

the buzz **B** Parenting

Three of the best . . . for early eaters



TUMTUM Tiny Dining Set

A plate and bowl set featuring bright colours and cute characters, and with 'scooping corners' and non-slip bases. Suitable for one to three years, available from John Lewis and www.tumtumtots.com, £15.



Boots Baby Stage 1 Weaning Spoons

These spoons, which come in a pack of four, have easy-grip curved handles and are ideal for feeding baby's first solids. Available from Boots, suitable from four months, £1.99.



Vital Baby Warm-a-Bowl

A thermal bowl designed to keep baby's food warmer for longer through an inner cavity filled with warm water. Suitable from nine months, available from www.vitalbaby.co.uk, £6.99.



SASHA BROWN on finding time for yourself with children

ALL children thrive off of and need attention from their parents.

However, sometimes parents may need time to themselves, such as when on the phone, doing something that requires concentration, or talking to another adult.

It is reasonable to want children not to interrupt during these times but children are hardwired to want attention from their parents and often struggle with having to wait to speak as they may forget what they want to say or feel what they have to say is more important.

If there are times when you know you will be busy, prepare your child ahead of time.

Let them know when and why you will be busy, for how long, and what you would like them to do while you are busy.

Plan activities that you can set your child up with to keep them occupied.

Set a few simple rules with your child to remind them of what behaviour is expected whilst you are busy.

For example, play quietly until I am finished or if I am on the phone say 'excuse me' and wait for me to finish.

Think of a consequence for misbehaviour ahead of time and remind your child what this will be if they misbehave whilst you are busy.

Consequences could involve removal of a privilege, such as reduced TV time, or simply not receiving the reward.

You may wish to offer a reward if your child follows the rules, such as extra attention once you are finished.

Remember to check in with your child and praise them for playing nicely or following the rules every so often, if you are on the phone this could be non-verbal praise such as a smile or thumbs-up.

■ Community Family Care, based at Staunton, Gloucestershire helps families, children and young people in need of additional support.

It seeks to improve parents' confidence, help with routines to get children to school, or more complex support dealing with challenging behaviours at home.

The work includes peer mentoring and life coaches.

Visit communityfamilycare.co.uk for more.

Juggling kids and cash

Samuel Taylor looks at ways at looking after the pennies, as well as the children

FAMILIES in Gloucestershire are being urged to become money smart and save thousands of pounds a year. Clever parents can save up to £4,000 a year on household expenses according to a new initiative.

Loyalty card Nectar has launched the Savvy Family competition to reward the best saving family with a prize package of vouchers worth £10,000.

Nectar says a family can save money by easy means such as using leftovers from a roast lunch for sandwiches the next day, buying magazines with free cosmetics on the cover to save on grooming costs, turning off appliances when not in use and buying presents for people in the sales and saving them until the right time.

One family who won the competition last year saved £3,023 using such techniques.

One of the judges for the competition is property developer and television presenter Sarah Beeny, who is also a mother of four children.

She said "It's a hard job juggling the purse strings and keeping the family happy, but I believe that you can have your cake and eat it.

"I find that once a family gets behind being savvy with money, they start to enjoy it and everyone enjoys having a bit more money in their pocket."

Fellow judge Sarah Willingham, founder of letssavemoney.com, reinforced Sarah's views on saving money.

"There's so much information around these days to make it much easier to save money without actually taking anything away from your lifestyle," she said.

"It's about doing the same thing, but being smart about it".

"The whole family needs to pull



Blue Skies Parenting Centre owner Nicole Hastie with Yann Lacy and William Rowe

together to be savvy, teaching the next generation the importance of making savings and that looking after those pennies is so critical.

Sarah added: "Being a savvy family can be fun and so often, it isn't about the big changes, it is about the small things which really add up.

"It takes a bit of extra time, but the amount of money you can save is phenomenal."

Sarah Beeny's top tips for saving money are:

■ Make use of money-saving vouchers found online, in the local paper, in e-mail alerts and in local deals that come through the letterbox;

■ Explore the outdoors with the kids – it's free;

■ Check websites like freecycle.org or freegle.com where people give away items

free. Baby stuff, toys and clothes are an easy find;

■ As children often have different fads on activities, borrow any necessary kit or equipment for the first few weeks, then fork out for new if you see they will stick at something.

Blue Skies Parenting in Cheltenham runs a Play Café for parents and Children to enjoy.

Owner and mum of two Nicole Hastie said: "We try and keep our prices low to help families save money. We also sell cloth nappies, they save families a lot of money in the long run."

Nicole also added second-hand items save people a lot of money: "Our pre-loved group has 1,000 members that buy and sell clothes, equipment and toys."

The prize for the family which can save

the most is impressive; it includes four free flights to Spain, membership of English Heritage for a year, vouchers for stores including Sainsbury's, Vision Express, Homebase and Ebay, and a 32 inch television set and iPod supplied by American Express.

To enter to competition, a family should tell Nectar why they think they are the most money-aware family in Britain and then provide their best tips.

The top eight families will then be asked to write a blog about their money-saving techniques as they happen for six weeks, with one penny-and-pound-wise family scooping the grand prize.

To find out more about the Nectar Savvy Family competition, visit nectar.com/savvy. The closing date for entries is March 16.