



RAISING  
CHILDREN  
CONFIDENTLY



# HELP AT HAND

Taking a  
Positive Approach  
to Parenting



**Children in Wales** is the National umbrella children's organisation in Wales, bringing organisations and individuals together to:

- Make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality in Wales
- Fight for sustainable quality services and fair shares for all children and young people
- Ensure special attention and treatment for children in need
- Give children and young people a voice

Children in Wales works in partnership with the National Children's Bureau in England and Children in Scotland, and works internationally with Eurochild and The International Forum for Child Welfare.

### **Did you find this booklet useful?**

We would be very pleased to have any comments you may have about this booklet.

Please contact **Children in Wales**,  
25 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ  
Tel: 029 2034 2434  
Fax: 029 2034 3134  
email: [info@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:info@childreninwales.org.uk)  
[www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk)

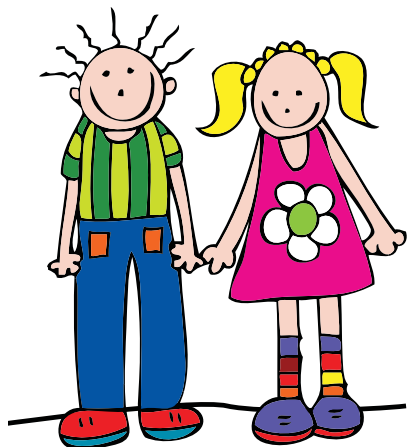


Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

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ISBN 1-901871-48-7. This publication is copyright.

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# Introduction

Children in Wales has written this booklet in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and members of the 'Sdim Curo Plant!/Children are Unbeatable! Campaign.



It is intended to provide ideas for parents of young children on helpful ways of dealing with children's behaviour, including alternatives to smacking. "Parent" means anyone who is responsible for the care and upbringing of children and young people. In this booklet to save on repeating 'he' or 'she' each time when we refer to your child, we will just use 'she'. All the information in this booklet does, however, refer equally to boys and girls.

The **Welsh Assembly Government** believes that smacking children and young people is wrong. Its policy on physical punishment is founded on rights and respect. Human beings should not strike each other, at any age, and smacking is a form of hitting.

Messages to children and young people about respecting others and not hitting them are lost when they themselves experience being smacked by adults, or when they see other children being treated in this way.

The Welsh Assembly Government wishes to help provide parents with the support they may need to find non-violent ways of managing their children's behaviour effectively and before things reach crisis point.



# Children have Rights

## Children have Rights

All human beings have the right not to be hit. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us that children and young people are people too and that they also have a right not to be hit. The Convention is an international human rights treaty that sets out the basic rights of children and young people up to age 18.

Rights include the right to an education, to health care and to be respected and protected from harm. The Welsh Assembly Government has adopted the Convention as a basis for its work with children and young people.



## Parents have Rights too

The Convention recognises that a child's parents should be given help and assistance to carry out their responsibilities. That is why the Welsh Assembly Government has sponsored this booklet.

## 'Sdim Curo Plant!/ Children are Unbeatable!

The 'Sdim Curo Plant!/Children are Unbeatable! Alliance is a group of more than 300 organisations working to give children the same legal protection against being hit as adults.

Children in Wales, Save the Children, NSPCC, NCH, Barnardo's, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health are all members of the Strategy Group in Wales.

The ideas in this booklet are drawn from previous publications by Barnardo's, Save the Children and NSPCC.



## What is 'Positive Parenting?'

Positive parenting is about showing children how to behave in ways which are acceptable to their parents and others. It helps children to understand how and why they should behave in different situations and by praising and rewarding them when they behave well. It builds on children's natural wish to please their parents. Any child of any age, personality, background or culture can respond well to this approach.



You can do these things by:

- Getting close to your child by showing love and affection
- Telling your children all the things that please you about them
- Praising good behaviour and trying to ignore minor naughty behaviour
- Avoiding harsh punishments like smacking
- Having clear limits (and not too many) that are right for the age of your child
- Explaining what behaviour you want in a way that your child understands
- Offering some (limited) choices such as choosing what to wear
- Making sure that things in your home that your child could break easily and are dangerous are put out of their reach
- Distracting younger children instead of smacking or telling them off
- Planning some time out for yourself, finding ways that help relieve your anger

It is not easy to change the way you do things with your child. Nobody gets it right all the time. Try to change things one bit at a time. If you keep going, you will see that your child will start to behave better.

*"Smacking stings like a nettle and makes you feel sad"*  
6 YEAR OLD GIRL

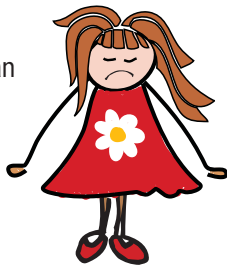
*“Children probably behave worse, because they’ll go around doing it to other children in the playground”*  
9 YEAR OLD BOY

**Why is smacking never a good idea?**

Being a parent is a very difficult job and all parents get cross with their child sometimes. They may end up smacking their child in the heat of the moment. Some parents believe that without smacks children will lose control or go off the rails. Some parents feel that there are times when children behave so badly that a smack is the only punishment that will do.

A smack may seem okay in these cases because it is a quick solution. However, it will not teach your child how you want her to behave but is more likely to:

- Teach your child that hitting someone smaller is okay
- Make cheeky, difficult behaviour worse, so discipline becomes even harder to achieve
- Lead your child to become secretive, blame others and even lie to get out of being smacked
- Make your child feel angry and fearful rather than look up to and respect you



**Don't children need to be taught right from wrong?**

Children best learn to behave well if they are given firm, clear boundaries. They do not need to be afraid or feel pain in order to achieve this. Studies have shown that smacking or slapping does not work well and parents may start to use harder smacks more often to get the same effect.

It is easy to forget how delicate children are, especially if you are angry. A smack or shake might cause real harm to a small child. Smacking and other forms of physical punishment are also an abuse of a child's rights.

*“Smacking feels unfair”*  
7 YEAR OLD GIRL

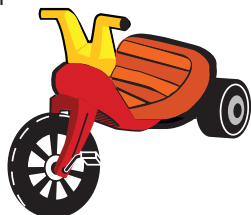


## Your Child

### Why does my child sometimes behave badly?

Sometimes it is hard to know why your child acts the way she does. If you understand why your child sometimes behaves badly it may help you to take action in a different way. Your child may be difficult for a number of reasons:

- **Hunger or tiredness** – Your child may get cross more easily if she is hungry, thirsty or tired
- **Attention seeking** – Your child will do anything to get your attention and may find that bad behaviour is 'noticed' and gets extra attention. She may prefer being told off or smacked rather than getting no attention at all
- **Revenge** – Your child may wish to get back at someone she feels has treated her badly
- **Feeling bored** – Your child may play up if she is bored, especially in a very formal place. For example she may start to touch objects she is not allowed to if there isn't anything else to play with



- **Stage of development** – Your child's difficult behaviour may actually be normal behaviour for her age. Toddlers are curious and explore their world by touching, tasting and shaking things - they can find it very hard to sit still for long periods. Crying, particularly in a baby's first year, may be their way of saying that they are wet, tired or hungry. Your child may be unable to do what you want because of her age, for example, she may not be able to drink from a cup without spilling some! The booklet "Over the Top Behaviour in the Under 10s" gives information on normal and problem behaviour - available from Children in Wales.
- **Understanding the rules** – Your child may not be sure about what you want her to do because your rules are not clear or different rules are being used at different times. Young children respond better when they have a few, simple rules to follow





- **Anxiety** - There may be other things going on in your child's life that affect her behaviour. Your child may have just started at playgroup or nursery or may be worried because you have had a new baby. Your child may not yet have the words to say how she is feeling, but will act out how she feels through her behaviour

#### How can 'praise' improve behaviour?

By praising your child when she behaves well you will encourage her to behave well more often. Tell your child exactly what she has done well – say "Good girl for putting your toys away" rather than just "good girl." Try to use "I" statements and avoid "you" statements. Instead of "you are so naughty" use "I don't like it when you throw your toys" or "I get upset when you shout at your brother."

Try to offer your child some choices rather than giving her too many orders. For example, "Do you want to wear your red top or your blue top" or "Do you want to hold my hand or Grandma's?" rather than "Put this top on" or "Hold my hand."

Offering choices can help your child to learn to solve problems and take responsibility for her own behaviour. Your child is also less likely to refuse to do something if she is given a choice.

#### How can 'play' help?

Your child will be more likely to behave well when she is busy playing. Play need not require large numbers of toys – children love to climb in and out of a cardboard box. If you have a toy library in your area you could borrow toys from them.

# About you as a Parent

## How do you deal with your child's difficult behaviour?

Being a parent is a tough job and it is not easy to deal with difficult behaviour. Thinking about the way you react to your child's behaviour can help. Parents often react in ways that they learnt from their own parents. Here are three different ways parents may react:

### Authoritarian

- Have lots of strict rules
- Make lots of orders and use threats
- Punish harshly - often with smacks

### Passive

- Ignore their own needs and give in to naughty behaviour because they want a quiet life and do not want to upset their child
- Always give in to whining
- Do everything for the child without giving their child a chance to develop independence

### Respectful

- Have clear simple rules and expect these to be met
- Give children choices right for their age and let them have some control
- Use praise and positive attention to encourage good behaviour, showing disapproval for bad behaviour, but never smacking

Most parents probably respond to their children in a mixture of these ways. The third way is often called positive parenting. It has the best chance of making both parents and children happy.

## How are you feeling?

Looking after children can be very tiring and there may be days when things get on top of you. If you feel anger getting the better of you try to take some time out - leave the room briefly, count to ten, make a cuppa, phone a friend, breathe slowly.

If you are feeling angry try to get some help – ask someone you trust like a friend or relative for some support. You could also ask your health visitor for help and advice. Some parents find it helps to meet up with other parents.

Your local Children's Information Service has details of playgroups, parent and toddlers' groups and parent support groups in your area ([www.nacis.org.uk/contactcis/wales/index.htm](http://www.nacis.org.uk/contactcis/wales/index.htm)). Cry-sis helps families who find it difficult to cope when their baby cries a lot. You can call them any day from 9am to 10pm on **08451 228 669**. You could also call Parentline Plus on **0808 8002222** (24 hours a day) if you would like to talk to someone about your worries.

# Crisis Moments

There may be some times that are more difficult for you and your child. Here are some ideas to try to make these times easier.

## At the Supermarket

- Try not to go shopping when your child is tired or hungry
- Give younger children something to play with or look at in the trolley. Allow older children to help with the shopping
- Keep talking to your child about things you see around the shop. Play some simple games like "I spy" or "Who can see the apples first?"
- Praise your child for good behaviour

## Tantrums

- Children are more likely to have a tantrum if they are tired or hungry. If your child does have a tantrum it may be too late to work things out or distract her
- Try to stay calm and keep your child from hurting herself and wait until she is calmer before doing anything else
- Avoid giving your child what she wants when she tantrums or the problem could become worse
- Smacking will make your toddler's tantrums worse and make your child afraid of you

## Bedtime

- Develop a bedtime routine with your child if possible at the same time each night
- Give your child at least half an hour to relax and get ready for bed. Baths and bedtime stories will help her relax
- Give your child praise when she goes to bed without fuss

## Squabbling between siblings

- Try not to get involved in arguments between your children - let them settle minor squabbles on their own
- Separate your children if they harm each other and firmly say that you will not let them hurt each other
- Distracting your children may help - suggest a new game or activity



There are more tips on coping with difficult situations in "From Breakfast to Bedtime – Helping you and your toddler through the day!" – available from Children in Wales. The next section of this booklet gives details of organisations that can give you further information and advice.

## Further Sources of Information

**Barnardo's Cymru** runs a number of projects aimed at supporting children, young people and their families.  
**Tel 029 2049 3387, Fax 029 2048 9802, [www.barnardos.org.uk/index](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/index)**

**BBCi Parenting** is a website with information and advice on parenting.  
**[www.bbc.co.uk/parenting](http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting)**

**Children Are Unbeatable!** is an alliance of more than 300 organisations campaigning for children to have the same legal protection against being hit as adults. **Tel 029 2034 2434, E-mail [cau@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:cau@childreninwales.org.uk)**

**Children in Wales** organises the Welsh Parenting and Fatherhood Wales Forums which support organisations who provide services for parents. **Tel 029 2034 2434, Email [info@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:info@childreninwales.org.uk) [www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk)**

**Citizens Advice Bureau Advice Guide** is the online CAB service that provides independent advice on rights - including benefits, housing, employment and debt, consumer and legal issues.  
**[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)**

**Contact a Family Cymru** is an organisation dedicated to helping families who care for children with any disability or special need. **Tel 029 2039 6624, Fax 029 2039 6625, E-mail [wales@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:wales@cafamily.org.uk) [www.cafamily.org.uk/index.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/index.html)**

**Cry-sis** helps families who find it difficult to cope when their baby cries a lot.  
**Tel 08451 228 669 (08451 ACT NOW)**

**Domestic Abuse** helplines - Domestic Abuse helpline: 0808 8010 800; Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO) **029 2043 7390**; Welsh Women's Aid: Aberystwyth: **01970 612748**; Rhyl: **01745 334767**; Cardiff: **029 2039 0874**  
**[www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)**

**Fathers Direct** have information on fatherhood with guides for supporting fathers and their families. **Tel 0845 634 1328, Email [mail@fathersdirect.com](mailto:mail@fathersdirect.com) [www.fathersdirect.com](http://www.fathersdirect.com)**

**Gingerbread Wales** supports lone parent families in Wales. **Tel 029 2047 1900, Email [leoni.philp@gingerbread.org.uk](mailto:leoni.philp@gingerbread.org.uk) [www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)**

**Home-Start UK** in Wales supports families with young children. **Tel 029 20 49 1181, Fax: 029 2049 1182, Email [walesoffice@home-start.org.uk](mailto:walesoffice@home-start.org.uk) [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)**





**Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin** promotes the education and development of children under 5 years old through the language of Welsh. **Tel 01970 639639**,  
**Fax 01970 639638**, [www.mym.co.uk](http://www.mym.co.uk)

**National Childbirth Trust (NCT)** supports families through pregnancy, birth and early parenthood. **Tel 0870 444 8707**,  
**Email enquiries@nct.org.uk**

**National Association of Toy & Leisure Libraries** allow local families to borrow toys for a small fee (and sometimes for free). **Tel 01874 622 097**,  
**Fax 01874 623 268**,  
**E-mail natll.wales@playmatters.co.uk**  
[www.natll.org.uk](http://www.natll.org.uk)

**NCH Cymru** offer services to children and young people and their families. **Tel 029 2022 2127**, **Fax 029 2022 9952**,  
[www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk)

**NHS Direct** gives health advice and information 24 hours a day, every day in English and Welsh. **Tel 0845 4647**,  
[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)

**NSPCC Cymru/Wales** have a Helpline - 0808 100 2524 which offers help and advice. Bilingual Welsh/English service. Open 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. **E-mail helplinecymru@nspcc.org.uk** or **Textphone 0808 100 1033** for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

**Parentline Plus** offers information, support and a freephone helpline to anyone who parents a child. **Tel 0808 800 2222** - available FREE seven days a week, 24 hours a day. **Textphone - 0800 783 6783** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. Open 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday

**Relate** offers advice, relationship counselling, mediation and support **Tel 0845 130 4010**, [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

**RoSPA** provides information and advice on making your home safe. **Tel 029 2025 0600**, [www.rospace.org.uk](http://www.rospace.org.uk)

**Shared Care Network** give family-based short breaks for disabled children. **Email pippab@powys.org.uk**

**SNAP Cymru** offers information and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs. **Tel 029 2038 8776**,  
**Fax 029 2037 1876**,  
**Email centraloffice@snappcymru.org**  
[www.snappcymru.org](http://www.snappcymru.org)

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