

The Secret
Book
of

**PARENT
TRAINING**

**HOW TO BRING OUT
THE BEST IN
MUMS AND DADS!**

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3.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

The first challenge in starting to train your mum or dad is to learn how to communicate with them properly. Communicating means talking and listening. You can do it in lots of ways, by chatting or by writing things down.

You have probably noticed by now that one of the biggest difficulties in talking to parents is that they generally have the attention span of a little bug.

This means that very soon after you have begun to tell them something, their mind can start to wander off. By the time you get to the end of your sentence you may often find that your mum or dad is no longer there. They may have

scurried off to read their email or even worse, started up another chat with someone else.



They do not mean to be rude, but often they need a bit of practice in learning how to listen well. If they don't listen, they will miss out on a lot of the important things you need to say. Worst of all you might feel like giving up and not trying to tell them anything ever again.

So it is important for them to get into the habit of listening to you well as soon as possible. A simple way is just to ask them if they have time to listen to you now or if you should come back later. There are times when it is tricky to have a proper conversation with a grown up, like when they are cleaning doggy poo from the living room floor or they have just noticed your dinner burning under the grill. It's best to try it when life is calm and quiet.

Often the only problem parents have is that there are so many things buzzing in their heads that they

haven't noticed that you are really, really trying to say something. But if you find that asking your parents clearly and nicely to listen to you doesn't work, here are some other ideas you can try.



Use a megaphone

Ask for one of these for your next birthday and carry it with you at all times for when you need to speak to your parents.

Set up an ambush

You could sneak into their room in the morning and tie their feet to the bed and sit on them. Don't get up until you are fully sure they have listened to you.

Write them a letter

If there is something really special or important that you would like to tell your mum or dad, this is a great way to do it. With a letter you can blurt out everything that's on your mind straight onto

the page. It is a good way to tell parents about anything that is troubling you. If you're not sure how to say it, you can draw a picture of it instead.



The real problem in communicating with parents is getting them to notice you. Once you have managed this anything is possible.

It is sad but true however that there are some grown-ups who don't think of kids as proper people yet, as though your real personality will arrive in a box on the morning of your eighteenth birthday. As you know, this is a ridiculous idea and often kids are much better at being real people than grown-ups are. But it sometimes means that adults don't let kids have their own voice.

Your voice is that glorious part of you that tells the world all about who you are and what you believe. Your voice can mean your speaking voice but also all the other ways you send parts

of yourself out into the world. Everything from the person you are on the football pitch to the ideas you have for the future. No one else will do things the way you do them.

You will find that your voice will be louder or quieter around different people in your world. Around some people your voice may even be completely silent. Have you noticed there are certain people you feel you can really be your best self with? You feel so relaxed with them that your smartest, funniest, happiest self is just barking to come out like a friendly dog. Remember this feeling because those are the people to fill up your life with as you go along. If you meet the ones who make your voice disappear just pretend you are off to the loo, then slip out the back door when they're not looking.



One way of helping parents to remember how strong your voice is when you are a kid is to ask them to show you photographs of them when

they were your age. Ask them to tell you everything they can remember about what is going on in the photo. Was it a summer holiday or a birthday party? Who are the other people there? What were they like when they were your age? Do you think you would be friends with your mum or dad if they were in your class now?

The more you can get your parents to remember what life was like when they were kids, the more they will realise how real and important everything is for you now. In lots of ways this is the most important bit of your life right now because this is the time when all the seeds are sown that will grow into the tropical rainforest that will be your life when you are older. We need to make sure that your parents are wide awake and paying attention and planting nice things in your head, and not just row upon row of cabbages.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Hill trained as a journalist and now writes about mental health recovery and emotional wellbeing in an accessible way. She lives in Ireland with her two daughters.

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