



Strategic  
Parenting

# STRESS-FREE PARENTING GUIDE

7 Ways To “De-Stress” Your Family And  
Create a Peaceful Home



# PREFACE

Today, parents are stressed more than ever before.

The pace of life seems faster every year, you have more and more obligations and commitments, expectations are always higher and the circles around your eyes are getting darker and darker.

Some of you have told me that as soon as you finish work and come home, your second job begins, and there's no break between the two.

And even though you're spreading yourself thin, trying to stay on top of things, you still fail to keep up. Some things get "swept under the carpet", some get put off until tomorrow, and you often pray things will just sort themselves out.

All of this leads to family conflict and even more stress.

You hurry, trying to be on time, the minutes tick by too quickly, you're anxious, and when things go wrong or simply don't go as planned, you feel like a failure.

You argue with your children and search for better solutions with your partner. You try to plan things so that you might finally be able to enjoy time together as a family.

If everyone just did as they were told, if no one dragged their feet, if your children stopped being stubborn, you wouldn't waste time and energy arguing about daily tasks and chores. . .

If, if, if . . .



If you're constantly on the go, constantly trying your best even though it never seems to be enough, it's no surprise you're feeling down and that your annoyance and dissatisfaction affect the other members of your family.

But there doesn't seem to be any way around it. You have a job, and a bottomless pit of housework, and children with three or even four extracurricular activities. They need your help with their schoolwork, and you want their help with the housework, you have to keep in touch with your extended family, help resolve conflicts and arguments . . .

And in the middle of all this, when do you have time for yourself and your partner? Oh, that's right—you always come last.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

With a few simple changes to your outlook and daily routine, you can significantly reduce the amount of stress you feel every day.

And this book will help you.

Help you see what you spend too much energy on, what you worry about too much, and to help you replace anxiety with a more peaceful, harmonious atmosphere at home.

Enjoy the read and good luck!

- Marko Juhant



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# PARENTING HACK #1: WHAT MATTERS MOST

If you haven't yet picked up a pen and piece of paper, now is the time to do so.

Your task is simple. Use the numbers 1-5 to write down your most important priorities.

Your list could look something like this:

1. raising and supporting my children
2. work duties
3. time for my partner
4. looking after our home
5. time for extended family

Your list might look like this, or it might be different. But I have to tell you there are some key issues with the list above.

## **Where is “time for self-care”?**

Let's start at the beginning. You've forgotten to make time to look after yourself—you, the mum or dad who is reading this.

And taking care of yourself must be on the list. You know how, on the plane, they always tell you to put your own oxygen mask on before helping the people around you?



The same logic applies to families, too. If you're stressed and exhausted, can't find time for the most basic self-care and rest, and are on the edge of falling apart, you can't possibly look after anyone else in your family.

The second problem with the list above is that spending time with your partner is so far down the list. As you can see, it doesn't say "overindulging your partner", "going on holiday with your partner", "daily massages" or even "going around town with your partner". All it mentions is spending time together—the absolute basics.

And even though everything I've just mentioned is a must for a healthy relationship, all I'm talking about at the moment is a little time, attention, and affection on a daily basis between you and your partner.

Who was there before your children? Who did you intentionally choose as your life companion? And who will remain when your children have "flown the nest"?

Who wipes your tears when you argue with your kids, and gives you a warm hug at the end of a difficult day? And who is the person who'll take the reins when you need a rest?

Your better half, your partner in parenting and in life, has to stay high up on your list of priorities.

There is a second reason why this is important, too.

You might have already read an article of mine, in which I talk about how harmful a "child-centric" family structure is—when the parents and everything about the family revolves around the child, changing and adjusting everything for them.

There has never been a society in which children were put in first OR in last place that thrived. Quite simply, neither system works.



The parents are the centre of the universe, and your children are your satellites, revolving and rotating around you, adapting to you and your life—not the other way around.

So when an issue arises that will ruin your plans—for example, you planned to go on a date on Thursday afternoon, but your child forgot about an important project they have to do for school—it shouldn't even be an issue.

Your date with your partner should go ahead as planned, seeing as your child should have taken care of their schoolwork on time.

The most important thing on your list is raising and supporting your children—and you won't believe it, but from a parenting point of view, the following situation is the best thing you could do for your child.

You can show support by saying:

*"We can't help you now because we have a date planned."*

*"Yeah, but I forgot and if I don't finish this by tomorrow, my teacher's going to kill me!"*

*"Now, now, she's not literally going to kill you, but there'll probably be some kind of consequences. But you've still got some time to fix the situation. So, what're you going to do?"*

*"Well, I don't know . . . I guess I could try to do it now?"*

*"That sounds like a great plan. Do as much as you can, and we'll see you when we get back."*

And so you ensured you had a nice, relaxing afternoon, and you avoided a stressful evening, labouring over your child's forgotten homework.



The question “*So what are you going to do?*” will make them start thinking about how they could solve the problem themselves. The wheels will start turning and because you encouraged them to try independently, they’ll probably also succeed.

But even if they don’t, let your child experience the natural consequences of their actions.

This is the quickest and most effective way for them to learn that if they don’t take care of their own tasks and obligations, then no one will, and leaving them undone will have consequences.

Next time, they’ll be more diligent about remembering homework, and you’ll still be able to enjoy a date with your partner—it’s a win-win situation!

## **Parenting, not the children, should come first**

This is another point which often causes confusion.

There is an important difference between saying that you children come first and saying that parenting comes first.

And comprehending the difference can be the most confusing and stressful thing of all.

If the child comes first, the entire family schedule changes to suit their wants, demands, hobbies, obligations, and so on.

You’ll end up running around from morning till dusk, making sure they don’t have to do any hard work themselves, making sure they don’t experience any discomfort, ensuring they enjoy themselves all the time, and get everything they want.





You'll end up spending a lot of time arguing with them and reminding them to do their homework and begging them to do their chores. You know, all those stressful things.

But if parenting comes first, then this whole picture looks quite different.

You'll make time for important parenting moments, for milestones, turning points, support and love, and use this time wisely.

You'll invest a lot of time and energy into showing your children model behaviour, cooperation, and self-initiative so that you'll be able to spend less and less energy doing this as they grow up.

And you won't waste your energy on saving your child's ass, catering to their every whim. These things don't hold any real parenting value, they don't prove that you love your child, and they don't benefit them or you.

All these things are nothing more than black holes consuming parental time and energy that you're never going to get back. And because your child has no less than 500 wishes a day, it will never be enough, no matter what you do.

So think carefully about your priority list—what will you write in first (and second) place? Is your goal to raise a happy and successful individual, or become their slave and servant?

If your goal is to raise happy and successful children, you have to spend most of your energy and focus on satisfying their needs, not fulfilling their wishes.

They have less needs than wishes and the most important ones are feeling safe and loved, having social interactions, being challenged . . . It's possible to satisfy these needs without turning your life upside down.

This is the difference between parenting and spoiling your children.



## Looking after the house is important, but possibly not in the way you imagine

*Of course* you shouldn't live in a "pigsty". *Of course* the family should ensure a general degree of cleanliness and tidiness at home.

After all, we have to set a good example for our children about what a tidy home looks like and how to look after their own home when they're adults.

But this doesn't mean that your home has to be as spotless and sterile as a laboratory and that you feel pressured to live up to your neighbours, in-laws, or the president's standards.

Your home only needs to be clean and tidy enough to be functional. Only this is important and, especially during your first years of parenthood, often the most you can expect of yourself.

If your day goes smoothly and no one wastes time looking for things—meaning everyone can get themselves dressed, the kitchen and bathroom are functional enough to be used independently—then that is enough.

If you're in a dilemma, wondering whether to get one more wash load done before bed, or whether to read your child a bedtime story—the answer should be obvious. A bedtime story is always more important!

If you can't decide between emptying the dishwasher and wiping down the kitchen, or relaxing on the sofa with a cup of tea to talk about your day with your partner—quality time with your significant other will always be more important.

And if these things really match your priority list, at the end of the day you'll feel happy and successful, not tense and stressed, even if the laundry and dishes are still dirty or your child fell asleep after story time with their pyjamas on backwards.



# PARENTING HACK #2:

## PEACEFUL DAYS FORMULA

This is one of the most basic and frequent pieces of advice that can benefit everyone, not just stressed parents.

Let me outline why this is so important. I'm going to use a real example from when I helped organise a diverse, whole-day family event in the local park.

The turnout was huge—around ten thousand parents and children showed up. All together, we put up around 600-700 foam blocks, which are nice and sturdy without being dangerous.

Then we compared the children's behaviour—do they act differently if the blocks are organised into structures, or not.

When the blocks were lying in unorganised heaps, the same thing happened over and over again. Preschool children would come up to the blocks, kick them, move them around, possibly shout a bit and throw a couple of them, before their parents dragged them away.

All the time we were observing their behaviour.

When school children came by and noticed the blocks lying there, they first checked to see if they're allowed to play with them, and then they started building things with them straight away.

Some of them built towers, others walls. But mostly, they all wanted to build something as tall as possible.



The third phase started when more preschool children came around and saw the block towers and organised structures, built by us or the older children.

When the preschool children encountered these organised structures, the first thing they did was demolish them. Each and every preschool child that came by knocked the constructions down, but without any sort of aggression.

They knocked them down, then used the blocks to build their own towers and shapes.

Without any over excitedness or shouting. Why? Because they'd seen and understood what the foam blocks were for.

Without needing instructions, they understood what was required of them, what was allowed, and even how to use the blocks.

The same thing happens when you show your children the structures in your home and family life.

Having structure in their home environment helps children immensely and gives them nonverbal instructions about the order of your family life.

If your days are generally hectic, unpredictable, and always different, then it's normal for your child to resist you every step of the day. How can there be any sense of stability and peace like that?

## **What does “structure” even mean?**

What kind of structure and order am I even talking about?

I'm not talking about spotless shelves, clean floors, and tidy wardrobes. Establishing order at home starts by setting important times, places, and activities.



That means clearly deciding what, where, and when something is done. These are the basic elements of establishing order in our homes.

It's important to decide:

- at what times important things happen (waking up, going to bed, lunch, tidying, homework, play time)
- where these things take place and where things belong (play in the bedroom, hang out in the living room, eat in the kitchen, work in the garden or garage, homework at the kitchen table, toys belong in boxes, books on shelves, clothes in wardrobes, etc.)
- what has to be done (brushing teeth, showering, meals, studying, tidying, looking after pets, etc.)

If you want to create a morning routine, because at the moment every morning is a circus show, you have to go step by step:

1. decide a time when everyone wakes up;
2. you always have to have the same hygiene routine;
3. breakfast takes place at the same time every day in the kitchen (not in front of the TV);
4. clothes are always set out the day before and are always in the same place;
5. school bags are prepared the day before and, in the morning, are always in the same place, and so on.

Structure and a predictable routine will ensure a couple of useful things: firstly, you won't waste any more time repeating your instructions, nagging and hurrying—instead, your children will know exactly what to do. Secondly, children feel safe in environments they know because they know what to expect. This also results in less bad behaviour.



Your children know what to expect and, more importantly, what is expected of them. When things happen in the same way every day, there is no confusion—they have strong, clear nonverbal instructions.

This is also the first thing I mention in family counselling.

If the basic things aren't going smoothly, that's what you have to focus on first.

Everyday activities and tasks should be "automatic" and shouldn't require additional energy from you.

It might take some time for you to establish order and structure. If the family never really had a timetable, then your children will probably put up a fight at first, and you'll need time to adjust, too. But believe me, your effort will pay off a hundred-fold.

I advise you don't change everything at once, but go about adding structure to your day step by step, starting with your mornings. When you decide to change something, be consistent until you succeed.

New habits take around 3-4 weeks to become routine, so even if it's difficult at the beginning, you have to persevere for at least that long.

If you think that's too long, look at it this way: in just 4 weeks' time, you'll have a stress-free morning routine—no more yelling or stress. I think you'll find your efforts will be worth it.

## **Your partner also helps establish order at home**

In the previous chapter I mentioned that situation with dirty dishes versus relaxing on the sofa with your partner.

I'm not sure what your partner would do in reality while you read a bedtime story to your child, but it's more than possible that they'd sort out the dishes you didn't have time for.



When you decide to create a routine at home, make sure that the duties and responsibilities are divided fairly and that both partners look after your children and your home.

If you don't both help out, then one of you will be completely exhausted, while the other either won't do anything to help or won't even recognise their partner is distressed and overworked.

Both partners need to be part of creating order at home, and they have to divide the work among themselves fairly so that neither feel taken advantage of.

And pay attention: if you're both high on each other's priority lists, then dividing duties shouldn't be a problem. Just be honest with each other about how much you can really take on and what you need help and support with.

## **PARENTING HACK #3:**

### **LESS NAGGING IN 20 MINUTES A DAY**

Now is the time to look at your planner. Have you scheduled important meetings, birthdays, doctor appointments, beauty treatments and mechanics, family and friend get-togethers?

And have you also scheduled time to spend with your children? Many parents will answer "no".

Firstly, because they feel like their children are always with them. Secondly, because they feel like they spend all of their free time with them anyway.

There's a problem with both reasons.



Firstly, just because you're physically in the same room, that doesn't mean you're actually spending time together. They watch TV while you hang the laundry, both silently doing your own thing—and this isn't quality time.

And despite spending a lot of time like this, you don't actually pay each other any attention and you don't nurture your relationship.

The problem with feeling like you spend all your time with your children anyway is twofold: you shouldn't spend all your free time with your children, and, in reality, you probably don't.

As a result, even though you're "always home" and "always available", your children still seek your attention.

They tug at your sleeve when you *really* don't have time, when you're in a hurry, which makes you feel guilty for spending time doing housework and other important things instead of focusing on them.

If you often find yourself in the situation above, and especially if you have more than one child, then I have some advice for you.

When you structure your day, include a 20-minute walk that you dedicate entirely to your child. If you have two children, then make time for two 20-minute walks—separate walks for each of them.

Walk together for 10 minutes in one direction away from your home, in any direction. It doesn't matter if you live in a city or a village or a town . . . Just so long as the traffic situation is safe.

Walk with your child, without a shopping bag, phone, or dog's lead. And if you meet a neighbour who wants you to stop and chat, just tell them: "*I'm very sorry, but I don't have time right now.*"

Your attention is focused solely on one person—the child you're walking with. All you need is 20 minutes. 10 minutes in one direction, regardless of the weather, unless it's actually dangerous to go outside.





If there's a terrible thunderstorm, then stay at home. But if it's only raining, put on some rubber boots, waterproof trousers, a raincoat, and grab an umbrella.

If it's very cold, wrap up warm and grab your gloves, scarf, winter hat . . . And if the sun is too hot, just use your umbrella for shade. In many places around the world, using a sun umbrella is totally normal.

In short, devote yourself to your child. This doesn't mean that you spend 20 minutes giving them life lectures or telling them about what your grandma once told you. This means letting your child lead the conversation and focusing on their questions.

And if they don't ask you anything for 5, 6 minutes, and you're already nearing the middle of your walk . . .

Just tell them that you feel good—because you love them and they love you, and it's nice to share comfortable silence with them. And that's it—just walk together.

*"It's just you and me. Let's go! Isn't this great?"* And your child gets what they need. They feel important simply by being there with you. Because you "chose" them to go for a walk with you.

It gives them a chance to tell you what's going on in their life, how their friends are, if they have any problems, what they've been doing lately, and what they're interested in.

And the results?



## **#1 Your child will receive your undivided attention every day and satisfy their need to have you all to themselves, even if it's just for 20 minutes.**

So they'll stop trying to get your attention at a bad time, in inappropriate ways, when you're busy. And they won't feel deprived.

This also means less attention-seeking behaviour, less arguing, and less digressing from your daily routine.

Those 20 minutes will belong solely to them, and they'll learn to wait. It will be easier for you to organise your day, and it will be easier for them to be patient.

## **#2 You'll be up to date about what's going on in your children's lives—and pick up on problems more quickly.**

They'll open up to you and tell you things they wouldn't have mentioned in the house, in front of other family members. Towards the end of your walk, they'll tell you their most personal and important news.

You'll catch any potential problems or challenges early on, before they become harmful. I'm sure you know it's easier to deal with a problem as soon as it occurs. For example, it's much easier to stop and repair bad behavioural patterns and inappropriate behaviour before they become a habit.

What's the difference? If you discover your child doesn't like biology in the first week of school, you'll be able to stay on top of the situation much more easily than if you find out in the middle of the second semester. By that time, they'll probably already have fallen behind, failing the class. Which scenario will cost you less time and energy?



### **#3 You won't be stressed and worried that you don't devote enough time to your children.**

20 minutes is a lot for a child. But for a parent? 20 minutes pass in the blink of an eye. And you can definitely take 20 minutes out of your day for this.

You'll notice that you don't have to reorganise your entire day. If not earlier, you can fit 20 minutes in before your evening routine.

It can be 20 minutes while dinner is in the oven. Or 20 minutes after lunch. Or 20 minutes after doing homework. I'm confident you'll find the time.

Every single day, you'll go to bed knowing that you spent quality time with your children, talking and bonding.

So you can say goodbye to the guilt and other negative feelings that you might've been feeling before.

### **3 minutes instead of 20 is still better than nothing**

If you don't have 20 minutes for a walk, there's also a shorter version, which is 3 minutes. It's still important that you're alone with your child, removed from the main family activities. This can be 3 minutes in the bathroom together, in the bedroom, in the garage, on the stairs . . .

Invite your child to sit next to you, ask them about their day, talk about what they did, and generally catch up with them.

Even if you can't make time for a 20-minute walk or something important comes up, you'll always be able to take 3 minutes out of your day for this.



# PARENTING HACK #4:

## DE-PRESSURIZATION

Divide chores among all the members of the household, and you won't only save time and energy, you'll also teach your children about good work ethic and how to look after a home.

It's important to do this correctly, which means that you actually succeed in reducing your stress levels.

It makes no sense to divide the housework if you end up having to nag at your children when they don't do their chores, watching them closely to make sure they do them correctly, or worst of all, ending up having to do everything yourself anyway.

So what is the best way to do this? By making sure that each family member does the same chores—a couple a day—in accordance with their capabilities.

### **Provide external reminders**

By “external reminders” I don't mean you constantly reminding them.

For example, your child has to feed the dog in the morning, empty the dishwasher after dinner, and put their dirty clothes in the laundry hamper before bedtime.

For younger children we can make reminders in the form of cards. Write or draw a chore on a card, and hang or stick it in a visible place.



When your child completes the chore, you can turn the card around. Sort of like the open/closed sign in shop windows. At the end of the day, turn all the cards around again, ready for tomorrow.

Every now and then, you can prepare a surprise on the back of the card.

They feed the dog in the morning, empty the dishwasher after dinner, and after putting their clothes in the laundry hamper, they turn around the last card and—WOW! They see a message: “Reward: tomorrow we’re going to the park.”

Give rewards in moderation. Make sure they’re a fun surprise and only reward them when they’ve done an exceptionally good job. Instead of rewarding them with food or material goods, reward them with an experience, games, and quality time together.

These rewards encourage intrinsic motivation and aren’t only external motivators.

To ensure these cards become an effective reminder, hang them in a place your child often looks at. This might be in the hallway, in their room, or even on the fridge if they like to eat. Make sure they’ll see these cards every day, no matter what they do.

Each card has to represent one chore—if your child has many chores to do, they get multiple cards.

The details of this method aren’t important. You can use cards, little boxes, something similar to an advent calendar with little windows that open and close—anything you want.

When your child is younger, it’s very effective to use drawings, sparkles, colourful string and other visually attractive elements to create the cards.

For older children, this external reminder can be an alarm on their phone, or a daily or weekly timetable in a visible place. So they don’t forget they have to clean the rabbit cage on Wednesday and take out the trash on Thursday, for example.



## Let them do the chores themselves. Your only role is “the overseer”.

The second thing you have to ensure is that your children do their chores independently. This means giving them short and precise instructions and telling them what your expectations are. And that’s it!

Then let them do the chore to the best of their abilities. When they’re done, check to see how they got on and rate their work. Compliment them for what they genuinely did well (precisely, on time, quickly, carefully—simply “done” doesn’t warrant praise) and ask them what they can do in the next five minutes to improve the quality of their work.

*“You vacuumed the living room really quickly, good job! The carpet looks great! Now, what can you do in 5 minutes to improve the quality of your work?”*

*“Hm, let me see . . . Oh, I know! I probably forgot to vacuum all the corners and under the table!”*

If you express your expectations in such a way, they won’t forget to vacuum the corners next time. And when that happens, make sure to praise their meticulous and thorough work.

With this attitude, house work and chores will get done quickly and without issue, and soon you’ll be able to entrust more and more tasks to them without worrying.



## PARENTING HACK #5:

# HEART-WARMING MOMENTS

Children do many great things—on time, successfully, correctly . . . And what do we parents do?

We forget all about them.

But when they make a mistake or behave badly?

Oh, we don't forget about *those* things! We even lose sleep over them sometimes.

Concentrating on negative things in this way causes a lot of unnecessary stress for parents.

So I advise you to pick up your diary or planner and write down a few happy memories or sweet moments to come.

What kind of “sweet moments”?

These are personal achievements, quality time spent together, a picnic, trip or adventure you went on, a movie night, a family photo shoot, a cooking evening in the kitchen, playing games together, etc.

Why is this important? Firstly, because you start focusing on the good things.

Secondly, because when you sit down to organise your week or month, the first things you write down are the “important” things. The meetings, appointments, and obligations you can't miss.



Doctor's appointments, official, bureaucratic engagements, paying bills, business meetings, birthdays . . . If we look back at our priority list, we mustn't forget to pencil in spending quality time with our children.

20-minute walks, going to the park together on the weekend, jumping in puddles on Thursday, baking cookies on Friday.

Because these are the most important events in your children's lives. They need these happy moments just as badly as they need to see the doctor if they're ill, or need to have a birthday party to celebrate their special day.

And parents need these moments, too, to connect with our children, establish our authority in a positive way, show respect to receive it, create happy memories and, last but not least, to fill our lives with happy things, not just stressful ones.

And if we don't write these "little" things down straight away, and decide to make time for them regardless, then we'll run out of time to do them.

You'll forget about them, miss opportunities, keep putting them off, something "too important" will come up.

Weeks and months will pass and you'll say "but I didn't have time." There is always time! You just have to plan things accordingly and *in advance*.

You can decorate these entries in your planner with smiley faces or hearts if you had a really great time. Don't decorate all of them. Just the memories that fill you with warmth and love—they deserve an extra smiley face in your diary.

If your child notices and possibly asks you why you do it, you can say: "*To see how often you bring me joy and to remember all the great times we had together.*"

After that they might ask you if you can draw a smiley face next to yesterday's movie night. They'll start calculating how to achieve this.





But it's important this doesn't become their goal.

Make sure they understand that there aren't any special conditions that warrant a smiley face. It's about the things that happen spontaneously if we allow the time and space for them to develop. The things we feel in these situations can't be forced or created intentionally.

## PARENTING HACK #6:

# HOURGLASS STRATEGY

All (over)busy parents will recognise this stressful situation: you have one more thing to do, one more phone call to make, one more important email to reply to and, just in that moment, your child starts demanding your attention.

You'll partially solve this problem with the 20-minutes a day, but there's another tool that can help—the timer.

I'm thinking about those egg-shaped kitchen timers, a referee's timer, or even an hourglass with sand.

Put the hourglass on the table and say: *"Look, when the sand stops flowing, I'll focus on you. By then, I'll have finished this important phone call and you can have my undivided attention."*

And so your child will sit down to watch as the time ticks down.



## Don't break your promise or this technique won't work

**When time runs out, you really do have to listen to what your child wants to tell you. This is crucial!**

If you said that you'll focus on them when time runs out, you have to follow through, otherwise this method will never work again.

When you sort out whatever it was your child wanted, you can tell them: *"Now, if you need anything else, you can come here and turn over the hourglass for me."*

This way you'll teach them that they can't just come up to you, grab your arm, and demand your attention. They learn to bring the hourglass and turn it over.

**Now the hourglass is intended for you.** Before, it was for your children—to tell them how long they have to wait. Now, it's for you—to tell you how much time you have left.

When they come to you with the hourglass, it means: *"I want to talk to you."* What they're not saying out loud, though, is: *"I want to talk to you and I need you to myself for a little bit."*

They set up the hourglass, after 2 or 3 minutes the sand runs out, and then we focus on our child. It's really quite simple.

Of course you can use any sort of timer. It's also great if it makes a noise when the time runs out because then your child will hear it if they wandered off in the meantime. They'll run up to you and say: *"Oooh, I wanted to tell you something!"*

Is there anything more wonderful than this? I don't think so.



# PARENTING HACK #7:

## THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

This is something parents love to do. When your children make a wish, you try to grant it as soon as possible and fit it into your day.

And despite thinking that this will make your day go more smoothly, it would actually be much more beneficial for your children if they learn to wait.

Why?

Because fitting their wishes into your timetable takes more time and mental energy than you think. You change a plan or two to accommodate them and end up losing not just a couple of hours, but also a lot of patience and energy.

The second reason to teach your children patience is to prevent useless and energy-consuming arguments when you won't be able to grant their wishes straight away.

And children have a whole arsenal of tricks up their sleeve when they want something. From innocent looks, to crocodile tears, stomping their feet, throwing tantrums, hitting things and people, biting, yelling insults . . . The list is endless.

The show they put on when they want something lasts until they get what they want. And when they do, the sun starts shining again and all is well. The tantrums and shouting are tiring for the child, but they're even more tiring for you.



## How can you teach your children to wait?

By not granting every wish they make as soon as they make them. Even if you could! Take things slowly—when your children are still very young, waiting a few minutes will be enough, but make the waiting time longer and longer as they grow up.

The best technique to use is “first-then”.

*“First you have to do this, then you’ll get what you want.”* And so they have to wait a few minutes.

*“Mum, buy me some of those stickers I’m collecting!”*

*“You want more stickers? First tidy up your toys and prepare your school bag for tomorrow, then we can go to the shop and buy some.”*

Or:

*“You want more stickers? What are you prepared to do **now**, for us to go and buy them in **the evening?**”*

If their answer is appropriate, make a deal. You can head off to buy the stickers in the evening if they did, in fact, complete the task earlier.

They waited 5 hours!

Then gradually extend the waiting time.

*“We can’t go today. I’ve got too many things to do, and then it’ll be too late. It’s not possible.”*

Your child waits at least 12 hours.

*“You have to wait!”*



*“How long?”*

*“Until Wednesday. We agreed you’ll get a new pack of stickers on Wednesday.”*

*“But I want it now!”*

*“I’m sure you do. But you’re going to get it on Wednesday.”*

They wait a day or two.

*“After the holiday!”*

They wait a few weeks.

*“You’ll get a new bike when you start second grade.”*

They wait a year or more.

*“Everyone has a scooter. I want one, too!”*

*“When you pass your licence!”*

Teenagers can wait for years. They’ll try to get their way in the meantime, but you mustn’t give in.

You won’t only be doing yourself a favour by decreasing the number of tantrums and emotional blackmailing sessions.

Being capable of waiting patiently is an extremely important skill every adult should have, too. Patient people are better friends, partners, and colleagues. They also feel better in themselves because they don’t have this constant need of wanting something *now, straight away*, or even—wanting it *yesterday*.



They can enjoy their life the way it is and look forward to getting new things, and enjoy the anticipation. It's never good for a person's happiness to depend on how quickly their surroundings can give them what they want.



