to say ‘NO’.**

As parents, we start off thinking that we always want to say yes to our children. We love them to bits and want to indulge them, especially to give them all the things we didn’t have ourselves. Somehow we feel that saying yes will create our dream family and solve all our problems. Unfortunately, that is not what happens; before we know it, we are living with a monster who shouts, screams, kicks, bites and demands, and the only way to soothe this beast is to say, ‘yes’. And so we find ourselves agreeing to all sorts of things, just for a quiet life. Saying yes can put a stop to tantrums in the toyshop or the supermarket, with the embarrassing stares and tut-tuts of every passer-by; we find ourselves buying unsuitable toys and clothes, agreeing to take children to places we don’t want them to go or having their dreadful friends to sleep over when we don’t want to.

The key to whether you should say yes or no to your child is how it makes you feel. Are you saying yes because you really want to spend time with your child or give them a special treat or reward their good behaviour? If so, say yes and enjoy it. However, if you find yourself saying yes resentfully or reluctantly or because it would be too stressful to say no, then yes is not the answer. Saying no is sometimes the hardest thing we have to do to be good parents and we need to do it for our child’s sake and to prepare them for the real world.

Real life isn’t easy and none of us gets everything we want, and the sooner children learn this lesson in a safe way the better they will be equipped to deal with reality.

Say no kindly, explain your reasons and stop.

* Otherwise you may be tempted to eventually give in and say yes.
* They may learn if they keep on like that, eventually mum or dad will cave in.
* If you do this you make it impossible for almost every other adult to work with your child.
* This is going to be particularly important when they go to school and have to get along with 30 other children and lots of teachers who, in the nicest possible way, will be saying no all the time.
* If you train your child to shout, scream, kick and bit to get what they want, you will not have done them any favours.
* If you want your child’s behaviour to change, you will need to change too and probably the most difficult thing will be learning to say no.

**Tantrums**

What are they?

Tantrums are when a child whines, complains, resists, clings, argues, hits, kicks, shouts, screams, runs or throws things. In children from 1-4 years, although normal, they can be embarrassing, challenging and difficult to manage. On the other hand, they can become a bigger problem when they happen frequently, (more than once a week), when they become more violent or when they occur in older children (or adults!).

What triggers them?

At home, there are predictable situations that can trigger tantrums, such as bedtime, mealtimes, getting up, getting dressed, washing, watching TV, being asked to stop doing something, arguments with brothers or sisters or other children and being denied something they want. At school, they are more likely to happen at transition times, that is, moving from one activity to another. These could include getting ready for school, getting on the bus, getting ready to work, moving to another area or activity and coming in from play.

How do you stop them happening?

Remember children have a tantrum in order to get their own way. If you give in to them, the next time they want something they will have another tantrum – because it works.

Some tips to avoid tantrums

• Don’t ask a child if they want to do something when they have to do it. For example, say, "It’s dinner time now, thank you" not " Would you like to eat now?".

• Praise children when they are getting it right, particularly in situations when they are likely to have a tantrum such as, "Well done for sharing with your friend."

• Don’t expect them to do things that are way above their capabilities, making them frustrated and angry. If you expect them to be a great piano player but they find the lessons really difficult and hate it, don’t keep forcing them and talk to them about what else they might want to do.

• Keep things that are likely to cause arguments out of sight. At bedtimes, having TVs or games machines in a bedroom or lots of toys lying around, is asking for trouble. Make sure the home is safe by keeping objects that could be dangerous and get them into trouble if they play with them, out of sight.

• Redirect the child to another activity. If they are likely to tantrum over stopping playing with toys, say, "Let’s read a book together".

• You can ignore some persistent unwanted behaviours that the child is doing, if the behaviour is not dangerous or causing any risk.

• Teach your child how to make a request without having a tantrum and then honour the request. Say, "Ask for that nicely and I’ll give it to you.

• Avoid boredom. Say, "You have been working for a long time, let’s take a break and do something fun".

• Try and be more tolerant. Are you available to meet the child’s reasonable needs? Think about how often and when you say, "No", and avoid fighting over minor things.

• Provide routines and structure. If a child learn to expect things at certain times they are less likely to fight over them.

• Give children some control over little things. A little bit of power can prevent the big power struggles later, e.g. for younger children at bedtime, "What do you want to do first, get changed or brush your teeth?".

**Rewards**

A reward is something that has to be earned. It is given when a task has been completed or an expectation has been met. "When you tidy your room at the weekend, I will take you to the park." "You came in when I asked you to so I will let you go out to play again tomorrow." Sometimes praise, when you catch your child doing something right, can be the best reward. "You really made life easier for me at the supermarket today, you were very patient in the queue and you packed all the food so quickly, I’m so glad I’ve got you to help me."

In a reward situation, you are in control.

• There is an incentive for the child to do the right thing.

• They will start to feel good about themselves and respect you for giving them the chance to do the right thing.

• Never be tempted to give the reward if they do not complete the task,

• Set another goal instead. "You didn’t tidy your room this weekend so I can’t give you your £2 pocket money. I hope you’ll be able to do it next weekend so you’ll get your money then."

**Make Rewards Realistic**.

Don’t promise a new games machine for a couple of good days at school. Make the child save up for what they want. For example, 50p for each day they get a good report from school or go to bed on time, 2 good days in school means a trip to the park on the way home. Keep a record of their progress. This could be a chart with stickers or a money book. Keep it in a place where you can easily refer to it, especially at times when they are about to get it wrong. "Look, you’ve gone to bed on time 4 days out of 4 this week, 2 more times and you will be able to go to the cinema. You have been much happier since you’ve gone to bed on time and less grumpy. I’ve been so proud of you going to bed without a fuss….." Always deliver the reward when it has been earned. Have the money ready or put the time aside. A reward system will only work when your child trusts you to pay up when they’ve kept their part and not give in when they haven’t!

**Expectations and Routines**

A child who does not know what and when things are going to happen to them or what is expected of them is an anxious and often upset child. To get the approval and praise that is good for them they need to follow the rules of society. We want our children to be respectful towards others, to do their best at school, to be organised, friendly, honest and caring. The most important thing in helping a child follow the rules is us. Sometimes despite our best efforts to set a good example they don’t behave. Why not?

• They might not understand fully what we want them to do.

• They might think what we are asking them to do is too difficult.

Do try and set aside a time for your child each day – this could involve an activity such as reading, cooking or simply playing a game with them.

• If they are not in the habit of doing the right thing, they might not even try.

• They might not take us seriously if we shout, plead, lecture, threaten, give in or not notice what they are doing.

• They might think misbehaving is fun!

**Setting the Expectations**

**Step One**: Decide on what the expectations should be by getting together with all the adults involved with your child. Set expectations that you are willing to follow through.

**Step Two**: Introduce the expectation to the child. Tell the child what you want, for example, "I want our house to be tidy", and ask questions about how they can help, "How can you help keep it tidy" where possible get them involved in setting the expectation.

**Step Three**: Explain what the rewards and consequences will be. Again try and discuss with your child what they think is fair.

**Step Four**: Get the child to repeat the expectation and the rewards and consequences so that you are sure they know what they have to do.

**Step Five**: Put a reminder about the expectation up on the wall – this could include a picture or symbol. Refer to this reminder if the child is reluctant to follow the expectation. Use positive language “ we keep our toys in the box” “ we use a quiet voice” “ we walk in the house”

**Step Six**: Be consistent! Follow through every time with the reward or consequence and be prepared to deal with the child’s reaction to it. If you give in because you feel tired or feel like giving them a treat it will just make more work for you in the long run.

**Step Seven**: Do not blame the child or criticise them for breaking the expectation. Refer to the reminder and give them the consequences which were already discussed.

**Step Eight**: Start with just a few expectations. Once you have success with a few you can add more in time.

**Keeping your child safe.**

Children learn when they are safe. Our main rule in school is about safety, which means children being responsible for their hands, feet, body and what comes out of their mouths. Racism, sexism and put downs all result in someone feeling bad and likely to retaliate. Most unsafe situations arise as a result of unkind comments. ‘Your mum……….’ can result in an explosive response where staff and children are at risk of being hurt. All children learn rude words but most learn not to say them to their parents or teachers. If your child has learnt bad habits, it is worth taking the time to re-train them. Otherwise they, and you, will be judged badly and they will not make many friends.

Do you know what your child is up to when they are surfing the internet? Do you know what surfing the internet means?

www.thinkuknow.co.uk is a helpful website

**Internet Safety**

• Do you know what your child is up to when they are online?

• Do you know how to keep your child safe on the internet?

• Most children know much more about computers and technology and computers than their parents do. There are ways to protect your child from unwanted attention and also to keep yourself informed. Many internet providers can sell you a package which will stop your child accessing inappropriate material on the internet. Alternatively you can attend an after school club here to learn how to keep up.

• If your child is spending hours on the computer, ask them to show you what they have been doing and the ‘history’ which the computer records of what it has been used for.

• Check their ‘favourite’ websites. Unfortunately the internet is a useful tool for people wishing to exploit children. Warn your child NEVER to give out any personal details of who they are or where they live to strangers they might meet on the internet.

Sadly we hear in the news every year of children who go missing to meet up with someone they have made contact with on the internet; often these stories do not have a happy ending.

**Stranger Danger**

Mostly we bring our children up to be polite to everyone and at the same time we tell them not to talk to strangers. It is often difficult for a child to know when to be polite and when to walk away / shout /be rude.

**Domestic Abuse**

Sadly, many children do witness domestic abuse because, sadly, some parents suffer it. Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. It is not always physical. Other forms of abuse include verbal abuse, threats, humiliation and put-downs. It can affect children in serious and long lasting ways. It also teaches children to use violence themselves. They do worry about their parents and will want to support or protect you if things at home are not all right. Children learn to behave in part from examples parents set them. Domestic abuse teaches them negative things about relationships and how to deal with people. If you are worried about domestic abuse, you are not alone. Please trust someone else enough to discuss it with them. If you are violent or abusive, you can get help to stop what is happening. Perhaps you were treated abusively yourself in your younger years and this is a pattern you are repeating. In time, if nothing happens, your child may also become a victim or an abuser as they believe this to be normal behaviour.

**In School**

Our advice to children is - If you are in the right place and doing what you have been asked to do, there will always be adults around to help -The ethos of the school is very much about sorting things out, making peace with the people you have upset and starting again. Bullying can take many forms, from verbal intimidation to physical attack; sometimes it is more subtle, with children feeling left out. Unfortunately, we live in a society where to be different in any way can mean ridicule or bullying. Children will copy your response to these situations. If you think your child is being bullied in school, please contact the school straight away. Bullies need help too.

Written by Mrs L Patmore