# What kind of Mum or Dad are you?

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It can be useful to think about the type of parent you want to be. The type of parent you are can affect your child’s well-being, how they develop and how they learn. It can also affect your relationship with your child.

Although raising children is often filled with joy and very rewarding, for most of us, being a parent isn’t easy. Sometimes it’s a lot more difficult than we had thought it would be. When we become parents many of us do what ‘comes naturally’. We don’t usually think too much about our behaviour towards our child or how we respond to their behaviour. We often follow what we have learnt from our own parents or get ideas from friends. Some parents get ideas from books or from the people they see like health visitors.

You can choose what you want to bring from your own childhood, or from other people in your life, and what you want to leave out.

What matters is that you care for your child and try to give them the best start in life.

### Parenting types

Psychologists have looked at the different ways parents look after their children and react to their child’s behaviour. They have found that there are three types of parent:

#### Authoritarian (very strict) parents

* have lots of strict rules;
* don't explain why they want their children to do things. They are more likely to say “because I said so”;
* tend to focus on bad behaviour, rather than good behaviour; and
* punish their children, (often with smacks), for not following the rules.

#### Permissive (very laid back) parents

* are kind and loving;
* have few, if any, rules;
* give in to their child’s winning and nagging because they want a quiet life and don’t want to upset their child; and
* do everything for their child without giving their child a chance to try.

#### Positive (firm but fair) parents

* are kind and loving;
* have clear simple rules and explain why they want their children to follow them – “if you throw your toy it might break or hurt someone”;
* try to catch their children being good and praising them;
* give their child some choices that are right for their age – “do you want to wear your red top or your blue top?”;
* are a good role model; and
* take time to listen, talk and enjoy time with their child.

Parents may use a mixture of these parenting types. But often use one type more than another. If they are under stress they may be strict for a while. Or they might not have any energy and let things go for a while. Most parents maintain a balance between being “too strict” or “too soft” every day.

**Nobody has all the answers** and there is no such thing as a perfect parent. However, psychologists have found that the positive parenting style is most likely to help children grow up happy and learn well.

### It’s OK to ask for help

Sometimes other things happening in your life make it more difficult to be a parent. You may have problems with housing, debt or with your job. You may be having relationship problems with your partner.

There are services and organisations which can give you support and advice. Your local Family Information Service will have information about services in your area. You can contact them by telephone on 0300 123 7777. The [**Family Point website**](https://familypoint.cymru/) (External link) also has information on services and activities in your area.

### Alternatively you may find these helplines useful:

* [**Family Lives**](http://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/) (External link) offers a confidential and free (from landlines and most mobiles) helpline. You can call on 0808 800 2222 for information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life. The (English language) helpline is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.
* [**C.A.L.L. Helpline**](http://www.callhelpline.org.uk/) (External link) 0800 132 737 (24 hour service) - Community Advice and Listening Line - (or text ‘help’ to text 81066). This is a confidential helpline which offers emotional support on mental health and related matters.
* [**Samaritans**](http://www.samaritans.org/) (External link) on 08457 90 90 90 (confidential 24 hour service), Email: [**jo@samaritans.org**](mailto:jo@samaritans.org). You can get in touch about anything that’s troubling you, no matter how large or small the issue.