



Session one 'You're not alone'

Running time: 12 minutes

Being a parent can be hard and lonely – but it can be funny too! Often we can cope better if we know we're not the only ones finding it difficult.

There are two particular pressures these days.

- Feeling alone
- The need to look as if everything is fine

Remember – you are not alone – others have gone through this themselves.



"I sometimes feel that way myself."



TIPS

Be more honest with each other - don't share just your successes, share your failures too.



Think it through

- Have you ever been through a hard time as a parent? What helped you to cope?
- Life is often busy. Is there anything you could stop doing, so that you could start doing something else?
- We need to be honest with each other. Look at the following comments. What could these parents have said differently, to allow them to support each other?
 - "Actually he's causing me real problems at the moment. Oh well, not to worry! How about you?"
 - "It's all terrible, but I'll cry if I talk about it"
 - "Poor you, how awful. Well, I'd better go and put the dinner on."

Action

Did you know...

In a recent survey, only 5% of parents had been on a parenting course, but 77% said they'd consider it.

Taking from: 'Parenting Across Scotland' survey

Do you know anyone you can meet up with for a regular chat, so that you can support each other as parents? Or, why not start a parents' coffee morning?





Session two

'The gift of acceptance'

Running time: 16 minutes

We all have a need to feel accepted – and this is especially true of our children. Their self-esteem can be very fragile, and they can easily feel judged about their:

- looks
- weight
- success at school; and
- sport skills.

So, how should you react? How can we encourage our kids without putting pressure on them?

We need to encourage our children, but we also need to let them know we love them.

- Tell them you love them whatever they look like.
- Tell them you love them whatever their grades are.
- Let them know you love them – exactly as they are.



- Of course we need to push our children a bit – we're their parents – but our children need to know they're accepted. How can we encourage them to succeed or look good without making them think that they need to do these things for us to accept them?
- Did you feel accepted as a child?
- How has this affected you in later life?



Write a letter or plan a time to tell your children how precious they are and what you like about them.





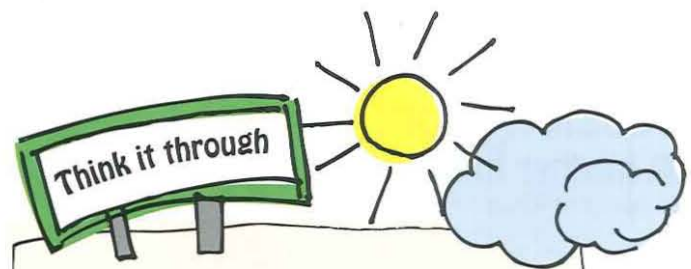
Session three 'The testing child'

Running time: 16 minutes

If you have perfect children and think you're the perfect parent – you got lucky! Just don't tempt fate by having any more children! But, many of us will have children that test us.

Here are seven important things to remember.

- 1 **Don't** take it personally – this is normal behaviour for many kids!
- 2 **Don't** compare them with other children – especially their brothers or sisters – they each have their own talents.
- 3 **Do** pick your battles – you can't fight them all – so decide what's really important. You need to get their attention on the important issues, so save telling them off for the things that really matter.
- 4 **Do** take a second look – children that test you often have qualities that are really important in later life. Maybe they have a great sense of humour or are very generous and open-hearted.
- 5 **Don't** read school reports as if they predict the rest of your child's life.
- 6 **Do** catch them doing something right and praise them for it.
- 7 **Do** help them develop a skill – preferably something unique to them.



- What have you recently criticised your child for?
- Can you think of three good things that your child has done recently?
- What are your child's unique characteristics and skills?

Action

Discuss with your children what their best points are.
Ask what sport or hobby they are most interested in?

Tips

Discover their strengths and praise their good points!





Session four 'A mother looks back'

Running time: 16 minutes

The task of being a parent never ends!

Some mums sometimes get to the point of saying 'I wish I hadn't become a mum', but this is still mixed with much love.

Although being a mum is a great honour, it can also be very tiring, with a feeling of always being in charge.



- What has been your experience as a parent? Was it what you expected? What is hardest for you at the moment?
- It's good to laugh – what could you do as a family that will bring smiles and create happy memories for the future?
- How would you like your children to remember you? What values do you hope to pass on to them?



Tips

Make some time for yourself sometimes.



Di's story



Di's experience of illness was very hard and brought guilt and made her feel guilty and as though she wasn't being a very good mum.

Here is her message to other mums, especially those suffering from illness or depression.

Let's all yell out "thank goodness it's not just me!"

'You can get through dark times.'

Don't judge and remember to laugh.

Never give up hope.'

Di hopes that:

- single mums will feel encouraged and less alone;
- mums who feel like failures will be inspired to carry on; and
- all mums will feel respected and honoured.



Make a list of what makes you a good mother or father.

This can include things that children take for granted, like cooking good meals!





Session five 'Building a sense of value'

Running time: 16 minutes

There are three important ways that we can help our children feel valued.

- **The power of praise**
Even when it's for something small – whatever their age.
- **The power of touch**
Touch is incredibly powerful – even with teenagers.
- **The power of time**
If you say 'we'll do it later' make sure you do. One day they'll stop asking – and your child will no longer be a child.

Don't forget the power of traditions. These little rituals and memories really strengthen families.



Let your child know you VALUE them

Voice your love for your children - tell them often that you love them

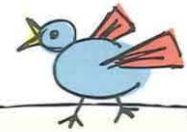
Avoid comparisons

Listen to them

Understand time is precious

Enter into their world - try to see things from their point of view

Think it through



- Do we praise our children enough? What things do they do which we take for granted?
- How can you keep using the power of touch without embarrassing your child?
- Time and traditions – what advice would you give to these people?
 - A divorced man who only sees his nine-year-old son every Saturday.
 - Parents whose 15-year-old girl would rather hang out with her friends.
 - A single parent working full-time with very little time or money.
- Share some of the things that have made your family laugh.

Action

Write down what makes each of your children laugh.

Plan a fun day out that doesn't break the bank.



Session six 'Defending the boundaries'

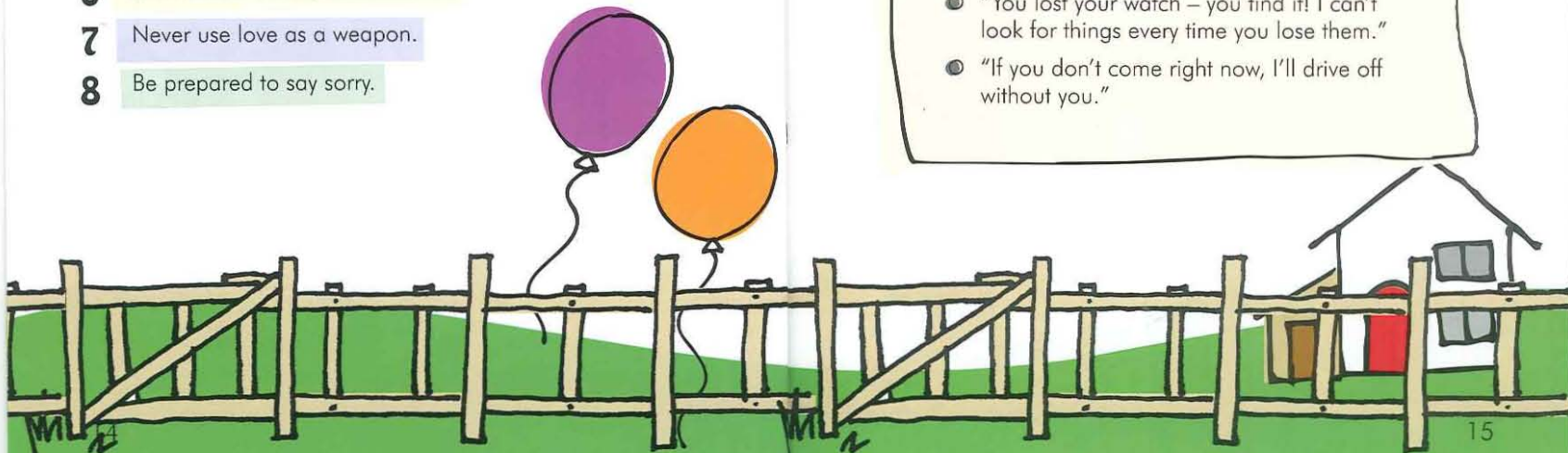
Running time: 12 minutes

Nothing makes a child feel more insecure than not having boundaries (rules).

Watch out for times when you have to stick to the rules.

Sometimes, in order to be good parents, we have to make ourselves unpopular! Here are some top tips for enforcing the boundaries (rules):

- 1 Pick your battles. Sometimes it's better to let things go.
- 2 Avoid last stands – but if you have one – win it!
- 3 Explain why a rule matters.
- 4 Say what you mean, and mean what you say.
- 5 Keep the reins tight at the beginning.
- 6 Criticise the action, not the child.
- 7 Never use love as a weapon.
- 8 Be prepared to say sorry.



Think it through

Action

- Which battles do you feel are crucial for you to fight and win?
 - Tidy bedroom
 - Doing homework
 - Tattoos and piercings
 - Household chores
 - Healthy eating
 - Table manners
- How could a parent say the following statements better? Or are they fine as they are?
 - "I know you're having fun, but we need to leave in five minutes"
 - "For the last time, you are coming in at 10.30, and that's that!"
 - "You lost your watch – you find it! I can't look for things every time you lose them."
 - "If you don't come right now, I'll drive off without you."

Discuss and agree some house rules with your children.

Decide what boundaries (rules) need to be kept through thick and thin?



Session seven 'Teenagers!'

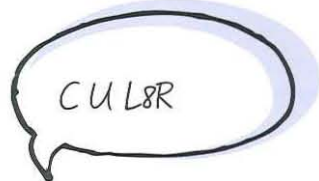
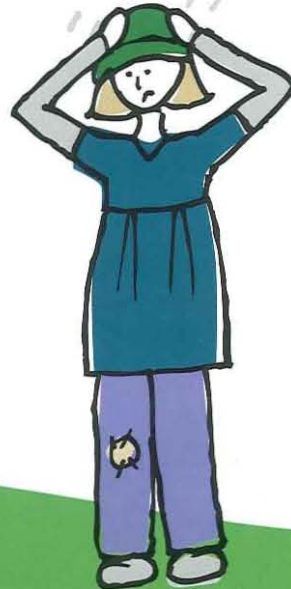
Running time: 8 minutes

The first 12 years are often reasonably calm, but then things can get stormy!

We feel scared, unsure, worried and out of control.

Remember

- Many other parents go through a tough time when their children are teenage too.
- All sorts of changes are happening.
- There is often a change for the better as they get older and become adults
- Just get them through!



- How can we encourage our teenagers to open up and talk to us? What can we say? What activities could we do that would encourage them to talk to us?
- What challenges do teenagers face in today's world?
- What challenges is your teenager facing now?



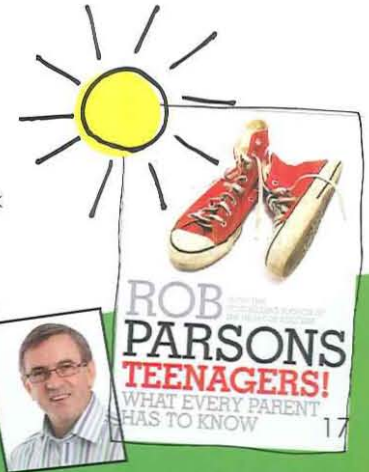
Think what rules you could have to give your teenager more independence.



Did you know...

Rob has also written a book for parents of teenagers

Available from Care for the Family.





Session eight

'Do what you can'

Running time: 14 minutes

10 top tips for all parents:

- 1 Don't take all the credit when things are going well, and don't take all the blame when they're not.
- 2 Believe in yourself.
- 3 Have confidence in yourself as a parent.
- 4 You know your children – do what you feel is best.
- 5 Let go of the guilt.
- 6 Remember, the perfect mother or father does not exist.
- 7 Know when to let go of your children.
- 8 Overcome your fears and let your children grow up.
- 9 Let your children make their own mistakes.
- 10 Just do what you can!



Think it through

- Discuss what you would do in the following situations;
 - A three-year-old child runs into the road, narrowly missing a cyclist.
 - A teacher calls a parent to say their 14-year-old girl was in town when she should have been in school.
 - An extremely gifted 11-year-old boy says he is bored and wants to give up his music lessons.
- In what ways do you think you should currently be:
 - influencing your kids?
 - letting them go?

Action

'Just do what you can' – think about what this means for you in your situation.



“By law step-parents have few rights. But I try to give what I can: my time, money, effort and even love and understanding.”
Mark

