



# Family Matters

*Making Family Life Easier*

## Parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Raising children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be very challenging. Many of the issues faced by young people and parents today were unheard of thirty or even twenty years ago. *'Are they old enough for a Facebook account', 'Is twelve too young to let them go to the disco', 'Those clothes seem too skimpy, but isn't that what they are all wearing?'* These are questions that many parents find themselves asking nowadays.

In a society that is constantly changing, parents themselves are no longer quite sure what behaviours and rules are appropriate for their teenager. In the past when a parent questioned their own parenting, they could turn to family, friends or neighbours for reassurance and a confidence boost. However with many of these supporters living further away and with less time for people to get to know their neighbours, parents are often left feeling alone and uncertain.

In addition to the challenges of guiding their teenagers; parental authority that in the past was more or less a given is also being undermined. With young people having increased access to digital technologies, they are exposed to a range of external influences that are often in conflict with your own values and beliefs. Young people are also living in an 'always on' culture; their mobile phones are like an extra limb and if they are not out with their friends they are hanging out with them online. This over connection to their peers can further reduce parental influence.

In an attempt to find out how best to guide and discipline their teenagers, parents often look to the media for answers. However having read all the tips and techniques that are on offer there, they often still find they are struggling with the same issues. The reason I believe that parents continue to struggle is because parenting cannot be simply reduced to a list of rules. Just as there are no two moments in time that are alike, there are no two children and no two parents that are the same. Each child and parent are different and unique, which means that every parent-child relationship is also different and unique. Parenting is not a one size fits all. Parenting is about building relationships; relationships that are based on mutual respect and open and effective communication. Parenting is about having a tool bag with skills and tricks of the parenting trade that can be used in that relationship. It is about finding out what works and what does not work for you and your child and applying that in your relationship with them. Different ways for different days! It is through this relationship that family life can become a little easier and parents can guide, support and raise their children according to their own beliefs and values, to become responsible, happy and successful.

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