

ISPCC
ALWAYS HERE FOR CHILDREN



Top Tips for Relating to Children

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Parenting is such an important job that at times, especially when life is stressful, we find it hard to step back and relate to our children in a positive way.

Here are some of the top tips from the ISPCC to regain a more positive balance.

1. **SWITCH GEARS** - Do something unexpected to jump start some feelings of fun and appreciation. Take a day off just to play or start a water fight. Go out of your way to say "thank you" for feeding the little dog or answering the phone. See the absurd side of your conflicts. Laughing together is a great way to strengthen family bonds as long as humour doesn't harm or belittle anyone.
2. **BE SILLY** - Let yourself go. Rent a silly movie. Dance around the living room or see if you can still lift yourself over a skipping rope. Go ahead and make a fool of yourself - but not in public with an easily embarrassed child or adolescent.
3. **TALK IT OUT** - Instead of nagging or shouting, talk to your children. If you want more adult behaviour be prepared to treat them like adults. Telling another adult what is on your mind can also help. Friends of children a few years older will re-assure you that no-one ever died from skipping a bath or refusing to eat one dinner.
4. **NEGOTIATE** - Most power struggles revolve around whether a child will obey. If your 10 year old would rather do the washing up than take out the rubbish remind yourself that he is contributing to the housework and that's what matters. We are all more co-operative when we are allowed to do things in our own way.
5. **SAY NO** - If you do not feel up to a trip to the beach say so. Children know when we feel boxed in and resentful and everyone suffers when we do the martyr.



Listen when your children say no, too. When their opinions are respected they learn to stand up for what you, and they, believe.

6. **ACCEPT GOOD ENOUGH** - You know your own child best. Trust your own instincts and respond to your own children's characteristics and needs. Do not expect perfection from yourself or your child. It is far better to celebrate mistakes (yours and your child's) as opportunities to practice or try a new approach.
7. **ASSUME THE BEST** - Give your child the benefit of the doubt. Look for ways to help them co-operate. Set them up to succeed. This starts with conscientiously accepting your child for who she or he really is - and gearing your expectations accordingly. The more accepting you are, the more genuine pleasure you will take in your child - and better they will feel about themselves.
8. **CHANGE SIDES** - If you are struggling to control your child's behaviour move over to their side and work on problems together.
9. **MOVE ON** - Remember that children are resilient. They can handle your mistakes and they are usually quick to forgive you when you say, "I'm sorry". Do not labour your point with long lectures or explanations in the hope of winning your child to your ways of thinking - or of soothing your own hurts.
10. **LOOK FOR THE JOYS** - We can choose whether to focus on the difficulties or the joys in parenting. Having a positive happy relationship with your child is the most joyous rewarding gift a person can have or give.

The ISPCC run a Support Line for parents and members of the public. If you would like to get support or advice you can call us Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm on 01 6767960.