

& Life & Style

Offering a haven



CALLS have been made to bring in parenting programmes in a bid to tackle the rising levels of child obesity, mental distress and underachievement.

According to Professor John Ashton, president of the UK Faculty of Public Health, all parents should be offered state-funded classes in how to bring up their families.

He said the programmes should be introduced across the country and said 'nanny state' interventions were needed to project the most vulnerable.

However Gloucester charity The Family Haven, which was launched in 1988, already has parenting classes in place to help disadvantaged and vulnerable families in the county.

The organisation in Spa Road provides a number of parenting sessions, healthy eating programmes and has a day centre for pre-school children and their parents.

Should parents should be offered state-funded classes in how to bring up their families? **MARYAM QAISER** finds out more

Lorraine Barrett, manager at Family Haven, said: "We run a series of parenting classes and they are very much parent lead tackling their issues that they face. "The sessions are mainly aimed at those families who are hard to reach and don't have access to services."

Gloucestershire County Council has launched a programme called Triple P, which stands for Positive Parenting Programme. It's a multi-level system of

evidenced-based education and support for parents and caregivers.

It aims to give parents their 'parenting wings to fly' by engaging, encouraging, and empowering families to address common child and teenage social, emotional and behavioural problems.

Linda Uren, commissioning director for children at the county council, said: "Triple P is designed to give parents the skills they need to raise confident, healthy children and teenagers and to build stronger family relationships.

"Triple P doesn't tell people how to parent, instead it offers them simple and practical strategies they can adapt to suit their own needs."

"There are many options for parents including one-off public seminars, self-help books and DVDs as well as more intensive group courses and individual counselling sessions."



Family Matters

Be reasonable

Make sure that what you're asking of your child is reasonable. Have you asked them to do something that is beyond their capabilities? Have you given them an unrealistic time frame?

Forewarn your child

A lot of grumbling can be prevented if you give children five or 10 minutes notice that they need to finish what they're doing so they can put their toys away, get ready for bed or whatever the task at hand is.

Acknowledge your child's feelings

When children grumble they often just want to be heard. So simply say something like: "Yeah, I know doing dishes isn't much fun. But it will feel good when they're all done and

SASHA BROWN of Community Family Care, provides advice on dealing with power struggles

you can go play."

Offer choices

As much as possible, offer your child choices. For example, you can't waver from the expectation that your children will have to complete homework but you can offer choices as to exactly when and where they do the work.

Consequences

If your child refuses to do what you've asked, calmly state what the consequence will be if they don't comply. **Give them reasonable time to do as you've asked.** Sometimes when children are resistant, parents too often

move in closer and increase the volume and intensity of their demands. Then our child matches that intensity by increasing resistance.

By stepping back, we allow our child to save face and 'choose' to cooperate.

Follow through

If your child still doesn't do as you ask, impose the consequence swiftly and matter-of-factly.

If they complain, remove your attention and walk away.

You are the adult and you are choosing not to engage in the power struggle.

Shouting or bombarding a

child with angry words does no good at this point.

He or she needs to see that you meant what you said.

Move on

Once the consequence has been imposed, move on without bearing a grudge. It's important to remember to 'catch your children being good'.

Let them know you appreciate it when they follow directions, especially when they do so cheerfully.

It's important to understand that all children are uncooperative at times.

And at certain ages, especially during the toddler period and early adolescence, resistance and defiance are especially common as kids struggle to prove their independence.

Ask Audrey

Have you got a question for Audrey James? Email citizen.news@glosmedia.co.uk



Making peace with the family

Q I REALLY don't get on with my mother-in-law. It might not be the most uncommon problem, but it has got so bad it is affecting my relationship with my partner, who I don't think takes my side enough in arguments about her. Whenever I try and make peace it doesn't seem to work, what do you think I should do?

The majority, if not all of us, have heard numerous jokes over the years regarding the mother-in-law.

This week's dilemma highlights an age old problem and sadly one that might never go away. The reader who has submitted this question is not alone.

I am positive many daughter-in-laws will be reading this column with interest and hopefully mother-in-laws too.

As a mother-in-law myself, hopefully I will learn from my own guidance. You said "it is affecting my relationship with my partner, who I don't think takes my side enough in arguments about her."

Here, I am reminded of the following scripture from Genesis 2:24 – "Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

In short, when a man marries, he is doing two things at the same time. He is leaving and letting go and also detaching from his mum and attaching to his wife.

The relationship with his mum must change as he builds a new relationship with his wife and this can be very difficult, especially for his mother.

Something for you to consider. Is it about winning and trying to get your partner to side with you? Or is it about wanting his help and support to bring the peace you are want in the relationship?

I am wondering how you are trying to make peace, is it on your terms?

Take some time, on your own, and ask yourself what it is you want from your mother-in-law and why?

For example, you may want her love because you never had that from your own mother. Or you may want her love because she is the closest that you have ever had in a mother. When you are ready and feel safe to make yourself vulnerable before her, go in peace and share the answer to your question with her.

Hopefully, after the above exercise, your mother-in-law will be open and honest with you by allowing herself to be vulnerable.

In addition, hopefully this will be the start of a better relationship with her. All relationships take work so why not put some time in your diary for you both.

■ Audrey James is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling and the founder of Restore Counselling Service, a private practice based in Barton Street, Gloucester. Visit restorecounsellingservice.co.uk or call 07717 633846.