



Top tips

for parents with children 8-12 years of age

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No matter what their age, our children always need our help, support and guidance to help them make the right choices in their life. The 8-12 age group is no exception. The transition from a young child to a pre-teen comes with a rollercoaster of challenges for both child and parents but we've got some useful tips to guide you along the way.

First and foremost, it is so important to show your child how much you love them – they need it, want it and it gives them a sense of security and helps build on their feelings of self-worth. Like adults, children are more likely to respond better to correction from people they have a strong connection with.

1. Remember they really do want and need your help

Your child is rapidly developing their ability to understand their environment. They are beginning to think logically and practise working things out for themselves. While they are becoming increasingly independent they are still happy to cooperate with you. They are reliant on adults and other children to learn and practise their social and emotional skills. At this time, you will still need to help your child make the right decisions, think things through and reflect on how it went afterwards.

2. Help your child to develop their own sense of right and wrong

Encourage your child to be responsible for their decisions, thinking and feelings. Affirm their ability to think logically and creatively and point out that you still love them even when they disagree with you. Work with your child and their personality to help them develop those feelings and teach them to respect others and themselves.

3. Make clear rules and stick with them

Typically a child of this age group is starting to understand, apply and insist on the application of rules in order to make sense of the world and live with others. You will frequently hear 'it's not fair'. This kind of testing behaviour is not a deliberate challenge and can be both positive and negative. Talk to them about what you expect and provide reasons as this will help them to think through what to do in most situations, in particular when pressured by peers. Also, allow them to be part of some wider family rules/choices, which allows them to feel included and listened to.



4. **Pick your battles**



Prioritise working on your child's behaviours/problems that are the biggest cause for concern and focus only on the most important at any time. Always maintain your patience, so channel your inner Elsa (Frozen) and "Let it go". Try to give appropriate consequences for any behaviour that is not acceptable and make sure you follow through if things haven't worked out well, so they can see that you really mean what you say.

5. **Think long term**

You are raising your child to become an adult. You need to consider what personal skills they will need to become independent and reach their full potential. You need to help your child develop these life skills such as learning about being accountable for their actions, how to control themselves, being able to build themselves back up after a set-back, listening and speaking out, and understanding and respecting others.

6. **Positive praise**

Your child is going through big changes, they may seem to act very grown up one moment and then very immature the next. You will need to help them understand how to behave. Children respond well to praise and it will help them build up their self-esteem. They will make lots and lots of mistakes as they learn and practise, so stay focussed on this tool and praise what is going well and when it isn't, forgive their mistakes and move on. Also praise them for just being themselves, however little it is.



7. **Keep communicating**

It is really important to find time and opportunities to listen and show you are interested in what they are saying, especially if you think there may be problems they want to tell you about. It sends such a positive message to them. During this age group, they may also start to have their own opinions and it is good to discuss these and be respectful of their opinions even if you may not necessarily agree.

8. **Be clear about your boundaries**

Do set appropriate boundaries and give clear instructions. Explain reasoning and involve your child in setting any rules and punishments. Abide by the rules and if they are broken let them know it is the behaviour or action you are unhappy about, not them. For example, if your child hits their brother or sister, explain how that will hurt them and explore with your child why they may have acted in that way.

9. **Online safety**

Make sure you know what your child is doing online. Educate yourself about the apps that they want to use before you let them download them. Teach your child about the dangers of the internet and help them to understand how they can use it safely. Make sure you use your other skills such as setting online boundaries, and keeping their equipment in a room that is used by all the family. Always keep an open dialogue with your child and encourage them to talk to you about anything that makes them worried or upset.

10. You are the role model

Parents/carers are the most influential people in your child's life, so don't just tell them but show them by example. Take an active interest in your child and you will know who they are, what they are doing and who they are spending time with. It also shows your child how much you value them.

11. Practise self-control

By controlling our own impulsive reactions we develop better judgment, patience and persistence that gives us strength, stability, influence and status as a parent. By displaying this type of behaviour, you are strengthening their understanding of what is and is not appropriate behaviour.



12. Work together

Each of you will need to negotiate and compromise with one another. Using directives i.e. 'Do this/don't do that' has two responses, obedience or defiance which can create feelings of resentment, dominance, lack of respect and distance in relationships. Always work together and allow them to be part of the choices that affect them. Growing up can be a challenge to a child and they need you to be physically and emotionally present to guide and support and help them re-balance when it all feels tough and too much.

13. Identify and sustain your own support network

'It takes a village to raise a child' and trusted family, friends and professionals can help support both you and your child. They will offer practical help, advice or emotional support when the going gets tough.

14. Keep connected

Parents often feel marginalised in their child's life as they become more independent, especially moving towards the teenage years. Keep communication lines open, share experiences, and remember and reminisce about past events to help maintain their sense of belonging, and retain your presence in their lives.



Always look after your own physical and mental wellbeing as you will not be able to support your child's needs if you are not taking care of your own.

Children need **RESPECT**

Role models to learn from

Empathy

Safety from physical and emotional harm

Positives, praise, prospects

Emotional literacy and regulation guidance

Consistency, compromise, compassion

Trust, tolerance, time



For more information and
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 gov.wales/giveittime



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