



## Riding the coaster

Parenting is first and foremost an emotional experience. It's not like a machine where you can pour in the right ingredients and get a predictable response ... If only! Rather, each day has its own challenges and demands, and as parents we respond to these challenges with different emotions. That's why parenting emotions can be like a roller coaster ride ranging from joy, pleasure and pride to irritation, annoyance and total frustration. Real parents experience all these emotions (and sometimes several times each day – or hour) and they are still great parents. Your emotions are real; don't deny them, but accept them as a gift.

Parent with passion.

Ian

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## PARENTING

### Winning the strong willed child battles!

"I'm sure there is something wrong with my child," fumes an exasperated mother. "I am challenged over every decision...It's like he thinks, 'You are maybe bigger than me Mum...But I'm smarter'...And he's only 2 years old!" Reading some child discipline books you'd be forgiven for thinking that every child is easy to bring up: Do these four steps and presto, you'll have the perfect obedient child. So you try them and quickly learn your child doesn't have the same respect for the 4 steps as you have. In fact, he thinks the 4 steps are a declaration of war.

### Any casual observance of a group of children quickly shows not all children are the same.

Some children are compliant when you simply raise your eye brows, but others see a raised eye brow as surrender – your surrender, not theirs. The strong willed child is such a child, and they present parents with a major discipline challenge. The following insights will help you understand what a strong willed child is, and how best to discipline them.

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# Winning the strong willed child battles! (Continued from page 1)

Every parent with a disobedient child thinks their child is strong willed, but only a few children really fall into this category. All children misbehave – it’s part of growing and developing – but the strong willed child doesn’t have periodic misbehaviour episodes. From the day they are born they have a determined will to be in control. “I Did It My Way,” is their song.

Where does such determination come from? They are born with it because it is their temperament. Temperament is the innate part (genetics) of each child that influences how they think, feel and act. Strong willed kids are strongly extroverted (they get their energy from outside of themselves) and task driven (they have their goals and look out anyone who gets in their way – some of you might have a boss who was a strong willed child!).

Being extroverted and task driven, the strong willed child displays the following behavioural characteristics:

- Lets you know what they want in a hurry
- Eats, drinks, walks fast
- Tells other people what to do
- Plays independently
- Ignores the word ‘No’ when possible
- Needs to be kept busy – gets easily bored
- Makes their own rules
- Likes to control other kids
- Likes competitive activities – so long as they win
- Becomes impatient with anything slow
- Insists on having best toy
- Can be demanding and rude

If you can answer “YES” to the majority of these statements there is a good chance your child is strong willed. And that’s not a bad thing!

Being strong willed isn’t a disorder, nor dysfunctional. It’s normal and is simply an expression of how nature has ‘wired’ some children. Trying to change how your child is genetically programmed to function is an impossible task. So don’t try to change them. One of my favourite pieces of parenting advice is “*Understanding always precedes advice.*” Once you realise your strong willed child is programmed to be this way, it provides understanding and realistic expectations. Rather than trying to change their irritating and annoying behaviours, a better goal is to moderate some of their more extreme behaviours. Bend their will – Don’t break their will.

Here are some ideas to moderate the strong willed child’s excessive behaviours:

- When disciplining get to the point quickly. Don’t go on and on and on.
- Provide direct answers. Firmly tell them what you expect.
- Don’t be wishy washy with your rules. These kids are hyper vigilant for any parent hesitation.
- Be brief and to the point. They only need to be told once.
- Ask ‘what’ questions; avoid why and how questions (example: “What can you do to keep your hands to yourself?”)
- When you disagree be careful not to criticise their character (“You are the rudest boy in the world!” This is petrol to a strong willed child!)
- Use a rapid voice tone: limit your emotion and enthusiasm with this child. This child views too much emotion as weakness. When you show anger, upset or despair this child believes they have won.
- Accept their bluntness; their directness is not usually cheekiness
- Give them options. Ask for their suggestions in getting desired behaviour.
- Express your confidence in their ability to do what is right.

I have two strong willed sons and once I understood how they were wired, and then worked with how they were wired, discipline became a lot easier. These children have high energy and if you can channel it in the right direction they will bring you immense pleasure and joy.

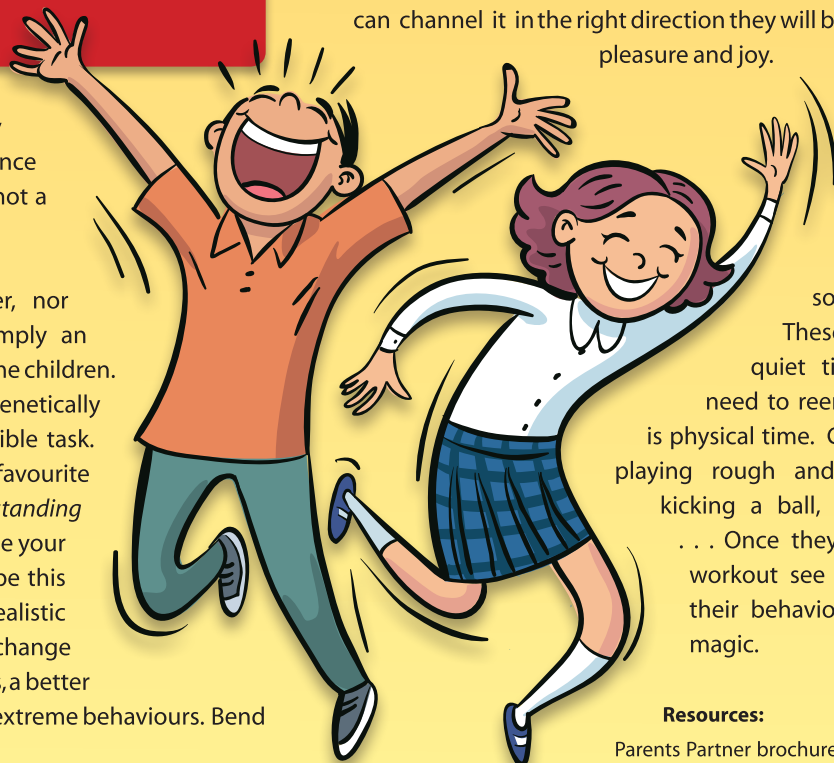
One final point, if you find your strong willed child getting moody and sulky don’t think they need some quiet time.

These kids never need quiet time. What they need to reenergise their lives is physical time. Get them running, playing rough and tumble games, kicking a ball, chasing the dog . . . Once they have a physical workout see the difference in their behaviour. It works like magic.

**Resources:**

Parents Partner brochure called Strong Willed Child (Parent brochure stand or web site)

Short movie on our web site: [www.parentspartner.com/resources/discipline-resources/strong-willed-child](http://www.parentspartner.com/resources/discipline-resources/strong-willed-child)



## RESEARCH

# Cohabitation: a common myth

"We don't want to get married yet," shares Peter and Sue who have been living together for 6 years. "We don't see much advantage in being married. In fact, living together before we get married should increase our odds of lasting love!" Peter and Sue's marital relationship used to be rare, but today it's almost the norm in couple relationships. One of the most significant changes in relationships over the past 50 years has been the increase in cohabitation (living together) prior to marriage.

There are many reasons for this societal shift, but a commonly held belief is that cohabitation prior to marriage decreases the odds of divorce. In a society where divorce is so prevalent trying to lower the odds would appear a good thing. Surely it makes sense that living with someone prior to marriage should result in deeper understanding of each other and improve your marital happiness potential. But what are the research findings for such a view?

Dr. Scott Stanley, a couples research expert at the University of Denver sums up the research findings, "Virtually every published study that has examined premarital cohabitation finds it to be associated with greater, rather than lower, risks for problems in marriage." He further states, "We know of no published study that shows a benefit of premarital cohabitation for marital outcomes." Research studies have found premarital cohabitation to be associated with:

- More negative communication in marriage.
- Lower levels of marital satisfaction.
- The erosion over time of the value/view of marriage and childrearing.
- Higher perceived marital instability.
- Lower levels of male commitment to spouse. This finding has identified that husbands have lower levels of commitment to their wives, years into marriage.
- Greater likelihood of divorce.

The popular belief that living together before getting married increases a couple's chances for marital happiness is not based on science. Science says it actually decreases the odds, and significantly.

### References

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- Rhoades, G.K., Stanley, S.M., & Markman, H.J. (2009). Couples' reasons for cohabitation: Associations with individual well-being and relationship quality. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30, 233-258.
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## Exercise improves brain health

We all know exercise is important for the body's health, but did you know it's a great way to enhance your brain power? Exercise has specific effects on the brain. Neuroscientists have discovered that exercise stimulates BDNF, that is Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor. BDNF to a brain is like fertiliser to a plant! It is a protein that stimulates brain growth in two important ways: Firstly, it keeps neurons healthy and young, which in turn makes them more willing to connect to each other, and secondly, it encourages neurogenesis which is the creation of new brain cells. The more you exercise the more your brain receives these two neural 'fertilisers'!

Exercise is associated with the following brain benefits:

- Reduces Alzheimer's risk by 60%
- Risk for dementia cut in half
- Improves long term memory
- Boosters the immune system
- Regulates appetite
- Improves reasoning & problem solving ability
- Decreases risk for diabetes
- Increases fluid intelligence
- Changes your blood lipid profile
- Treats depression
- Reduces risk for cancer
- Cuts risk of stroke in half
- Decreases risk of heart attack

If your daily exercise routine is merely walking to your office cubicle, that sedentary lifestyle will be dumbing you down. Try some aerobic exercise each day and see if you don't think quicker and smarter.



## 15 Minute dinner secrets

The media is making us more aware of the dangers of fast food that is rich in fat, salt and sugars. A favourite restaurant of our family is called Revive. It is located in Fort Street, downtown Auckland, and as the name suggests, it's a restaurant that prides itself on providing healthy food that tastes brilliant – that's why we go there so often! Jeremy, the friendly owner, is passionate that people enjoy great health and he believes it begins by eating healthy food. Makes sense.

If you visit his restaurant you are invited to sign up to his web site and that's a real plus, because each Sunday he sends you health tips and a fabulous recipe idea. In a recent Sunday email it contained the following quick dinner menus which my wife thinks all busy parents would like to hear. Jeremy has given me permission to include it in our newsletter.

Here are Jeremy's favourite top 6 quick dinners:

### 1 Stir fry

There are many variations. If you have some brown rice in the fridge it can take seconds. Just start with a good cooked onion base and add vegetables, cashews, rice, and some frozen beans from a can or the freezer.

### 2 Tomato based stew

Just fry up some onions, add vegetables and complete with canned tomatoes and beans/lentils. Serve on top of brown rice.

### 3 Omelette

This is so quick! Beat a couple of free range organic eggs, into the pan and when ready add some chopped tomato or mushrooms and fold out onto a piece of toast.

### 4 Nachos

A can of chilli beans and baked beans, plus some chopped tomato, lettuce, avocado, hummus and some corn chips.

### 5 Baked potato

Just add a can of corn, mushrooms or some chilli beans. Complete with Hummus. Note potatoes do need to be baked for around an hour but if you are organised to start the spuds when you get home this is possibly not too long to finish. Also make extra and have them in the fridge!

### 6 Soup from the freezer

Serve with fresh bread and hummus. When you make soup always make a double batch and freeze!

The secret is preparation. Keep your freezer and fridge stocked with pre-cooked ingredients and a quick healthy meal is a breeze! I cook a big pot of beans or soup up on Sunday and freeze. And a pot of rice and put in the fridge. Then I am set for the week (and beyond!)

For more ideas check out Revive's web site: [www.revive.co.nz](http://www.revive.co.nz)

#### Inspiration Quote *Do It Anyway*

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centred; Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.

If you are successful you will win some false friends and true enemies; Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God; It was never between you and them anyway.

*Mother Teresa.*



# Surviving a layoff

In these current turbulent economic times each day there are reports of business organisations laying off staff. Being a casualty of downsizing must be highly stressful - even traumatic. But what about those who survive and keep their job? An initial thought might be they would be most grateful and repay their organisations with increased performance.

Research quoted in a recent Harvard Business Review suggests the opposite: good fortune doesn't make for good performance! The following are potential performance danger factors for survivors of downsizing:

## Creativity

In an ideas economy innovation is king, but a disruption of team stability kills creativity. In a survival environment who has the energy to dream!

## Communication

Many companies struggle to openly communicate with their employees in the best of times, let alone in a crisis. With layoffs, the normal social channels get disrupted, resulting in negative feelings. If people aren't given the opportunity to authentically share their emotions then they get suppressed. What gets suppressed usually gets expressed later in uglier ways.

## Perceptions

Security is a basic human need and a layoff environment is a threat to all employees' sense of safety. This has a flow on effect of changing people's perceptions of their work, which in turn decreases their sense of work satisfaction. Increased stress levels result in decreased morale and trust.

## Turnover

Research indicates many survivors voluntarily quit after the layoffs. Factors like being understaffed, having to train new people, or the sense of fear (I could have been one of those laid off!) contribute to a sense of "I want out of here ..."

## Stars

Here is a real amazing research insight and one most downsizing organisations wouldn't bargain on: after layoffs, the star performers - those most secure in keeping their jobs - because of their expertise, education or performance, are the most likely to quit if dissatisfied.

Reference -  
Harvard Business  
Review, June, 2009

## House Rules

- |                    |   |             |
|--------------------|---|-------------|
| If you sleep on it | - | make it up  |
| If you wear it     | - | hang it up  |
| If you drop it     | - | pick it up  |
| If you eat off it  | - | wash it     |
| If you open it     | - | close it    |
| If you turn it on  | - | turn it off |
| If you empty it    | - | fill it     |
| If it rings        | - | answer it   |
| If it howls        | - | feed it     |
| If it cries        | - | love it     |



## SUPPORT

# Need fresh parenting ideas?

There are no experts when it comes to parenting. I'm reminded of this when I think of Dr. Ben Spock. He was the parenting guru for a generation of parents back in the 1950's and 60's. His book *Baby and Child Care* became a popular book for parents and has sold over 50 million copies. He was an advocate for parents being more flexible and affectionate with their children. When he died in 1998 his children said their dad was the very opposite of what he had advised other parents to be! That simply says, even the so called experts are learners too.

Recognising we are all in this together, the Parents Partner wants to support you in helping your family be its very best. We know parenting can be a challenge because we are parents ourselves. That's why we have created a web site to provide new ideas, insights and understanding into how parenting can be more engaging and empowering.

If you are looking for fresh ideas check out our web site:

[www.parentspartner.com](http://www.parentspartner.com)

You'll find ideas ranging from making discipline work, to how to stay in love with your partner. We recognise parents today need more than information to be successful. Experience is the vital component of true success and we are currently developing a new brain friendly approach to parenting. You will find on our web site two new visual experiences for parenting awareness and understanding:

- The Strong Willed Child
- Staying in Love: Making sense of couple distress

Our next experiential resources will be encouragement and discipline modules.



### WORDS OF WISDOM

"Children are like flowers, nurture them and they will grow up strong and beautiful."

*Lydia Boyd*

## Resources to support you

Whether you are working on parenting issues like discipline, obedience, cooperation, or wanting to revitalise your couple's relationship, we have many resources to help you. If you want a resource we suggest the following process:

### Step One:

Check out our web site: [parentspartner.com](http://parentspartner.com)

### Step Two:

Check out the parent brochure stand in your centre. There are more than 25 resource topics with practical intervention suggestions.

### Step Three:

Attend one of our parent workshops. They are fun, informative and offer the best research insights into effective parenting. You will find the schedule on our web site. They are held in individual centres, but you are welcome to attend even if your child doesn't attend that centre.

### Step Four:

If nothing seems to be working, ask your Centre Director for our contact details, or click 'contact us' on the web site. We welcome your specific challenges and will work with you to find a spark to open new possibilities.



## Parents Partner

### The newsletter for Kindercare families

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Your child's early years have a defining influence on the rest of their lives. That's why we want to be your partner in helping your child be their very best. If you are looking for a parenting resource check out our brochure stand in your centre, or visit our web site

[www.parentspartner.com](http://www.parentspartner.com)

[www.kindercare.co.nz](http://www.kindercare.co.nz)