

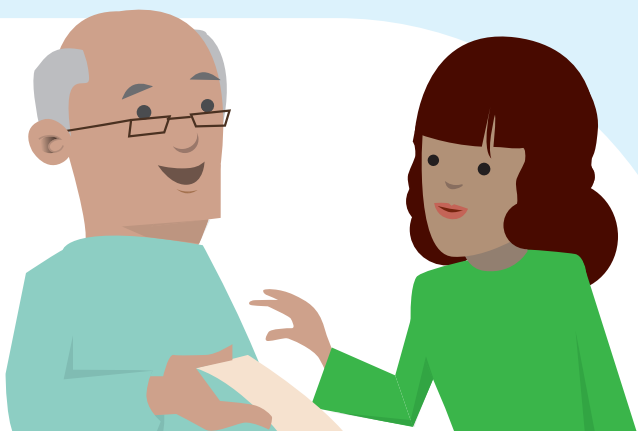
Dads can feel their family has become 'public property' and can sometimes feel excluded from discussions with professionals. Try to make sure that you both go to at least some appointments together. Encourage each other to develop other interests, and make time for your relationship with each other.

Having access to respite is a top priority for many parents. Don't feel guilty about asking for a break from your caring responsibilities. It helps recharge the batteries and maintain family relationships, as well as giving your child an opportunity to enjoy time away from home.

Supporting the rest of the family

Some siblings are very accepting and understanding of their special needs brother or sister. Others may feel embarrassed, or under pressure to compensate by becoming a 'super child'. Try to make sure that you give them time on their own with you. Keep them in touch with what's going on and let them have a life of their own.

Grandparents may find it helpful to be given professional information about their grandchild's condition. When visiting grandparents, encourage your child to take along a favourite toy or book so they have something to talk about.



Helping you to be an even better mum or dad



For more information and tips on family life, visit cff.org.uk

You might like to:

- Attend a local *Time Out for Parents - Children with Special Needs* course cff.org.uk/courses
- Visit the *Additional Needs* section of our website cff.org.uk/additionalneeds
- Sign up to receive the *Additional Needs Support Newsletter* cff.org.uk/additionalneeds

 **positiveparenting**

Care for the Family seeks to promote strong family relationships and help those who face family difficulties.

 cff.org.uk

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Top Tips For Parents

Raising Children with Special Needs



Parents of a child with special needs face a whole set of unique challenges and experiences.

We may feel unsure about our ability to fulfil our role as parents so here are some helpful tips for raising children with special needs.

Help build your child's self-esteem

The self-esteem of children with special needs is fragile and easily damaged. They need you to believe in them and give them encouragement. Point out to them their great personality traits and encourage them to be proud of who they are. Look out for good behaviour and small achievements to praise them for.

Give them quality time

Playing with your children will strengthen your relationship. Find out what activity your child most enjoys and do that together. Playing is important for your child's physical, emotional, social and brain development and also helps them to develop their creative skills, imagination and coordination.

Regularly have a time when your child has your full attention. Let them choose what they want to do, take an interest in their activity and enjoy spending time with them.



Give them boundaries

Children feel loved, safe and secure when they know what is expected of them. However, it can be challenging to communicate boundaries to your child with special needs.

You need lots of patience and realistic expectations– not too high, but not too low either. It's normal to want to protect your child with special needs. However, if you are overprotective it can stop your child from learning new skills and make them more dependent than they need to be.

Communicate clearly

Have eye contact with your child by getting down to their level. Keep commands simple and explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable. Try to be consistent, and use sign language or picture cards if it helps. You may feel you want to protect your child from knowing their diagnosis, but children are often the first to know that they are different in some way. Talk naturally and simply about their condition when opportunities arise.

Other people's reactions

Sometimes people make unhelpful comments or stare and look embarrassed. Develop some stock phrases to use in difficult situations, such as, "My son has a condition which makes it hard for him to sit still for long." Or consider carrying a little card explaining your child's situation.

Acknowledge your feelings

Initially coming to terms with your child's special needs can feel like a grieving process. The hopes and dreams you had have to be readjusted. These feelings are completely normal.

You may find it helpful to contact us at Care for the Family and we can put you in touch with another parent in a similar situation to yourself through our befriending scheme (telephone 029 2081 0800).

Know what help you're entitled to

As a parent or carer of a child with special needs, you might be entitled to certain benefits and services that can help you, your child and your family. Contact a Family gives free advice (visit www.cafamily.org.uk or telephone 0808 808 3555).

Look after yourselves

Taking time out for yourself isn't selfish – it's important and necessary. Find someone you can trust to look after your child and go for coffee with a friend, go for a run, take a long bath or spend time with your partner.

