

YOUNG DADS INFORMATION BOOKLET



Disclaimer on Contents

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Contents

Introduction

- Parenting as a new experience

How your baby will change and grow

- Pregnancy, birth and afterwards
- 0-1 child development
- Teething
- Oral health messages for children under 2 years of age
- 2-7 child development
- Positive impact fathers have on their children's development
- Feeding and nutrition.

Young Fathers – How do you feel?

- Coping with stress
- Effects of passive smoking
- Effects of drinking alcohol in front of children
- Postnatal depression
- Premenstrual syndrome
- You and your money
- Self-esteem
- Significance of relationships
- Feeling fed up?

The Legal Stuff

- The legal situation
- Fathers' rights
- Custody/Access
- Child Maintenance
- Benefits and entitlements

Congratulations

You are a new young father or a potential one. Fatherhood will bring many changes to your life so hopefully this booklet will provide you with the information needed to help you become the best father you can be. Above all it will help you think about what it means to be a father and what fatherhood involves.

Every parent struggles with the demands of raising a child so finding the right support is really important so that you can be the best dad you can be to your child/children.

This support can come from family and friends but there are also people outside your social circle who are there to help you with learning parenting skills, information on your rights and generally helping you to keep your life on track and build a future for you and your family.



Why is Parenting Important?

Children from positive homes have good self-esteem and self-confidence and have lower levels of anxiety and depression. They function better socially, academically and in the world of work and have fewer (if any) behaviour problems. They tend to become respectful and responsible adults.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy is divided into three stages of three months called trimesters, outlined below:

First Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most important basic development• Fingers, toes, facial features & ears visible• Foetal heart can be heard through a stethoscope.
Second Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baby's organs begin to function• Bones become more solid.
Third Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some women experience a sense of relief from symptoms• Baby's skin is thin and fragile, but body is beginning to fill out• Taste buds starting to form.

Pregnancy: Fathers' Responsibilities

As many young pregnancies are not planned, this means that most new parents have to get used to the idea of becoming a parent during the pregnancy. Fathers have to work a little harder at this because, of course, mothers are reminded each day that they are having her baby. Expectant fathers can go with the young mother for her appointments and scans where pictures are provided of your baby. It may be helpful to spend some time with relatives' babies to get a feel of what it's like to have a baby around and how to change nappies, how to feed, bath, etc.

Source: Banks, Ian (2007) Men and Babies Haynes Publishing England



Childbirth: Fathers' Responsibilities

It is important to discuss with the mother and to plan whether you are going to be present at the birth of your baby. For many fathers it is the most important event of their lives. Your support to the mother through the labour by offering support, company and encouragement is most important.

After the birth: Fathers' Responsibilities

After the birth of your child, the mother will also need some support as she recovers, so you and the baby can begin to bond through comforting, holding, and talking.

Fathers are able to bond with their baby just as much as mothers and the bond can quickly develop by holding and comforting them. It is a myth that a mother naturally knows how to care for babies as mothers still have to learn the skills just like fathers. Holding a baby is natural and, despite their concerns about dropping the baby, men catch on very quickly. In the first few days after birth babies are likely to have more contact with their mother than their father, so the awareness of there being two important people in their lives arrives gradually. Some fathers experience the same process with their baby.

The more you get involved now, the closer you are likely to be for the rest of your child's life! The bonds with babies are often built before they walk and talk, so the more you cuddle and talk to your baby, the closer you will feel to your baby. Opportunities to bond with your baby can also include washing, feeding, and bathing.

Source: Banks, Ian (2007) Men and Babies Haynes Publishing England

Five ways to get close to your baby



Source: www.fatherhoodinstitute.org (2008)

Your Baby's Development (0-1)

NEWBORN

Head falls back as you lift baby

Baby tries to grab your finger if
you stroke its hand

Baby's pupils react to light.



6 MONTHS

Tries to sit when hands are held

Hold arms out for cuddles

Can lift legs when lying down

Can hold a toy moving it from
hand to hand

Puts everything in mouth

Looks at objects closely

May 'make strange'

Recognises voices

Makes singing noises when content

Laughs when pleased

Screams when annoyed

Understands different tones of mum's
& dad's voices

May have his /her front tooth.

1 MONTH

Makes jerky movements with arms and legs

Turns head when corner of mouth touched

When held over a surface,
makes walking movements

Eyes follow dad's face

Blinks on sudden movement

Stares at bright colours

Turns head towards light

Begins to smile at 6 weeks.

1 YEAR

Can sit up from lying position

Crawls on hands and knees

Recognises known faces on other
side of room

Prefers toys that make sounds

Waves bye

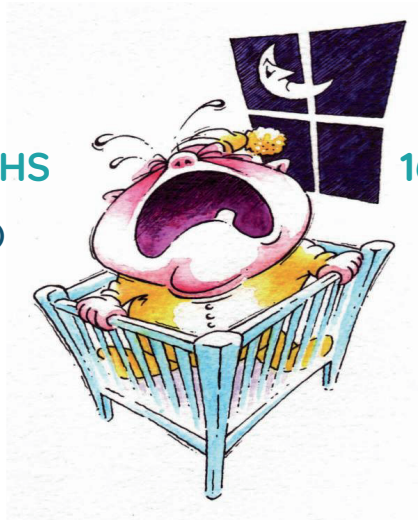
Responds to own name.

Teething

Although the times of teething vary according to each baby, on average general guidelines are as follows:

6-8 MONTHS
CENTRAL & LATERAL INCISORS
(4 FRONT TEETH)

12 - 16 MONTHS
1ST MOLAR
(BACK TOOTH)



16-20 MONTHS
CANINE
(EYE TOOTH)

21-30 MONTHS
2ND MOLAR
(LAST BACK TOOTH)

Symptoms include redness of baby's gums with more dribbling than usual, hot and red cheeks, tender gums, disturbed sleep and irritable behaviour as well as chewing fingers, hands or anything else they can get their mitts on!!

How can you help?

There are plenty of teething rings in the shops at reasonable prices that will ease their pain. Store teething rings in fridge to keep cool and gently rubbing cool water onto the gums can help.

Oral Health for Children Under 2 Years of Age

FROM BIRTH, CLEAN
YOUR CHILD'S
MOUTH USING A
DAMP CLOTH

START BRUSHING
AS SOON AS
THE 1ST TOOTH
APPEARS

BRUSH YOUR
CHILD'S TEETH
TWICE A DAY
ESPECIALLY AT
NIGHT USING A SOFT
TOOTHBRUSH WITH
A SMALL HEAD

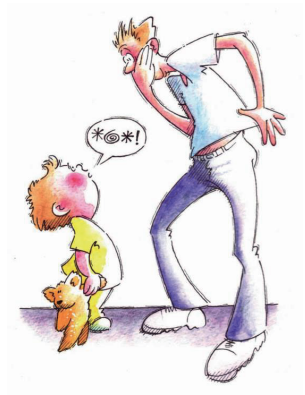
DO NOT USE
TOOTHPASTE –
UNLESS ADVISED BY
YOUR DENTAL TEAM

Sources: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/caring-for-teeth.html>.
<https://www.dentalcareireland.ie/blog/importance-baby-teeth/>

Your Child's Development (2-7 Years)

2 YEARS OLD

Still looks like a baby when asleep
but is probably walking, talking,
shouting, playing games with you
and laughing.



3-4 YEARS OLD

Your child can kick a ball and stop it, sit
on the loo, count to five, sort objects by
colour, understand what their birthday is
and get excited.

5-6 YEARS OLD

Knows a wide range of words
Continues to learn words
when adults name objects
Information books become
increasingly important
Learns to follow instructions
Starts conversation.

7 YEARS OLD

Can probably ride a bike without
stabilisers
Brush their teeth
Swim
May ask where babies come from
Able to add and take away
Spell basic words and write
simple sentences.

Source: Dad Pack (2008). Fatherhood Institute; www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

Positive Parenting

Positive parenting means bringing out the best in your child, by listening and understanding, praising and encouraging their efforts, noticing and rewarding good behaviour, and doing things together that you both enjoy. It also means that all the important adults in a child's life should work together in the child's best interest. This starts from the earliest days of your relationship with your child. It is often easy to point out where a child is going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. If we do this, we end up giving a child lots of attention for negative behaviour, rather than for the good behaviour we want them to develop. Your attention and praise are some of the biggest motivators for children. Praising good behaviour will influence your child's behaviour in a positive way. It will also make your child feel happy, loved, wanted and secure and these feelings will help them to develop life-long confidence and self-esteem.

Source: <https://www.tusla.ie/tsrif-nredlihc/roles-and-responsibilities/parents/what-can-i-do-to-keep-my-child-safe/positive-parenting>

Tips for Positive Parenting

- Talk to your baby. She will find your voice calming
- Answer when your baby makes sounds by repeating the sounds and adding words. This will help him learn to use language
- Read to your baby. This will help her develop and understand language and sounds
- Sing to your baby and play music. This will help your baby develop a love for music and will help his brain development
- Praise your baby and give her lots of loving attention
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby. This will help him feel cared for and secure.
- Play with your baby when she's alert and relaxed. Watch your baby closely for signs of being tired or fussy so that she can take a break from playing
- Distract your baby with toys and move him to safe areas when he starts moving and touching things that he shouldn't touch
- Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Parenting can be hard work! It is easier to enjoy your new baby and be a positive, loving parent when you are feeling good yourself



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/infants.html>

Food and Nutrition

Breast or Bottle?

Breastfeeding gives mother and baby many more advantages than formula milk. It is natural, free, and convenient and is designed specifically for the needs of the baby. Breastfed babies are less likely to overfeed and become overweight. Breast milk is environmentally friendly – it is a truly natural resource.

Why Breast Is Best

- Provides baby with more immunity against infections and diseases
- Nutritionally complete food until 6 months
- Easier to digest
- Protects against infection & allergies
- Aids bonding between mother & baby
- Breast milk is always available. It is hygienic, cheaper and needs less equipment
- Assists in mother's return to usual body shape.

Health Benefits for Babies

Less risk of:

- Stomach upsets
- Coughs & colds
- Ear infections
- Childhood diabetes
- Asthma & eczema
- Obesity
- High blood pressure & heart disease in later life.

Breastfed babies also have:

- Better mental development
- Better mouth formation & straighter teeth.

Source: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/publications/breastfeeding-in-a-healthy-ireland.pdf>

What is infant formula?

- Formula feed is made from cow's milk
- It mimics human breast milk
- It is modified to meet the nutritional needs of the growing infant
- It is suitable from birth to 1 year.

Types of infant formula

Formula for newborns such as Aptamil First, Cow & Gate First Infant Milk for Newborns, Farley's First, SMA Gold. These are:

- easiest to digest
- most suitable for newborns who are not breastfed.

Formula for 'hungrier babies' such as Cow & Gate Infant Milk for Hungry Babies, Aptamil Extra Hungry, Farley's Second, SMA White. These are:

- Less suitable for newborns
- Often used for 'hungrier' babies.

Source: Healthy First Steps: Good Nutrition from Pre- Pregnancy through to Infancy. Produced by Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service, Health Promotion Department, St. Brigid's Complex, Ardee, Co. Louth

Weaning



The Importance of Weaning

- Provides energy & nutrients for growth
- Helps speech development
- Encourages teeth growth
- Encourages self-feeding
- Establish healthy eating patterns for later life
- Social development.

Foods to Avoid before 6 Months

- Foods containing gluten e.g. bread, wheat, & oat-based foods/cereals, rusks, some variety of dried infant meals etc.
- Eggs
- Salt, stock cubes & packet sauces
- Sugar & honey
- Whole nuts & nut spreads
- Cow's milk, yogurt, fromage frais & cheese
- Citrus fruits & juices e.g. orange juice
- Fish & shellfish.

- **Do not add sugar or salt to food.**
- **Snacking on sugary food and drinks between meals may cause tooth decay.**

When to Start

Exclusively* breastfed

- 6 months

Formula fed

- 4-6 months

Not recommended

- Before 4 months or later than 6 months

**Receiving nothing except breast milk for 6 months.*

Stage 1 (4 - 6 Months)

Suitable Foods:

- Plain baby rice
- Puréed: Vegetables Fruit Meat/chicken

Suitable Drinks:

- Breast milk
- Formula milk
- Cooled boiled water

Consistency

- Puréed, no lumps.

Carrot and Potato Purée - Stage 1

Preparation: 25mins

Storage: Suitable for freezing; keeps up to 24 hours in the fridge. Babies love the sweet taste of carrot. Here, we have combined it with potato to provide extra calories.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced
- 100mls (3 1/2 fl oz) water
- Expressed breast milk or formula milk to thin

Put the water into a small pan and bring to the boil. Add the vegetables and cover. Bring back to the boil and simmer for about 10 minutes until tender. Purée the vegetables with the cooking water. Take out one portion to serve and thin with expressed breast milk or formula milk.

Makes 12-14 servings.

Stage 2 (6-9 months)

Foods now suitable:

- Well cooked eggs
- Other breakfast cereals
- Bread & pasta
- Cheese (pasteurised)
- Yogurt
- Pasteurised cow's milk in small amounts in foods.

Consistency

Minced or mashed to a less fine texture

Drinks now suitable:

- Breast Milk and/or Formula milk
- Cooled boiled water
- Diluted unsweetened pure fruit juice (1 part juice to 4-5 parts water)
- Introduce a free-flow or open-lidded cup.

Stage 3 (9-12 Months)

Suitable foods:

- Increase the variety of foods offered
- Most family foods are suitable

Consistency

- Chunky mashed texture
- Chopped into bite or finger size pieces.
This allows for self-feeding

Suitable drinks:

- Breast Milk and/or Formula milk
- Cooled boiled water
- Diluted unsweetened pure fruit juice (1 part juice to 4-5 parts water).

Tips to deal with fussy eating

- Avoid frequent snacks & drinks between meals
- Keep to regular mealtimes
- Keep portions small
- Give gentle encouragement & praise
- Stay calm & relaxed - remove food without commenting
- Keep offering the food
- Don't use food as a bribe or reward
- Never force food
- Vary the food
- Avoid distractions while eating, e.g. toys, television.

Foods to avoid (6 - 12 Months)

- Whole-nuts & peanut-containing products
- Undercooked eggs
- Unpasteurised cheese (will state "made with raw milk" on the label)
- Cow's milk as main drink
- Salt, stock cubes & packet sauces
- Sugar & honey.

Mince & Cheese Pasta - Stage 2

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 8oz milk
- 2 tablespoons grated cheddar cheese
- 4oz cooked minced meat
- 1 cup cooked pasta (e.g. macaroni)

Cook mince well. Boil pasta. Beat egg. Add milk and cheese to egg. Mix well - a blender is ideal. Add cheese sauce to the pasta and minced meat. Pour into a lightly greased ovenproof container. Bake in a 350F (180C, Gas 4) oven for about 30 minutes.

Makes 3 portions.

Chicken and Vegetable Stir - Fry - Stage 3

Stir-fried chicken breast is soft enough for infants to chew but note that other meats cooked in this way may be too tough.

Preparation: 30 minutes.

Storage: Keeps for up to 24 hours in the fridge

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ chicken breast, thinly sliced
- ½ tsp dried tarragon
- ½ red pepper, deseeded and thinly sliced
- 6 baby corn, sliced lengthways
- 3 tbsp frozen peas

Heat oil in a frying pan. Add the chicken slices and tarragon, and stir-fry for a few minutes. Add the red pepper and baby corn and continue to stir-fry over a gentle heat for 10-15 minutes until the chicken has cooked right through. Meanwhile, bring a small saucepan of water to the boil and add the peas. Reduce heat and simmer for 3-4 minutes until the peas are hot right through. Lift out with a slotted spoon and add to the stir-fry. Serve with rice, pasta or steamed potatoes.

Managing your child's behaviour

Behaviour management means finding ways of helping your child to behave. Positive behaviour management means giving your child attention when he behaves well, rather than punishing him when he doesn't.

Understanding your child's behaviour helps you to choose the best way to respond to it.

Old-fashioned punishment caused children to respond out of fear, but we now know that we are not at our best when we are anxious or fearful. When children feel safe, they behave better and learn better. What we also now know is that the human brain is wired for connection. Children need to feel emotionally close to their parents and they want you to be pleased with them. So, the more you can discipline in a way that keeps the communication lines open, the more your child is likely to respond. Children need limits to keep them physically and emotionally safe, but it's how we do it that makes the difference.

What do I do when my child's behaviour is not okay?

First of all, **HALT** and ask yourself, 'What is my child's behaviour trying to tell me?'

- H** Is my child **H**ungry or is there some other problem with his or her diet?
- A** Is my child **A**ngry, **A**gitated or **A**nxious?
- L** Is my child **L**onely or **iLL**?
- T** Is my child **T**ired?

What about when I feel stressed out?

It is really important to remember that you need to look after your own needs too. When you feel as though you're likely to 'flip the lid', give yourself a break. Ask yourself if any part of HALT fits for you too. Then take care of your needs for rest, food, reassurance or whatever it is. If you want to meet your child's needs, you have to first do the same for yourself. If you're running on empty, you won't have the energy you need to parent positively.

By taking time to stop (**HALT**) and think about your child's behaviour (and your own) is trying to tell you, you can sort out problems in a way that shows your child you value him or her and you value yourself.

Sources: <https://www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven/behaviour-management-for-your-child-an-introduction>
https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Parents_Parenting_skills_d3.pdf

Fatherhood

How do You Feel?

Coping with Stress

A simple way of understanding stress is to think of it in terms of the demands that are made of you and the resources you have to cope with those demands. The more that is asked of you and the less resources you have to cope, the more stressed you are likely to become as a result.

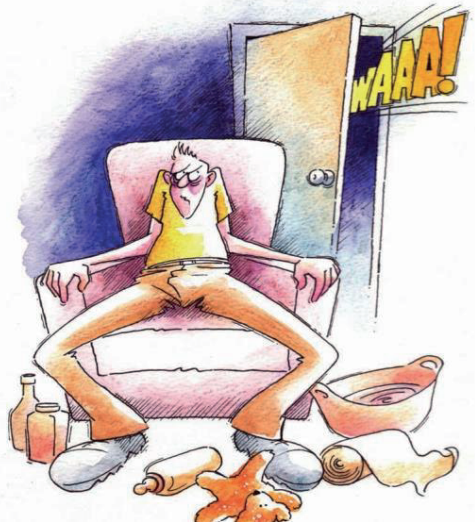
Although a bit of stress is healthy as it can make us more alert and prepared to act quickly and effectively, too much unchecked stress can leave us feeling depressed and anxious. If this continues, excessive stress may increase the risk of developing illnesses such as heart disease. Dealing with your stress will benefit you mentally and physically.

Not only does stress affect your mind, it harms your physical well-being and can knock your self-esteem too. Stress is not an effective way to deal with situations. Normally, situations aren't as bad as you think. And getting stressed just adds additional pressure to yourself and others.

Common Signs of Stress

- Eating more or less than normal.
- Mood swings.
- Poor concentration.
- Feeling tense or anxious.
- Low self-esteem.
- Not sleeping properly.
- Tiredness.
- Poor memory or forgetfulness.
- Excessive drinking and/or drug use.

Source: Haynes: *Men and Work Manual*: 2002



Ask yourself

- Is my thinking helping the situation?
- Is it really going to be that bad?
- What's the worst thing that can happen?



The good news is that there are positive steps you can take to deal with and manage stress, both at home and at work. Some tips are listed below to help eliminate the stressful 'it's the end of the world' thought patterns. They will help you to face tasks in a more positive and proactive way, clear your mind and reflect on what's important in life.

Diet & Lifestyle

Your diet and lifestyle will influence the amount of stress you feel. Exercising at least three times a week is medically proven to be the number 1 stress release. This could be extra quality time for you and your child as you could take part in activities that would benefit you both. Fruit and vegetables really boosts your immune system, especially in times of stress.

Drink plenty of water. Water really will help. Stress can dehydrate you, so, if you don't keep your water levels up, you'll feel more tired. This will help you concentrate better and stop you getting headaches, which can be caused by dehydration.

Avoid stimulants like coffee, energy drinks, alcohol and fizzy drinks, as well as sugary, fatty and salty foods and cigarettes as they will make you feel worse. As your child will mirror your actions, it is important for you to set a good example.

Relax

You also need to relax. Taking time to relax is an important but often neglected part of life. Slow down your life by devoting some time to yourself. Making time for yourself mentally and emotionally, as well as getting enough quality sleep is important so you can focus on relaxing your mind and recharging.

Sleep

One of the side-effects of stress is not being able to sleep. Sleepless nights can affect health, relationships, your job and even the ability to perform simple tasks. If you're having trouble falling asleep, try to carry out activities you are interested in to relieve some of the tension. Try to get eight hours sleep every night in order for your mind and body to function the way you want and need them to.

Take control of your breathing

Whenever you feel things are rushing by you, sit back and take four or five deep breaths, and count to ten to get an instant de-stress. After a while, your body gets so used to breathing deeply whenever it goes into stress mode that you'll do it without realising it.

Talk It Out

Talking about stress with family, friends or colleagues may help you see things in a different light and find a way forward in tackling the underlying problems. You may also want to consider talking to a healthcare professional, such as your GP or practice nurse.



Alcohol and Drugs

Excessive use of alcohol and the use of drugs will heighten your stress rate, so it is important to be sensible with what you put in your body. Alcohol is a depressant and drugs only provide a temporary escape. Remember your body and mind work together.

Practice Safe Sex

If you are in a relationship, it is a good idea to have a chat with your partner and work out what contraception to use in the future.

You may need to find out more information about the contraception you are using or maybe you need to use another type of contraception.

The rate of sexually transmitted infections is soaring in Ireland. Always use a condom (keep a supply handy) and take responsibility for your behaviour.

You could talk to your doctor or visit your nearest family planning clinic.

Or log on to <https://www.ifpa.ie/> or <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/> for more information.

(Please see resources at the back of this Booklet)

Effects of Passive Smoking

It has been estimated that the total nicotine dose received by children whose parents smoke is equivalent to their actively smoking between 60 and 150 cigarettes per year. The smoking habits of parents may be the most important influence on whether the children themselves become active smokers in adolescence. Avoiding smoking during pregnancy and after the child is born, offers an opportunity to reduce significantly the risk of illness in your children.

Effects of Drinking in Front of Children

You Are the Most Powerful Influence on Your Child's Behaviour.

Underage drinking can have serious consequences. You can protect your children from the risks associated with drinking by maintaining open communication and expressing a clear, consistent message about alcohol. Building a close relationship with your kids will encourage them to come to you for help in making decisions that impact their health and well-being.

Sources: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15751938/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/alcohol/young-people-and-alcohol/setting-boundaries.html>

Postnatal Depression

Postnatal Depression is what happens when a woman becomes depressed after having a baby. It can be particularly distressing for some women when they have been looking forward during the pregnancy to having the baby. They may feel guilty for feeling like this, or even feel that they can't cope with being a mother. It can last for weeks or several months. Mild PND can be improved by increased support from family and friends, more severe PND will need help from a GP, health visitor or, in some cases, mental health professionals. Around 1 in every 10 women has PND after having a baby.

How does it feel to have PND?

- Depressed (feeling low and unhappy most of the time)
- Irritable (with other children, your own child and often your partner)
- Tired & Sleepless (exhausted but unable to sleep)
- Loss of appetite
- Guilty (causes negative feelings)
- Not interested in sex (takes away any desire or enthusiasm)
- Anxious (afraid to be alone with baby, feel detached from baby & unable to work out what baby needs or feels).

Source: <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/post-natal-depression>

Premenstrual Tension

Many women go through various physical and emotional changes just before and during their period. These symptoms, which usually begin 7-14 days prior to a period are known as either Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) or Premenstrual Tension (PMT). Symptoms include:

Tender swollen breasts
Headaches
Stomach cramps and bloating
Feeling irritable
Mood swings and depression

Tearfulness
Food cravings
Acne outbreaks
Weight gain

You and Your Money

When you have financial problems it's natural to feel your life is spiraling out of control. Money worries are one of the biggest causes of stress, potentially having a negative effect on you and your child. It is important that you take control of your money situation so that you have a platform built for your child.



Seven golden rules are listed below to help you control your money:

1. Take control of the situation
2. Budgeting is important
3. Make the most of your income
4. Cut down on your spending
5. Create a personal budget (Downloadable from MABS)
6. Create a spending diary (Downloadable from MABS)
7. Manage your money wisely

Budget Planning

Budgeting is the art of keeping your spending under control, which is perhaps not as simple as it sounds. It is a very useful skill to have and will help to make life that little bit easier. Wherever your money comes from, make sure you know where it's going!

But cutting your expenses doesn't have to mean cutting out your social life – you can still have fun and keep a roof over your head.

Why Budget?

- Identifies where you can save money
- Shows you and other people that you are handling your money wisely
- Gives you an accurate picture of your finances.



Source: MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service (Ireland)) <http://www.mabs.ie/>

Self Esteem - You and Your Child

Your self-esteem is something greater than the normal 'ups and downs' of daily living. Self esteem is largely developed during childhood, so it is vital for you as a father to recognise the significance that self-esteem has on how your child develops. Children should grow up learning to talk about their feelings and not keeping everything bottled up.



Childhood experiences that may determine self-esteem include the following:

Healthy Self Esteem	Low Self Esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being praised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being harshly criticised
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being listened to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being yelled at or beaten
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being spoken to respectfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being ignored, ridiculed or teased
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving attention and hugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being expected to be 'perfect' all the time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiencing success in sports or school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiencing failures in sports or school
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having trustworthy and loyal friends	

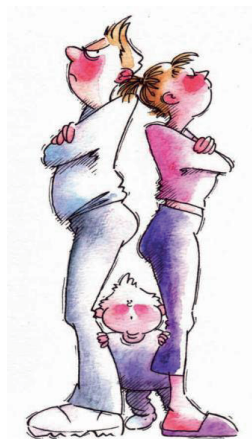
Source: Better Self-Esteem, University of Texas, The Counselling and Mental Health Centre, 1999)

Young People's Survival Guide

Your Relationships

Spending time with other people is a major part of most of our lives. The word 'relationship' means 'relate to' so it is not just about sexual relationships, but also about families, friends, work mates, the people we live with, hang around with, even the people that we try to avoid! Good relationships can make us feel great and get us through the bad times.

However, relationships are rarely perfect - all relationships go through bad times. Not getting on with someone - whether you are ignoring each other or it's out and out war - can really hurt. Talking things through with the other person is worth a try, but that isn't always easy. Try asking someone that you both trust to be there too, to help both of you listen to each other as well as each of you having the chance to talk about how you feel.



What should you do if it all falls apart?

Your relationship with your child is for life — even if you or your partner have fallen out of love. If you continue to have a relationship with your child they will recover better from the split. They are also likely to have better mental health and less likely to get into trouble later in life. The worst thing you can do, is to walk away and try to forget.

The single, most important thing that you can do for your children is to do everything in your power to have the best possible relationship with the mother of your child. If they see the two of you getting along and supporting each other, they will mirror you and will likely get along with each other and their friends. Every single ounce of energy that you put into your relationship with their mother will come back to you tenfold through your children.

On the other hand, children are also great imitators of less than perfect behaviour. If they see the two of you arguing constantly, calling each other names, putting each other down, or hitting each other, you will probably see them repeating these negative behaviours. They will probably feel insecure, and this insecurity might be reflected in poor grades, bad behaviour at school or home, or even depression. If the two of you are going through a rough period, work on your relationship. The entire family will benefit, not just the two of you.

Make Peace

Communication is really important; it's often poor communication that makes relationships go wrong in the first place. The key to a successful separated parenting relationship is the same as for a successful marriage: a good relationship with your child's mother. No matter how bad things are, try and heal any rifts and move to a respectful and supportive relationship.

Feeling fed up?

Difficult feelings and difficult times affect everyone during their life. Sometimes we sort out problems for ourselves; sometimes we need to let off steam to a friend or spend a few hours away from our problems to see them in a different light.

Sometimes we need more than that. If you are worried about a problem, finding it hard to deal with difficult feelings such as guilt, jealousy, anger, depression or simply just feel confused or in need of help, there are people you can go to who can help you (see the contacts listed at the back of the booklet).

Sources: The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Marriage 2001 by Hilary Rich Helaina Laks Kravitz, M.D

Young People's Survival Guide to York <http://www.yorksurvivalguide.co.uk/sexual-health/sexual-health-and-young-men/2008>.

The Legal Situation

Guardianship

Guardianship are rights and duties that a parent may have in respect of a child. For example, a guardian has the right to make decisions about the major areas of the child's life such as religion, school, adoption, consent to medical treatment, getting a passport and decisions about taking the child out of the country, where the child lives and other matters affecting the welfare of the child.

In Ireland, a father who is not married to the mother of his baby has **no automatic rights at birth** in relation to his child. This is the case even if his name is on the birth certificate or even if he is paying maintenance for his child. However, if the mother agrees, the father can become a joint guardian by both parents signing a form in front of a Commissioner of Oaths or a Peace Commissioner.

An unmarried father can also get **automatic** guardianship if he has lived with the mother of his child for at least 12 continuous months, 3 months of which must be after the birth of the child.

If none of these situations apply to you, you may need to go to court to get your guardianship rights. In this case, legal advice and representation is advisable. Contact details for solicitor firms is available on the website of the Law Society of Ireland (www.lawsociety.ie).

If you would like more information about **how to become a guardian** of your child contact Treoir's Information Service at 01-6700120 or go to www.treoir.ie.

Access

If you have a right of access to a child in Ireland, you have the right to spend time with the child and to take the child out for specified periods of time. You may also have the right to have the child stay overnight with you or go on holidays with you.

When the parents of a child cannot agree on access rights, the courts will decide. The welfare of the child will be the most important factor in the courts' decision. In general, the courts consider that it is very important for the welfare of a child that it should have a relationship with both its parents, and they are slow to deny access rights to the natural parent of a child. A father may apply for access whether or not he is a guardian. He can do this even if his name is not on the child's birth certificate, and even where his application for joint guardianship has been turned down. Unless there are unusual circumstances, the unmarried mother is usually granted custody of her child and the unmarried father is granted access rights.

Custody

Custody is having the responsibility for the day-to-day care of a child. When the parents of a child in Ireland cannot agree on who should have custody of the child, the court will decide. When the court is making its decision, the most important factor is the well-being of the child. This includes the child's religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social welfare with their safety and happiness being central. In general, if the parents of the child are unmarried, the court judges what's the best living arrangement for the child. However, the courts will usually grant a right of access to the unmarried father so that he can have regular contact with his child.

Sources: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth_family_relationships/cohabiting_couples/legal_guardianship_and_unmarried_couples.html www.tpsp.ie

Child Maintenance

Both parents are legally responsible for financially maintaining their child up to the child is 18 years of age, or up to 23 years of age if they are still in education.

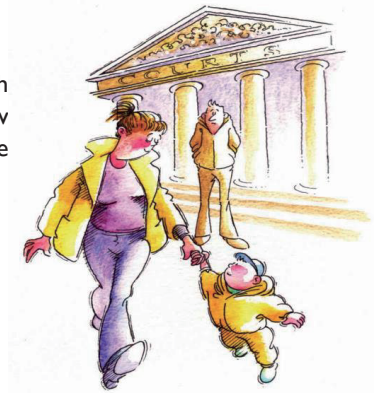
Maintenance can be agreed informally, or through family mediation, or through the courts.

A mediator or Judge will assess both parents' income and outgoings to decide on a child maintenance payment that is payable to the custodial parent

Social Welfare

If you are an unmarried parent and your child lives with you as part of your household and your income is below a certain level, you can apply for certain social welfare benefits.

If you wish to talk to someone about any legal issue or social welfare issues, ring Treoir on 01-6700120 www.treoir.ie



Remember...

Care for yourself or you can't take care of your child. Eat well, sleep well, exercise, don't drink excessively or use drugs.

Always be on time and respectful when picking up and dropping off your child.

Help your child's mother out whenever you can so she feels supported by you.

It's important to keep up with your child maintenance payments. Child maintenance is how you help to meet your child's needs.

Keep copies of letters, records of gifts etc. If you don't see your children, one day you'll want to explain how much you thought about them.

Only go to court as a last resort. Try mediation first. Your relationship may be a mess, but exposing it to an expensive, mudslinging, slow, legal system may make matters worse.

Don't use your children to get to their mother. Don't quiz them about their mother or send messages to her through them. Never say unpleasant things about her in front of them.

<p>Family Mediation Service Head Office Legal Aid Board Quay Street Cahirciveen Co. Kerry</p> <p>Tel: 066 9471000 LoCall: 1890 615 200 www.legalaidboard.ie</p>	<p>Free Legal Advice Clinics Head Office 85/86 Dorset Street Upper Dublin 1</p> <p>Tel: 01 8745690 www.flac.ie/help/centres/</p>	<p>Legal Aid Law Centres Head Office Legal Aid Board Quay Street Cahirciveen Co. Kerry</p> <p>Tel: 066 9471000 LoCall: 1890 615 200 www.legalaidboard.ie/en/cont-act-us/find-a-law-centre/</p>
<p>Teen Parents Support Programme Tel: 087 2518428 www.tpssp.ie</p>	<p>Treoir Tel: 01 6700120 www.treoir.ie</p>	<p>One Family Tel: 01 6629212 https://onefamily.ie/</p>
<p>From Lads to Dads Tel: 085 1835935 Email: Fromladstodads18@gmail.com</p>	<p>Tusla Family & Community Support https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/family-support/</p>	<p>Your Mental Health Local Support Services https://www2.hse.ie/services/mental-health/services-search/</p>

The Samaritans Freephone 116 123 www.samaritans.org	AWARE Support with Depression Tel: 1800 804848 www.aware.ie	GROW Mental Health Recovery Tel: 1890 474 474 https://grow.ie/
Citizen Information Centres Tel: 0761 07 4000 https://centres.citizensinformation.ie/	MABS Money Advice Service Tel: 0761 07 2000 https://www.mabs.ie/en/contact/	Quit Smoking Tel: 1850 201 203 https://www2.hse.ie/quit-smoking/support-services/
Alcoholics Anonymous Find a meeting Tel: 018420700 www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie/aa-meetings/find-a-meeting.299.html	Emergency Services Tel: 999 or 112	Men's Aid Supporting men and their families experiencing domestic violence Tel: 01 5543811 www.mensaid.ie/

Treoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children, has produced leaflets for unmarried parents on issues such as Guardianship, Access, Custody of Children and Shared Parenting. www.treoir.ie

FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) is an independent, voluntary organisation that operates a network of legal advice clinics throughout the country. These clinics are confidential, free of charge and open to all. Contact your nearest Citizens Information Centre for information on FLAC services in your area. FLAC also runs an information and referral line during office hours for basic legal information. FLAC has produced a series of basic leaflets on various areas of law which may be useful. These are available from your local Citizens Information Centre and from FLAC or can be downloaded from the FLAC website.

The Family Mediation Service can enable couples who have decided to separate to negotiate their own terms of agreement, while addressing the needs and interests of all involved. The service is free.

To enquire whether you are eligible for **Legal Aid**, contact your nearest law centre. The law centre staff will assess your means and advice on financial eligibility. Legal Aid is not free, and everyone must pay some contribution towards costs.

Notes

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For Further Information Contact:

National Manager, Teen Parents Support Programme

Treoir, 28 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1

Email: tpsp@treoir.ie Tel 087-2518428

www.tpsp.ie

Treoir

The National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children

28 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1

Email: info@treoir.ie Tel 01 6700 120

www.treoir.ie

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