

Life & Style

Top toothbrush

Rockabilly Kids Toothbrush

Brightly coloured children's toothbrush that stands up on its own and won't topple over. Each toothbrush comes with three replacement heads to provide a year of brushing. Suitable for ages three to seven years. £7, from Jo Jo Maman Bebe in Cheltenham.



Ask Audrey

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



Why am I not ready to be dad?

Q My wife and I have been happily married for three years. We have recently begun to talk about having a baby. My wife is ready but I don't feel I am. I'm not sure when I will be but I can't help but feel guilty and am worried about the pressure it's putting on our relationship.

Starting a family brings with it great responsibility and should bring with it tremendous joy for both parents.

It's good that you and your wife have taken time to enjoy married life together and by doing so hopefully have started to lay a positive foundation on which to build a family.

In addition, taking time allows couples to continue to learn about each other and define their own roles in the marriage.

Because you have taken the time to write in and from the contents of your dilemma the time has come for you to confront your true feelings regarding having children.

"My wife is ready but I don't feel I am. I'm not sure when I will be . . ."

I'm wondering what lies beneath you not being sure. Is it fear? And if so, why? What are you afraid of?

I'm asking because the majority of us are still troubled by bad experiences from our past.

If we've not been able to resolve them or have suppressed them, they hinder our growth and potential for positive experiences – in your case, having children.

"I can't help but feel guilty . . ."

I wonder what you might be fighting with internally that is causing your sense of guilt?

With clients, I explore with them what might be going on internally through their dreams.

If you remember your dreams, I encourage you to write them down and look at what they mean to you or remind you of. If you have recurring dreams then that is something to take note of.

You ask, "What should I do?"

Talk with your wife and allow yourself to be vulnerable by sharing your concerns and any fears you may have.

Great responsibility comes with being a father. Maybe the way you were fathered wasn't a positive experience for you – or maybe your father was absent in some way, physically or psychologically or both.

Whatever the reasons, positive or negative, articulate them to your wife; she deserves an explanation. In addition, being openly honest and vulnerable will help to draw you closer.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further help. My details are below.

■ 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.

Children's 'healthy' drinks can be jam-packed with sugar. Here's how to keep your little ones' teeth in tip-top shape



The sugar rush

FRUIT juice seems like a healthy option for children. But dentists are warning parents to beware of hidden sugars in little ones' drinks.

With child-friendly packaging and reassuring names, parents could be forgiven for thinking fruit drinks and smoothies are healthy and nutritious.

But more than a quarter of these sold in supermarkets contain as much sugar as Coca-Cola – some considerably more.

ASDA's Chosen by Kids tropical juice drink had the equivalent of 7tsp of sugar per 200 ml, which is more than full-fat Coke, while Tesco Goodness Slurper Apple and Banana Fruit Smoothie Snack has 8tsp per 200ml.

Although fruit juice contains natural sugars, processing releases sugars in the cell walls and turns them into 'free sugars',

which damage teeth and rack up calories.

But it's not just sugar that can damage children's teeth, as dentist Tony Parker from Clarence House Dental Health Centre in Gloucester explains.

"In dental terms, the real problem is not how much sugar children have but how often during the day they have sugar, either in food or drink," he said.

"We don't want to ban people from fruit juice completely but suggest that it isn't drunk regularly through the day."

He added that the sugar and acid in juice was a "double whammy" for teeth.

The worst thing children can do after drinking juice is to brush their teeth straight away. It's because teeth can repair themselves within two hours of a sugary snack or drink – but brushed, they lose this

fight-back and teeth can be damaged.

The World Health Organisation currently advises that people get a maximum of 10 per cent of their total energy from added sugars – around 50g or 10tsp a day.

But a recent study by University College London suggested that figure should be slashed to 14g, or just 3tsp – half a can of Coke – as too much sugar can also contribute to obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

Fiona Hunter, nutritionist and member of the British Dietetic Association said: "Most nutritionists and dietitians agree juice can be part of a varied, healthy diet. In fact, the Government's healthy eating advice, the Eatwell Plate, includes juice as part of a balanced diet. Pure fruit juice is nutrient-rich, so whilst it contains only natural sugar from the fruit, it also adds real value to the diet with vitamins."



In her monthly column, Sasha Brown, of Community Family Care in Staunton, offers advice to stressed-out parents

Community Family Care helps families, children and young people in need of additional support www.communityfamilycare.co.uk

Family matters: keep calm, carry on

BRINGING up children is not always easy and it can be stressful.

Here's how to manage stress so that you stay calm when managing children's behaviour.

Why it's important to recognise stress

Being a parent/carer can be very rewarding but it can also be very challenging when your patience has run out, trying to deal with misbehaviour. When you reach that point, and you are exhausted or stressed you can make decisions that you regret, such as taking your frustration out on children. You may snap

at them and shout or have a lower tolerance for behaviours you would normally accept. Recognising when you are stressed allows you to seek help and take back some control.

It is useful to recognise the signs that you are close to your limit and to know how to stop yourself losing control.

The effect on children

You may not realise just how much children pick up on tension. They become worried and anxious and may choose to trigger a situation which relieves the tension rather than live with the uncertainty.

Children may find how you deal with stress frightening – hitting out, shouting or tensing muscles. If children witness this it can be scary and emotionally upsetting to a child to witness a parent becoming angry or losing control.

Children often think they are to blame for the outburst and this can damage their own emotional development.

How to manage stress

Identify the signs you are becoming stressed and try using these techniques to calm you.

■ Count to 10 and take deep breaths

■ Take time out. Walk away and take a few minutes out in another room or outside if you need air. Are you really angry at your child – or is it something else?

■ Visualise somewhere calming like a beach.

■ Remind yourself you are the adult and you are setting an example to your child. Would you like to be shouted at like that?

■ Phone a friend. Talking things through helps with perspective.

■ Scream into a pillow – away from the kids. You can let rip – it will absorb the noise.