

Sue Beever

Happy Kids



Happy You



Using **NLP** to bring out the best  
in ourselves and the children we care for

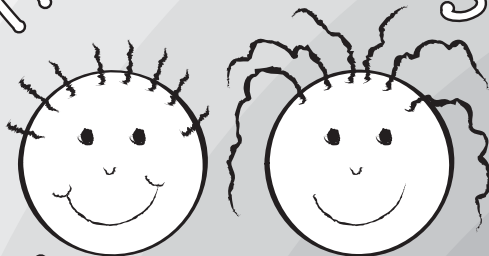
"A really useful,  
inspirational guide."

Janey Lee Grace author of  
*Imperfectly Natural Woman*  
[www.imperfectlynatural.com](http://www.imperfectlynatural.com)



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# Welcome to



Having children is an opportunity for creating and enjoying greater happiness in the world. And yet, sometimes our children's behaviour drives us to distraction! Why is it that the things we try to do for the best often backfire, giving us the opposite of what we wanted?

When it comes to parenting, whilst we may sometimes wish for a magic wand or at least a consistent formula for getting it right, there is no such thing. So this book is not about coming up with the right answers all the time and how to be a "perfect parent". This book is about being the best *real parent* you can be, moment by moment, by choosing to use *what works* in good communication. Adopting effective ways to relate to your children can enhance your children's lives and your own, resulting in more happiness all round. This book shows you how to do this.

Many of us come to parenting with high expectations of what life *should* be like. The reality can be very different: our lives are increasingly busy as we try to meet not only our own needs but those of our children and families, as well as all our other responsibilities. Little wonder it's so easy to notice when our expectations are not being met. We notice more and more of the behaviour we **don't** want from our children.

She hit me!

I don't WANT to  
put my shoes on!

## Starting out

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With the best of intentions, what we then say or do can often make things worse. We get even more of what we **don't** want!

The truth is, you're doing the best you can in any given situation, with the choices you have available to you at that moment:

**SITUATION + YOU + Your CHOICES ⇒ RESULT** i.e.  
What happens next

The methods in this book are all about giving yourself more choices, more options – more ways of thinking and doing something *that works* so that:

- you get great results with your children
- your life goes more smoothly
- you feel more confident and positive
- you have fun and enjoy being a parent more of the time!

## Your children need you!

When it comes to parenting, there are no right answers, no universal solutions, no absolute truths. There is only the here and now of what is going to work for you and your children, moment by moment, on *your* parenting journey. You are the expert on your family and your children. You are in the front line. No matter how well intentioned the advice of others, it's you who must decide ... and you who must live with the consequences.

So it makes sense to find out about *what works* in good communication. With methods that work and a little practice, you only need a moment, a **pause for thought**, to then choose to:

- Say or do something useful
- Encourage behaviour that you **do** want: behaviour that is positive and useful for you and your children.

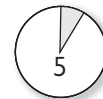
You're then creating the kind of relationships, family life and future that you **do** want for yourself, your children and your children's children.

This book focuses on your needs – **Happy You** – as well as the needs of your children – **Happy Kids**. You are a significant part of the equation and have a major effect on the results you get. So family life has to work for you as well as the children you care for. And to help and encourage you along the way, you'll find many examples of how people just like you have used these methods to find solutions that worked for them.

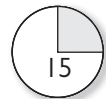
## How to use this book

The methods are presented in a consistent and easy-to-read format. Each method starts with an introduction which is followed by details of the **method**. Then there are one or two **examples**, followed by **tips for good results** when using the method. **Now you have a go** gives you ways of practising the method and **finally** ... gives closing thoughts about the method. **How this method worked for** ... gives examples of how others have used the method to good effect.

A clock symbol at the beginning of each method suggests how much time you need to get an idea of the method and to start using it. For example



5 minutes



15 minutes

A mirror symbol indicates that a level of reflection is required: some calm time out, to think about and get the hang of the method.



The methods are grouped into sections and ordered with the easiest first as each method builds on the previous methods through each section of the book.

Each method is self-contained so you can simply **dip** into whichever method appeals to you, depending on the current challenges you face and the time you have available. The **Quick reference guide** in **Appendix I** gives suggestions for where to start with some common types of challenge. References to specific behaviours can be found in the **Index**.





## Turn Don'ts into Do's



Whatever you're doing at the moment, don't look behind you ... don't even think about what's going on behind you. Hard isn't it?! I bet, even if you didn't actually turn to look behind you, you were tempted to do so, and that's exactly what I asked you not to do! Now try this: don't think of a big grey elephant, with its long trunk swinging.

The reason you find it hard not to do what I've asked you not to do is because of how your brain works out what words mean. To understand not doing something, it seems the brain first creates an impression of what it is we're not meant to do. This impression can influence us to actually do it. Hypnotists use this language pattern, the "negative command", to give hypnotic suggestions to their clients. We are adults who have plenty of experience of language and what words mean. Now think what it's like for your child, who is just learning language and what words mean. Chances are you'll get more of exactly what you didn't want:

What you say	What they "hear"	What's likely to happen
Don't throw your food!	Throw your food!	Child thinks, "Sure thing!" and throws more food.
Stop smearing your yoghurt!	Smear your yoghurt!	Child thinks, "Wow, so this is called smearing yoghurt! It sounds as good as it feels!" as more is smeared.
Don't take your nappy off!	Take your nappy off!	Child proceeds to take off nappy.
Don't hit me!	Hit me!	Ouch!

## Section 1

### The method

Whenever you hear yourself thinking or saying, “Don’t ...”, “Stop ...”, “You can’t ...”, or “You shouldn’t ...”, ask yourself:

#### What can I usefully and safely encourage my child to do instead?

Then tell your child what you want them to do. Use clear and simple words to offer them this alternative. Make it sound vivid and appealing to grab their attention and interest. Remember, their brain will create an impression of your suggestion, based on how well you’ve described it to them.

### Here are some examples:

#### Don’t

Don’t talk with your mouth full!

Don’t run on the road!

Don’t just help yourself from the biscuit tin!

#### Do

Tell me when you’ve swallowed that mouthful ...  
Then I can hear you better.

Walk on the pavement!

You can help yourself to fruit or juice.

or

It’s nearly teatime. Help me lay the table, then you can eat your tea as soon as it’s ready.

## Tips for good results

- ✓ It's OK to tell your child what you don't want them to do as long as you follow this up straight away with what you do want them to do instead.
- ✓ Whenever it's appropriate, reinforce your words with a clear demonstration of the behaviour you want, e.g. "We eat yoghurt like this ..." followed by a clear demonstration of you spooning your yoghurt into your mouth. With young children, you can help them to do what you are requesting, e.g. help them to spoon their yoghurt into their mouth.
- ✓ **Turning Don'ts into Do's** is a great way to teach your child relevant, useful behaviour, when and where it's appropriate. If you're struggling to come up with an appropriate Do, ask yourself:

### What do I do in this situation?

It may be useful to show and tell your child to do the same. Kate explains how this worked for her at the end of this section (page 31).

- ✓ At certain times, children (and teenagers) respond really well to a **prove me wrong** challenge. To do this, start to explain what you want your child to do with a challenge, something like:

"I bet you can't ..."

or "I'm not sure you can ..."

Your child then defiantly does what you want them to do to **prove you wrong**. You then need to be *really* impressed with what they've just done!

For example:

"I bet you can't put all those clothes on before I've cleaned my teeth."

Followed by:

"Wow! You're all dressed! You put all your clothes on by yourself!

Well done!"

Use **prove me wrong** with care. You'll get an immediate sense of whether you're going to get a good response. If not, use another method.



## Set and maintain reasonable boundaries



When I became a parent, I knew I was taking on many roles including carer, cook, nurse and chauffeur. It only dawned on me gradually, as my children started to challenge boundaries, that parenting also includes setting and maintaining boundaries.

Boundaries, limits and rules are important in creating an environment in which we can get along and live together. Boundaries give children the space to grow, learn and play; to develop an awareness of their relationships with others and what's important in life. Children need to challenge boundaries to feel secure within them and to be more creative within the limits they impose.

So as one of the “responsible adults” in our house, I knew I had to enforce boundaries but I didn’t want to become a police officer.

Have you noticed that, when it comes to enforcing boundaries, we live in a **don't** world?



## Section 2

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So we know really well what we *shouldn't* be doing! Expressing boundaries in this way gives us the limit beyond which we must not go. But what can we do instead? And if we did that, how would it look, sound and feel? As we already know from the **Turn Don'ts into Do's** method (page 27) it's much more effective to tell children what we do want them to do.

Here are three possible ways to enforce boundaries:

**I win** I have the power and you are weak. I maintain boundaries by enforcing  
You **lose** compliance. I use **don't** a lot because I am focusing on stopping you crossing the boundary (which you try to do a lot).

***You will do as I say.***

**I lose** You are strong and I am weak. I try to enforce the boundaries but give  
You **win** in when you resist. I abdicate my responsibility for enforcing the boundaries so neither of us really knows what they are.

***Oh, OK I suppose you can do that. I don't really mind.***

**I win** We can get along and get more of what we *all* want by operating  
You **win** within reasonable boundaries that are realistic to the situation. Instead of resisting and focusing on what we *can't* do, we focus on the many things that we *can* do and *want* to do within the boundaries. Let's focus on how situations can work in some way for *all* of us.

***Let's play quietly while granddad watches the news.***

The last way, **win-win**, is the most reasonable and respectful approach to adopt and is embodied in the following method.

## **The method**

### **The boundary**

Decide what boundaries you want for you and your family in your home. Discuss and agree these with any other adults who will be responsible for maintaining them. Make sure your boundaries honour both your children's needs (**Happy Kids**) and your needs (**Happy You**). State them in positive language, telling your children what they can do. Be aware of the limit set by a boundary, which will be expressed as a **don't**.

### **The positive consequences**

Work out what the positive consequences (the benefits) are for having the boundary.

### **The negative consequences**

Decide what the negative consequences will be for going beyond the boundary. Make sure you're prepared to follow through on these consequences and in a timeframe that keeps the association with the boundary clear to your child.

### **Positive language to support what they can do**

Use positive language to tell your child what they can do. Encourage and support them in finding behaviours that are appropriate within the boundary.

### **The warning, followed by the choice**

When a boundary is being seriously challenged, warn your child of the negative consequences. Follow up this warning immediately by offering your child the choice of the negative or positive consequences. State the positive consequences last (for emphasis) and make them sound really appealing.

### **Follow through**

If your child then chooses to cross the boundary, follow through with the negative consequences. Otherwise, be impressed by their appropriate behaviour within the boundary and reinforce the associated positive consequences. (The **Be impressed** method, page 51, covers ways of giving effective praise.)



## Be impressed ... with you!

One of the best ways you can look after yourself and build your confidence and self-esteem is to notice all the positive things you're doing as a parent. But how do you know when you've done well as a parent? How do you recognise and acknowledge a job well done?

It's only natural that we look for external signs from our children, family and friends that tell us we're doing a good job as parents. We may then judge ourselves and our performance based on how we rate this external evidence. But first, let's consider how this approach can limit us and prevent us from recognising and feeling good about what we're doing well. We'll then explore an alternative way to **be impressed with you**.

### **Do you rely on the appreciation of others?**

Whilst others may indeed appreciate your contribution, all too often their appreciation may get lost in the hurly-burly of family life. If you rely on this feedback for your sense of being valued as a parent, you may feel dissatisfied and taken for granted.

### **Do you take the view that “the proof is in the pudding”?**

Then you only really know you've done well when your children have grown up and succeeded in their lives. This view has some inherent pitfalls and dangers:

- Your sense of yourself and the value of your efforts rise and fall with the performance of your child. It's as if the jury's always out with regard to the value of your contribution as a parent.
- You can only recognise your success as a parent when your child has matched up to your expectations of them. When do you decide that your child has achieved *enough* for you to give yourself that pat on the back?
- You're tying your children into your opinions and beliefs about what “success” is in life. This makes it harder for you to be involved when they make life choices that do not concur with your opinions.

## Section 3

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- When your children are “failing”, you are failing too. If your child is not meeting your expectations, and is perhaps most in need of your unconditional love and support, you may not be able to give it because you are preoccupied with doubting your abilities as a parent.

### **Here’s an alternative way of thinking:**

Give yourself permission to feel good about the effort *you* are putting in: the things you do, day in day out, to keep the wheels of family life turning; the thought and consideration you give to your children, all with the intention of *bringing out the best in them and you*. Be actively impressed with yourself and the positive contribution you make as a parent. Do this *now* regardless of how you feel about the overall results, good or bad, immediate or long term.

Based on this way of thinking, the following two methods to **be impressed with you** have two major advantages:

- You’re free from needing the appreciation of others. It’s an added bonus when you get some!
- You can be more open to recognising and supporting your children being successful in ways that make sense to *them*, even though they may not make sense to you.





## Walk your talk



This method explores what we can learn from our children when they draw attention to our undesirable behaviour. They can bring inconsistencies in what we say and do into sharp focus in a number of ways:

- They copy our undesirable behaviour from us:

***Children are natural mimics; they act like their parents in spite of every effort to teach them good manners.***

*Anonymous*

- They want to copy our undesirable behaviour from us. For example,

Once we'd had our children and I'd come to the end of five years of being pregnant and breastfeeding, my eating habits had completely gone to pot. I was in "see it, eat it" mode, regardless of whether I was hungry or not. I found myself eating all sorts of stuff, food I didn't even like, such as the kids' leftover marmite on toast – yuk! Whilst I provided healthy food for the kids and only allowed them fruit at snack times, I frequently "found myself" sneaking biscuits from the cupboard when I didn't think they were looking. One day, my 3-year-old caught me unawares, mid-munch, and said "Mummy, I want a biscuit too!"

- They simply give us honest feedback about how we are behaving, such as "Mummy, you need to calm down!" or "Please don't use your cross voice."

However they do it, whenever your children make you aware of inconsistencies in what you're saying or doing, they present you with an opportunity to change your ways. Bringing your own behaviour into line with what you want for your children has the following benefits:

- Your new behaviour gets better results for you.
- You're demonstrating behaviour that you'd be happy for your children to copy from you.
- You're also demonstrating continuing personal development for your children: the ability to learn at any age and change what you are doing to something more beneficial.

## Section 4

---

Here's a method to help you reap these benefits and **walk your talk**:

### The method

When you find yourself wanting one thing for your child but doing something else yourself, ask yourself:

- **Why is it important for my child to behave in the way that I want them to?**
- **What benefits does this behaviour get for them?**

When you've identified the benefits for your child, consider:

***If I want these benefits for my children, I deserve them for myself.***

Recognise that you can have the same benefits by behaving consistently with what you want your child to do. You will also be consistently demonstrating that behaviour to your child.

Once you are convinced that you want these benefits, ask yourself:

- **What now needs to happen for me to walk my talk?**
- **What do I need to do differently?**
- **How will I support myself through these changes?**
- **How will this work for me *and* for my child?**

Now that you have identified what you need to do, are these things that you can and will do? If so, decide when and how you will put them into practice. If not, ask yourself the above questions again and focus on how **walking your talk** will work for you as well as your child.

**Be impressed** with yourself as you do something different and make changes. Well done! Also be impressed with yourself and your child when you notice that your child's behaviour has changed too. (See pages 51 and 153 for more on how to **be impressed** with your children and yourself respectively.)

# Using **NLP** to bring out the best in ourselves and the children we care for

Every child, every family situation is different and parenting is a journey of constant change. There are no “right answers”, only what works for you and your family. This book will give you a toolkit of practical NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) methods flexible enough to cover all situations. It focuses equally on the needs of you, the parent, as well as your child and will help you:

get your family life running more smoothly

understand your children

support and encourage them and their development more effectively

recognise and meet your own needs so you can be more  
resourceful in family life

feel more confident and positive so you can have fun and enjoy  
being a parent more of the time!

Rather than giving prescriptive advice, *Happy Kids Happy You* will enable you to develop your own solutions to situations. You will learn to speak and behave more positively with your children and experience outstanding results!



“A very clear, informative and practical book to have in any home or work place,  
I will certainly be recommending it to all my parents.”

Joyce Forster Head of First Steps Nursery Harrrogate

“This has got to be essential reading for every mum and dad.”

Clive Wilson, Deputy Chairman Primeast, specialist in leadership, change and teamwork

“... a gentle toolkit of methods which are easy to follow and easy to recall  
when you're in the middle of a potentially difficult situation.”

Emma Golden, Parent from Oldham

“Anyone who is responsible for the emotional development and  
welfare of young children should buy this book!”

Sue Overton, Sue Overton Associates Training and Management Consultants

“Sue Beever has come up trumps with this excellent resource for anyone serious about not  
just their children's well-being but also their own emotional health.”

Stephen Fischbacher, Creative Director, Fischy Music

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