

FAMILY MATTERS

» Parenting column by **Sasha Hart**, family care manager at Community Family Care, Staunton

Supporting your child to engage in positive play

» It is common for children to have disagreements and fall out while playing. Turn taking and sharing is a skill they need to develop. Problems arise when children do not learn how to problem solve and that can lead to aggressive behaviour frequently occurring whilst playing. We've come up with some simple steps to help.

» **Explain the rules**
Decide on two or three simple rules for playing with others and remind your child before playing - keep hands and feet to yourself or share and take turns. Rules should act as a reminder for the behaviour you want to encourage, not what you want to avoid.

» **Encourage positive behaviour**
Offer lots of praise when your child is playing well with others. If playing with others is particularly difficult for your child, you may want to reinforce positive play with a reward at the end.

» **Choose activities to encourage positive play**
Some activities promote sharing and turn taking, such as board games and ball games, which can be a great start. More structured play will help your child to remember the rules as free play can be chaotic, particularly if your child struggles with sharing/playing nicely.

» **Step in before it escalates**
Often aggressive behaviour is triggered by children becoming frustrated over not getting their own way. Children can struggle to articulate what they want and the idea is to help them problem solve before the behaviour escalates. For example, give them some words to use: "Tom - say 'Isaac you've had your turn, it's now my turn'."

» **What to do if it escalates**
Tell your child what you want them to stop doing and what behaviour you want to see instead. Act as soon as you see it happening. If they do not do as you have asked, give a logical consequence such as removing the item they are fighting over for a set time or take your child for a time out to calm down. Praise your child as soon as you see them playing nicely again and this will encourage that to continue.



Having a newborn baby in the house can be overwhelming

It's all about you, baby

TV presenter and mind coach **ANNA WILLIAMSON** shares her top tips for new parents

» **THINK** we're all agreed that, although new babies are incredibly cute, they can also be a bit scary... they're just so little, and wobbly... and well, small! Pretty much every new parent finds those initial few days and weeks upon entering 'baby-ville' more than just a little bit overwhelming. And, guess what, if this is ringing a bell with you, then you are totally and utterly normal.

» It's quite natural and understandable to feel rather clueless as you adjust to being a responsible parent - eek - is there a more terrifying label?

» Every new mum and dad pretty much goes through the same motions... a wonderful combination of all-consuming elation and sheer panic, all rolled into one.

» Being honest and open about your thoughts and feelings are key to keeping well, happy and content in your new role. Sleepless nights, learning how to change a nappy, and juggling those rampaging hormones can take some getting used to, so do be sure to offload and share how you're getting on with each other and/or a health professional. And remember, being a parent is the hardest and most rewarding job you'll ever do, so it's ok not to love it ALL the time.

» Here are some of my top tips on coping with a new baby in those first few crazy weeks.



Anna Williamson

» **TAKE THE ADVICE-GIVERS WITH A PINCH OF SALT**
THE minute you announce you're in the family way, is the minute you will be inundated with (mostly unwanted!) advice. People mean well but it can be more than a little overwhelming to

deal with the, often conflicting, advice. Your baby is completely unique, and you will learn to be the parent you want to be as your little family evolves together.

» Sure, take on board the odd handy hint and tip - if you find it works for you - but essentially be confident in your own abilities.

» As long as you give your new baby love, cuddles and lots of milk, you can't go far wrong.

» **IT TAKES TIME**
NOBODY becomes the perfect parent over night. Your new baby is effectively a stranger, a lovely cute snuggly little stranger, but still, a brand new unpredictable little person who you don't yet know.

» Allow yourself to get to know your baba, and his or her little quirks, likes and dislikes. Time is so important, and it's the one thing that can't and shouldn't be rushed.

» **TAKE TURNS**
IF you're in a couple, it's important to give each other time 'off' - particularly mum if she is exclusively breast feeding.

» You'll both most probably be knackered in the early weeks, so perhaps think about when you can give each other some 'me time' - even half an hour or so can be hugely effective - to do something of choice.

» A bath or shower, watch some TV uninterrupted, a snooze... whatever it might be, work out when and how you can do some 'baby shift work' to regroup.

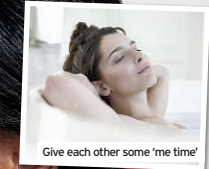
» **BE KIND TO YOURSELF**
IT'S likely your emotions will be all over the place, after all, you've just welcomed the most amazing little being into the world, and the best bit... they're all yours.

» You might experience highs, and lows, excitement and worry, happiness and anxiety... it's completely normal and natural to go through a cocktail of emotions, and dads are just as likely as mums to feel as though they've been put through the wringer emotionally, mentally and physically.

» Make sure you talk to each other, friends, family and health professionals to let them know how you're feeling and be kind to yourself as you let yourself adjust.

» **BOND WITH BABY**
IT can sometimes feel as though you don't get a look in with your new baby, what with the realms of well wishers in the early days and weeks.

» But it's vitally important for you to get involved and bond with baby as much as possible. Try lying on the bed or sofa with your little one, try skin on skin



Give each other some 'me time'



Try 'skin on skin' to help you bond



Cuddles with dad are important



PERSONALISED FLEECE ONESIE by My 1st Years, £32, from notonthehighstreet.com



JELLYCAT PETAL BUNNY PERSONALISED COMFORTER £14, from bundlesofjoy-shopping.co.uk

LITTLE LOVE BUNNY AND BATHROBE HAMPER £45, babyblooms.co.uk

KIDS' PUZZLES!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the six differences between the pictures below?



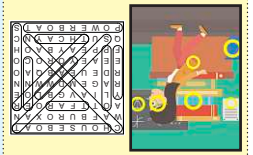
WORDSEARCH

Can you find all these boats in the grid?

- CANOE
- CATAMARAN
- FERRY
- HOUSEBOAT
- PEDALO
- POWERBOAT
- RAFT
- ROWBOAT
- SCHOONER
- SPEEDBOAT
- YACHT
- YAWL

C	H	O	U	S	E	B	O	A	T
W	A	F	B	U	R	O	X	A	N
A	O	T	T	F	A	R	O	E	R
Y	L	I	A	V	G	B	L	O	E
R	A	G	E	M	D	W	W	N	N
R	D	E	U	E	A	B	Q	A	O
E	E	A	E	Y	O	R	O	C	O
F	P	P	E	A	Y	B	A	O	H
Q	S	U	T	H	C	A	Y	N	C
P	O	W	E	R	B	O	A	T	S

Solutions



RICHARD IRVINE
DOUBLE TROUBLE FOR A FIRST-TIME DAD OF TWINS

Emma loves my 'dad-dancing' now... but

» MY mum and dad visited last weekend and were amazed to see the twins were bigger. Oddly, we all point out babies are growing, yet getting bigger is really the only option. I didn't pick them up on it, as Thomas has tripled in size within five months, but I never want to be in a situation where somebody points out that they're shrinking.

» Anyway, as my parents needlessly exclaimed, they are turning into proper little people. The problem with development is, every exciting stage brings a fresh new anxiety. We're only just recovering from Thomas' brave battle against colic. He used to arch his back, contort his neck, wriggle around and cry at practically every feed. It was like wrestling with a freshly-caught trout. He's still not 100%, and with all his trapped wind it can sound like a brass band rehearsal during and after feeding - but he's happier.

» Emma meanwhile seems to be bored with the current state of affairs, and who can blame her? Being a boy, Thomas has adapted very nicely to this pace of existence. I imagine he has his fingers

let's see when she's a teenager

» crossed that life is all about napping, lazily around, playing with toys, chatting and watching others work. Thankfully, Thomas is male so he might fulfill his dream, but Emma is female and will therefore have to work longer and harder to get paid less.

» The obvious answer to Emma's boredom is television but according to the internet, children aren't allowed to watch it till three years old, which seems a shame for both them and me. Fortunately, as Emma stared



indifferently to space wondering if life would ever be more than this, Uptown Funk by Bruno Mars played on the radio and I busted out a few moves. I'm no professional but Emma was captivated. So much so that I'm now dancing on a semi-permanent basis to keep her happy with my interpretation of Wham's Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go a favourite. So, if you're in the market for a reasonably priced children's entertainer, who resembles a younger Jeremy Clarkson and dances like Justin Timberlake after too much coffee, then please get in touch.