

Te ao o te tamariki nohinohi

The world of under-fives



Your guide to

parenting styles, ages and stages,
temperament, and more...

tākai



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Parenting can be the most rewarding challenge.

There are lots of little things you can do to make life easier and to help build a positive relationship with your tamariki.










Everyone raises tamariki in their own way. What do you remember about how your parents raised you? Are you the same or do you want to be different?

Everyone wants the best for their tamariki. But some parents feel they need to be tough, and end up being too hard or inflexible. Others give in too easily.

Somewhere in between is what works best for kids – flexible but staying consistent about what's important.

Ten basics

To be flexible as a parent, but stay consistent about what's important, try these 10 things with your tamariki.

1. Give lots of aroha and positive attention. 
2. Try to do something they enjoy every day.
3. Notice them being good and praise them.
4. Have a small number of rules and stick to them.
5. Give them plenty of warning so they know what's coming next.  
6. Have reasonable and related consequences if they break rules. For example if they hit someone, they have to play on their own for a bit. 
7. Think about what upsets or challenges your children. (See page 16 for more about this.)
8. Behave how you want them to behave. They'll learn more from what you do than what you say. 
9. Give them simple choices. For example the red or the blue t-shirt? Not which t-shirt they want to wear.
10. Have a routine but expect that it won't work some days.

Whānau say

**“Say more positive things than
negative things. Kia kaha!”**



Ages and stages

Knowing what your tamaiti may be able to do at their age and stage will help you understand what you can expect of them. Use these tips to support them to grow.

One to two years

Toddlers are learning to wait. As pēpi, they were used to having their needs met pretty quickly.

They might feel frustrated in this new learning stage, as they develop the ability to run, kōrero and climb. It's an exciting time!

Ways you can support them:

- try to tell them about things in advance. "When I've finished hanging out the washing we will..."
- balance independence with limits, "Sit on the floor please, then you can hold your drink"
- praise behaviour you like, and ignore behaviour you don't
- give limited choices, for example, say "apple or orange?", not "what do you want to eat?"
- involve them in what you're doing, for example, ask them to hand you the pegs or carry a grocery item
- keep to routines and make sure they're refreshed and have a kai before starting on bigger tasks like shopping.



Whānau say

“Try to say what you want them to do – and why. Instead of saying ‘Don’t run in the house’, say ‘Please walk in the house. You might hurt yourself if you run.’”



Two to three years

Between the ages of two and three, children are developing their own separate identities. They'll start to use words like 'mine' and insist on doing things for themselves.

They may be more interested in playing with other children. Learning to share and cooperate with others takes lots of practice.

Their emotions will feel too big for them sometimes. They'll need your help to calm down. While they don't mean to hurt others, sometimes they'll just get overwhelmed.

The learning they do between two and three is amazing!

Te hinengaro mīharo



The emotional brain is driving how they behave at this age. Practise new skills, like taking turns, when they're happy and relaxed.



Ways you can support them:

- stay with them when they play with others and help them to share and take turns
- ask them to do one thing at a time – not a list
- give them lots of praise, and be specific about what you like
- give them little jobs to do, like handing you the pegs or filling the clothes basket with washing
- respect their boundaries too – they'll hug or kiss people they feel connected to, and shouldn't be told to hug or kiss
- stay calm and loving when you need to follow through with a consequence.

Whānau say

“Making it into a game or singing a silly song can lighten the mood and avoid a power struggle.”



Three to four years

Tamariki are better at recognising and expressing their emotions in these years – for example pride, guilt or embarrassment. Encourage them to think about how they're feeling.

They're sharing and taking turns more often, but will still need support sometimes.

They'll love to laugh and their imagination will be a big part of their games, play, stories and artwork. They'll have lots of pātai as part of this too, and be much more curious about things.

This is a fascinating time of life for them.



Ways you can support them:

- distraction still works and can help with power struggles if they get stuck on 'no'
- be flexible on things that aren't so important
- guide them to make good decisions and follow instructions – "as soon as you pick up your toys we can go to the park"
- they may still need your help to calm down. Have things available to help them – a quiet place they can be, and some relaxing things to do. In quiet moments, kōrero about how you calm down and what they can do too
- ask them for their ideas – make sure you both agree, then follow through
- stick with their routines as best you can, even when they don't want to sometimes!

Whānau say

**"Your time and attention
are better for your kids
than treats like lollies."**



Four to five years

You'll probably see your child starting to play more cooperatively with other children. Friendships become more important, although they're still learning and will need your help.

They may have lots of energy and enjoy trying new challenges. They'll look for ways to be independent. They may test rules and routines, or use 'silly' behaviour to get your attention. Ignore this if you can.

Te hinengaro mīharo



Playing games uses lots of different parts of the brain. Avoid meltdowns by making games simple and not focused on winning.



Ways you can support them:

- keep giving them lots of affection and positive attention
- be clear about what you expect from them, "Remember to thank Rosie for your play date"
- encourage them to try lots of different things
- give them jobs to do so they can feel important and responsible
- praise their efforts when they try hard
- give warnings before consequences, "If you can't keep your scooter on the path, you'll need to walk." Stay calm when you need to follow through with a consequence
- support and encourage them to work out their own solutions to problems.

Our temperaments

We often notice how our tamariki are like us, and also not like us. Or they may be like someone else in our whānau, or like some things in the pūrākau (stories) we know of our whakapapa. It's pretty awesome!

Sometimes this is because of temperament. Our temperament affects how we react to things, and how we deal with our feelings.

Temperaments mix with our way of parenting and the environment we provide. So it's great to know about and be aware of our temperament.

Different temperaments all have their own strengths and mana. You might think about temperaments as we think about different kinds of manu (birds). For example, they can be:

- curious and busy
- thoughtful and observant
- happiest with their whānau and things that are familiar.



Think about the temperament of your tamaiti when they're at their best – enjoying their time, able to kōrero and find the comfort they need.



You might ask yourself, "What's helping my tamaiti to thrive in these moments?" You might consider:

- who they're with and where they are
- whether this is part of their routine or spontaneous
- the activity they're doing.



Reflecting on these things helps you give your tamariki more opportunities to feel comfortable, have fun and learn.

Whānau say

"They love hearing about how they remind you of important people in your whānau."

If your child needs extra support

A child with a disability or health issue might need more support to do things.

Give lots of love, attention and consistent support to guide their behaviour. They may reach milestones later than other kids, and need extra help and time to learn things. And just like all kids they'll sometimes behave in ways that challenge and frustrate you.

Remember – each child is different

Try to keep your expectations reasonable for your child's age, stage and temperament.





Be clear and consistent – especially if it's hard for children to understand instructions.



Use physical prompts to show them what you would like them to do. To help them learn something new, you may need to show them many times.



Taking your child to lots of appointments can be stressful. And, if they have problems with sleeping or are easily frustrated, it can be even harder. Talk to your friends and family, ask them for support when you need it. Let them get to know your child so they can help you through the tough times and enjoy the good times too.

Managing your own stress

When life gets stressful, it can be hard to keep your cool with your kids.

Tips for staying calm

- Take deep, slow breaths when you feel under pressure. Move away. Come back when you're calmer.
- Accepting things you can't change can be a relief.
- Be realistic. If you've got small children, keeping the house tidy all the time is impossible. Make time at the end of the day to all tidy up together.
- Exercise can help relieve stress. Set yourself a realistic goal – maybe walk three times a week, do some sit ups every morning, or spend 15 minutes digging in the garden.
- Set aside some time for yourself. Sit and read a book for 10 minutes, watch TV, lie in the sun, or ring a friend.
- If there are things that regularly stress you out, talk them over with someone. There might be ways you could manage them better.
- Get support from your family, friends and other parents.





You could try a helpline for confidential advice:

PlunketLine **0800 933 922**

Are you OK? **0800 456 450**

Free call or text **1737**

Whānau say

“Try not to spend all the time your kids are asleep rushing around trying to do things – it’s okay to have time to yourself.”



6 things kids need

You might be strong in some of these areas and not so strong in others. These questions might help you to see what you do well and where you might improve your relationship with your children.

Love and warmth

- How do I show them I love them every day?
- Does my child know that it's their behaviour, not them that I don't like?
- Is my child scared of me? Am I calm enough?

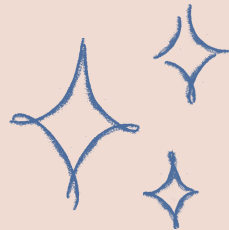


Talking and listening

- Have I said clearly how I want my child to behave?
- Have I listened to them or asked them how they're feeling?
- Are all our conversations about me telling them what to do?

Guidance and understanding

- Does my child understand why their behaviour is not okay?
- Do they see how their behaviour has affected others?
- Have I helped them to work out better ways to get what they need?



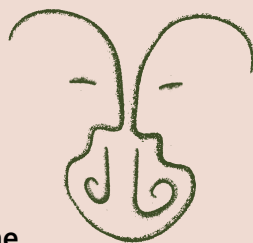


Limits and boundaries

- Has my child broken a clear, simple rule they already know about?
- Is my child capable of doing what I expect or am I asking too much for their age?
- Have I reminded them of the rules?

Consistency and consequences

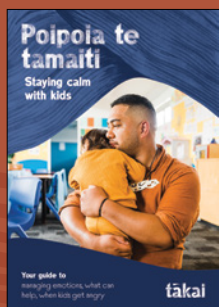
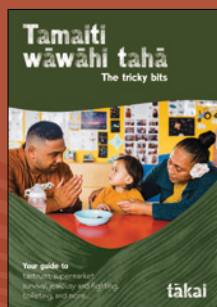
- Do I behave the way I want my child to behave?
- Do I respond the same way each time I see this behaviour?
- Is this consequence related to the behaviour?
Is it reasonable for my child's level of understanding and ability? Is it respectful?



A structured secure world

- Does their day-to-day life have enough routine so they know what to expect?
- Do they have freedom to explore safely and make choices of their own?

**Know someone
else that could use
this booklet? Pass it on!**



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