

# Parenting in a new culture

## *the preschool years*



### *Raising Australian born Chinese children effectively*

*This parenting education guide for Chinese parents in Australia was initiated, developed and produced by the Northern Migrant Resource Centre in collaboration with many individuals and families within the Chinese community in Victoria*

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Produced by the Northern Migrant Resource Centre  
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## *the preschool years*

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*This parenting guide was made possible by the assistance of many people, whom the Northern Migrant Resource Centre owes a debt of gratitude for their support and advice.*

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*Editors: Dr Khairy Majeed  
Stephanie Lagos*

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*If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.  
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.  
If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.  
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.  
If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.  
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.  
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.  
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.  
If a child lives with recognition, he learns it is good to have a goal.  
If a child lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.  
If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.  
If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and those around him.  
If a child lives with friendliness, he learns the world is a nice place in which to live, to love and to be loved*

*(Anonymous)*



**THE HON LARRY ANTHONY MP**  
**MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**  
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR RICHMOND

FOREWORD

The simple aspirations that parents have for their children cross all cultural divides. All good parents, from whatever cultural background, love their children and want the best things in life for them.

But family values and parenting practices are not the same in all cultures and it can be especially difficult for parents to raise children in an unfamiliar culture. Moving from one culture to another means dealing with new rules, new customs, and new and different influences on children.

These children may not behave in traditional ways and may not want the same things their parents want for them. This can cause confusion, misunderstandings and pain.

These books aim to reach out to these parents of young children who are growing up in Australia. The Australian Government welcomes these families and the different experiences they bring with them. Without abandoning their own ideas, we ask them to acknowledge Australian law and custom and to balance the best elements of both cultures.

These books will help parents find some of the answers to the questions they have about supporting their children and help them to understand the changes that are happening in their children's lives and how to grow with them.

Yours sincerely

Larry Anthony

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## Introduction

It is widely recognised that a majority of migrants and refugee families migrate in order for their children to have improved life opportunities. The decision to migrate to a new country is not always a voluntary one, in the case of refugees; families are typically escaping war, civil strife or persecution in their home countries.

The migration process may result in a dramatic transition from one culture and language to another. In the case of refugees, families may have been involuntarily uprooted. The decision to leave one's own country of birth can result in significant trauma and loss for both the parent and accompanying children. Not surprisingly, it is often reported by migrants that parenting in a new cultural environment can be highly problematic, challenging and quite often confusing. Successful parenting outcomes are dependent upon increasing the skills of these new migrant parents in the context of the new Australian social and educational environment.

Similarly, the literature in this field indicates that effective parenting among newly arrived families will be dependent on 1) how well parents can manage the process of adaptation to a new society with diverse values and expectations and 2) how to balance preserving the ethnic identity on the one hand and incorporating the positive aspects of the adopted culture on the other. Unfortunately, very little is known about this process here in Australia. To our knowledge, there are no published parenting programs or documentation about parenting within migrant families.

The *"Parenting in A New Culture"* (the preschool age) is a project initiated and developed by the Northern Migrant Resource Centre and supported by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services. The project targets three migrant community groups (Arabic, Chinese and Samoan), whose cultural and social values regarding parenting and families are quite different from mainstream Australian cultural and social values and norms.

The project aims to strengthen and support parents' roles and enhance parents' skills to raise their children confidently in the Australian context. It also provides opportunity to strengthen the confidence, knowledge, ability and skills of parents from the three community groups (Arabic, Chinese and Samoan) living in Australia. A significant component of the project is to develop and produce a parenting guide for parents within the three community groups written in their own respective languages.

The Northern Migrant Resource Centre is proud to offer this important and culturally appropriate parenting document to enhance the parenting skills of parents from the three community groups.

Stephanie Lagos  
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## Immigration and parenting

### Introduction

Historically, China was predominantly an agrarian country. In older times, a “happy family” was one that owned a good shelter and its family members had enough food to live. Chinese farmers were concerned about the weather, the harvest, their livestock and the wellbeing of all family members.

In recent years however, there has been a dramatic change in the concept of the “family” in the Chinese culture. In modern Chinese society, a family should not only satisfy the material needs of its members but also should satisfy their psychological and social needs.

### What does good or positive parenting mean generally?

There is no specific definition which may be used comprehensively to refer to good or positive parenting. The concept and methods vary from one culture or community to another but the term generally refers to a group of methods and practices which contribute to children’s development, build their abilities and control their behaviour using constructive methods. This form of parenting is based on a good understanding of children, an appreciation of communication with them and the ability to ascertain their needs at different age stages to assist their growth and development.

### Traditional Chinese family values

Confucian thinking alongside patriarchal and authoritarian philosophies have influenced Chinese culture for over three thousand years. Chinese cultural values are very strict in that the young must respect the old and the people must respect their rulers. Boys are valued more than girls. Loyalty, filial piety, kindness and righteousness are very important values in Chinese families and

the society at large. Filial piety is the first and the most vital family virtue of all the good moral virtues.

## What is filial piety?

Filial piety requires a person, from birth to death, to obey and respect parents no matter what circumstances arise. Children are expected to honour their parents' wishes and requests in all respects including a choice of career, partners or in financial matters. Disagreeing and arguing with parents is regarded as disrespectful. When children are capable of earning an income, they are obliged to support the family financially. Any disregard to these principles is considered disobedience.

Parents can use any kind of disciplinary action including physical punishment. It is a disgrace when a child disobeys and goes his "own way" as this brings shame to the family and the parents "lose face" amongst the relatives and community.

In return, children are given the full protection and assistance from parents who would mobilise all their financial, material, social and emotional resources to assist them. In addition children inherit the wealth of the family, though sons inherit the first and largest shares.

## Cultural conflicts

*How do traditional family values including filial piety apply to Chinese parents living in western societies today?*

There is a large volume of research evidence indicating that filial piety is still considered very important in Chinese society. In addition, throughout the world and throughout time, Chinese parents have emphasised the importance of a good education and tended to sacrifice their own needs to help their children to achieve well academically. In addition, by performing well at school, children will fulfil their filial piety and their obligations to their family.





However, research findings have also indicated that the younger generation of overseas - born Chinese recognise that they need individual space and creativity and to exercise their rights as individuals. Hence, they tend to be no longer willing to follow the traditional values of filial piety.

The overseas born Chinese children were found to believe that:

- *parents should not have absolute power over the children*
- *children should be encouraged to explore and ask questions*
- *children can be independent, have the right to make their decisions and fight for their rights*
- *children can be assertive and be proud of their achievements in mainstream schools.*

It is also widely accepted that Anglo-Australian culture shows two main characteristics:

- *Egalitarianism (social equality), which embraces democratic and humanitarian precepts.*
- *Individualism, which emphasise personal freedom, self-reliance and devotion to achievement.*

These family values clash directly with the traditional Chinese family values.

## Mutual expectations of parents and children

Before examining your method of parenting, reflect on the following questions:

- *What are your expectations of your children (i.e. the next generation)?*
- *What do you believe are the expectations of your children of you as a parent?*
- *What were your expectations of your own parents (i.e. the previous generation)?*
- *What do you believe were the expectations of your parents of you?*



How do your answers compare to the following responses from Chinese parents attended a parenting course in Melbourne in 2001.

### **What are your expectations of your children?**

*"We hope our children are happy and healthy, capable of achievements, independent, self-sufficient, helpful, obey their parents, with openness and courage and are not afraid of difficulties in life."*

### **What are the expectations of your children of you as parents?**

*"Our children hope we can spend more time with them, play and have activities together, listen to them, praise and appreciate them, love and respect them, accept and understand them, encourage them and communicate with them more."*

### **What were your expectations of your own parents?**

*"When we were children, we expected love, protection and freedom from our parents. When we grew up, we hoped that they could understand and accept us, including our achievement and our choice of partners and career".*

*"Our parents were too traditional and too harsh and only fulfilled our material needs but not the psychological needs. Our parents did not have good education, so they did not know how to raise us properly. We cannot blame them, but we hope we can do better than them."*

### **What were the expectations of your parents of you?**

*"When we were children, our parents expected us to fulfil filial piety, obey them and not talk back. When we grew up, they expected us to achieve well academically, become more independent and happy. They do not seem to expect too much from us as daughters."*



## Children's developmental stages and needs

### The need to understand child development

Although each and every child is unique and different from other children, understanding the developmental stages and patterns of child development in general is of prime importance for all parents.

Research findings have indicated that social and psychological needs of children vary dramatically according to the developmental stages. Each developmental stage is regarded as a "psychological crisis" which arises and demands "resolution" before the next stage. It is widely accepted that children's unacceptable behavior is a reflection of unmet psychological and social needs.

### The psychological needs of children and parents

The traditional Chinese parenting styles tend to frustrate the psychological needs of both parents and children.

Children in all developmental stages, in particular early childhood, require some essential supports to survive and thrive in life. In addition, families and communities require support to promote children's healthy development, provide opportunities for exploration and active learning as well as providing social and emotional care.

## Levels of children's need

Researchers have identified five levels of needs that apply for both children and adults. These are:

- **Level 1** the physiological needs which include food, drink, sleep, activity etc...
- **Level 2** the needs of safety and security (including physical protection, order and freedom)
- **Level 3** the social needs (including love, affection, interaction, friendship, and intimacy)
- **Level 4** the recognition and achievement needs (including competency, usefulness, ability, and mastery of skills and self-esteem)
- **Level 5** is the top of the hierarchical needs and these needs are for Self-Actualisation. (This refers to the individuals reaching their potential, development of new skills and achieves personal growth).

However, when our lower level needs are unmet, we will not be motivated to fulfill higher level needs. For example, when a boy feels very insecure (Level 2), he will not be motivated to seek out friendships in the next level (Level 3), nor spend time and energy to develop his competence in some complex skills (Level 4). On the other hand, when his lower level needs are adequately satisfied, he would be strongly motivated to strive to meet his higher level needs.

## Developmental stages of children and physical safety

Parents are concerned with the physical safety of their children. This is one of the most basic of the hierarchical needs. When the physical safety and physiological needs of children are ensured, parents feel relieved and secure and the children can be encouraged to explore their environment. Generally speaking, children at the preschool years are at higher risk than older children.



The following outlines general characteristics of two preschool age groups as it relates to potential safety issues.

### **First age group (birth to 3 years)**

In this developmental stage, children:

- are naturally curious; like to touch, feel and explore
- learn by physically interacting with things around them
- learn about properties of things by putting them in their mouths
- drink anything (no matter what)
- are attracted to moving objects and like to crawl into small spaces.

As a result children in this age group are at high risk of accidents such as choking, drowning, poisoning, burns and others.

### **Second age group (three to five years)**

In this preschool developmental stage, children:

- continue to learn about the world primarily through interacting with things around them
- become less likely to put objects in their mouth
- continue to feel, touch and explore the surrounding world with little thought to danger
- begin to develop “some” self control, but don’t easily recognise dangerous situations

Research findings shown that accidental injury is the main cause of death among Australian children. Accidents often occur unexpectedly as caregivers are not aware of what children can do and how quickly they develop new skills.



# Developmental stages of children and their psychological needs

"The more parents learn about and understand their children the more they can help and support them to develop and grow"

Parents need to be aware of their children's social and psychological development in order to determine their needs. It is widely accepted that children go through four stages of social development during the preschool age. It is the successful completion of each that governs the child's and later the adult's psychological health.

## 1. Basic trust / mistrust (0 to 18 Months)

Babies learn to trust and develop optimism only if their needs are met and they are well handled, nurtured and loved. On the contrary, badly handled babies become insecure and mistrustful.

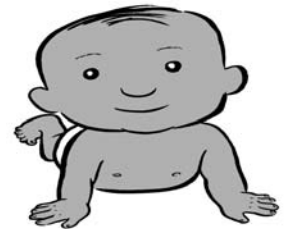
### How to enhance trust development with your child

The role of the parent during this stage is to:

- provide your child with emotional security and a calm home atmosphere
- give your child lots of cuddles and smiles
- use a gentle voice, singing and repeating the child's sounds
- avoid all kinds of violence within your home
- spend quality time with your child whenever possible
- distract your child with a toy to play with when upset.

## 2. Autonomy versus shame (18 month to 3 Years)

This is a new stage for the child physically, psychologically and emotionally. During this stage the toddler learns to become an individual. From 18 months, children start to say 'no' and feel they can do things for themselves when moving around. The well-parented child emerges from this stage sure of himself and proud rather than ashamed.



Your role during this stage is to:

- respect the ownership of your child's possessions and teach him to respect that certain things belong to certain people
- Teach "but don't force" your child to engage and share with others
- Be flexible and give your child a space to develop his independence and respect his privacy
- teach your child about his body and accept him as a whole person.

### 3. Initiative versus guilt (Ages 3 to 6 years)

At this stage, your child will tend to show strong desire to explore the surroundings, experiment his new ideas and to carry out his plans. His favourite saying at this age will be, "I can do it", "let me do it". In addition the child learns to imagine, to cooperate with others and to lead as well as to follow. Poorly handled children will be fearful and continue to depend on adults and be restricted in the development of play skills and imagination.

Your role during this stage is to:

- encourage your child to develop their own creativity and imagination
- listen to your child and share his imagination
- respect his fantasy and do not tease him about it
- set realistic expectations for your child according to his age and ability
- affirm your child's ability and foster his self-confidence.

### 4. Competence (Ages 4 to 5)

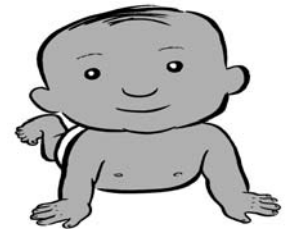
In this stage the child learns skills such as relating with peers according to rules (team work) and mastering social studies and reading.

Well-parented children in their earlier developmental stages who are trusting, autonomous, full of initiative will easily learn to be industrious as well in this competence stage. While the shame and guilt filled children will experience defeat and inferiority.



Your role during this stage is to:

- respect and accept your child's need for power and decision making but set clear rules, boundaries and limits
- teach your child to keep promises as a sign of maturity
- involve yourself in the child's imaginary role-plays with his super-heroes and teach him how to use power to help others.





## Self esteem and self confidence

### What is self-esteem?

In general terms self-esteem is the collection of beliefs or feelings that we have about ourselves. With young children however, self-esteem refers to the extent they expect to be accepted and valued by the adults and peers who are important to them.

Children with a healthy sense of self-esteem feel that the important adults in their lives accept them, care about them and are working hard to ensure that they are safe and secure. On the other hand, children with low self-esteem feel that the important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them and don't care about them or their safety and security.

### Self-esteem and the Chinese community

Families, communities, and ethnic and cultural groups vary in the criteria on which self-esteem is based. Some groups may emphasize physical appearance or favour boys over girls. Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination are also factors that may contribute to low self - esteem among families of ethnic origin particularly children.

Generally speaking, Chinese are humble people and believe that everyone should strive for improvement. Chinese feel the need to be harsh on themselves and to act quickly to correct mistakes. Chinese parents tend not to praise their children and sometimes devalue their children in front of others. They think that too much praise makes their children too proud of themselves and subsequently spoilt.

With these prevalent traditional Chinese values, most Chinese did not (and still don't) develop positive self-esteem or self-confidence from relationships with their parents. In fact, most of the parents within the Chinese community who

participated in our parenting survey did not see themselves as having a high self-esteem or high self-confidence.

If we are not aware of the pitfalls of these cultural values, we will tend to repeat the mistakes of our parents. These are actions and practices that impact on the children's self-esteem and on their abilities towards the challenges of the world.

## Characteristics of children with high and low self-esteem

Children with positive self-esteem:	Children with negative self-esteem:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a sense of self importance and value within the family and community</li> <li>• act independently</li> <li>• take pride in achievements</li> <li>• tolerate frustration</li> <li>• handle positive and negative emotions</li> <li>• assume responsibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel unloved and not important within the family and community</li> <li>• avoid trying new things</li> <li>• blame others for own shortcomings</li> <li>• are unable to tolerate frustration</li> <li>• are easily influenced</li> <li>• put down their own talents and abilities.</li> </ul>

Parents, more than anyone else can play a vital role in strengthening children's self-esteem by treating them with respect and considering their views and opinions seriously. Promoting children's self-esteem is not a difficult task. In reality, most parents do it without realizing that their word or actions have a great impact on their children.

### Here are some suggestions:

#### 1. Feeling connected to the past and future

To build your children's self-esteem, it is important that they feel:

- a sense of connectedness to their family's past and heritage (mother land)
- a sense of direction and belonging to their current life in the new country



- positive about their future.

You can help them to achieve this by:

- sharing stories and photos from your past, your roots and your ethnic background with them
- sharing stories about your migration, settlement stages and difficulties accompanying this with them
- talking to them about your current place and roles in the community and the society at large
- talking to them about your participation in social, sports and general activities
- talking to them about your future goals and expectations for the family's future
- talking to them about your dreams and hopes for their future how these have changed with time.

## 2. Positive affirmation

Children need constant positive verbal messages and affirmations from you to make them feel good. These need to be accurate and true about them. Gradually they will internalize these and believe in themselves. You need to be very giving and generous. Do not forget to praise them by:

- saying I love you no matter what
- saying I am happy and lucky to have you
- helping them to solve their own problems

## 3. Acknowledgment

When children achieve things that they are capable of, do not forget to praise them by saying:

- thank you
- you did it very well
- I appreciate your efforts and perseverance.



#### 4. Physical action

Action speaks louder than words. Physical gestures, body language and actions are powerful tools of encouragement. You can show your love by:

- listening to your children
- spending special / quality time together
- participating in their games and activities
- giving them warm gestures and affection whenever possible (smiles, hugs, stroking their head and hair or back)
- giving them opportunities to participate with you and help you.

#### Self-esteem and competency

Self-esteem is a prerequisite for success in life. If children feel confident and think they are competent based on their past successful experiences, they will most likely succeed. If they see themselves as a failure, they will likely be unsuccessful and this may reinforce their low self-esteem. When children have low self-esteem, their self-worth is also low.

Children need to apply learnt skills to a variety of different situations when the opportunity arises. You can contribute to your child's abilities and competencies by:

- coaching your children and demonstrating new skills to them
- encouraging your child to make repeated attempts to achieving a task
- allowing the child an opportunity to apply what they have learnt
- assisting your child to enhance their strengths
- assigning some of your tasks to your children in appropriate age.



## Enhancing children's social skills

### Introduction

Developing children's language and social skills are amongst the basic principles of raising children outside the parents' homeland. These skills help to build their character and develop them as good citizens who are able to interact with and contribute to society at large and their community in particular. This responsibility to develop social skills is primarily a parental one and is also assumed by child care centres, kindergartens and other educational institutions.

The majority of Chinese families in their homelands and abroad still follow traditional inherited methods of parenting. The family plans the paths children will follow in other stages in their life. The family under this model assumes the role of setting their children's steps towards maturity as they determine and resolve other details, which may be considered personal issues. In western culture, including Australian society these are considered to be basic rights and choices the child will make as he matures.

Some of these traditional methods will impact in one way or another on the child's capacity to develop their abilities, including the ability to interact with society.

In addition, language is the basic method of communication and interaction with society and represents the tool through which an individual is able to fulfil himself within his environment, whether it is at home, school or the community at large. Thus, Chinese families should take language and other social interaction into account especially during the early stages of childhood.

## The importance of language development in Chinese children

Generally speaking, Chinese usually are humble, passive, quiet, hard working, not vocal, non-assertive, caring, peaceful and non-demonstrative of emotions. They are actors rather than talkers. These can be the strengths of the Chinese character but they can be also the weaknesses.

Chinese parents express their love toward their children in actions rather than in words. They use body language and indirect small gestures to express their feelings: a smile, a frown, a look and even silence are subtle ways of expressing their emotions.

However, this traditional Chinese parenting practice of putting less emphasis on verbal expressions tends to delay the language development of young children.

## What happens when children have difficulty in verbally expressing themselves?

Children experiencing difficulty in expressing themselves may suffer from emotional as well as social stresses.

### 1. Children experiencing emotional stress may:

- become more frustrated
- throw more temper tantrums
- tend to be aggressive in resolving conflicts.

### 2. Children experiencing social stress may:

- display inadequate social skills and experience shyness and isolation
- lack self-confidence
- become very quiet
- become passive, timid and an easy target for teasing and bullying.



Statistics have shown that most Chinese speak their native language at home in Australia. The first contact that Chinese children have with Australian mainstream culture is when they enter playgroups, kindergartens and primary schools. It is then when they find that their Australian peers are more expressive and assertive.

## Language development and play learning

A traditional Chinese saying about play is that “play gives no benefits but hard work does”. Most Chinese parents regard play as a waste of time. However, for young children all kinds of play are a rich learning process. Play:

- is a great opportunity for spontaneous learning and exploration in a simple way
- is an opportunity for interaction and various skills development
- is a safe medium for children to explore and develop their abilities and potential
- helps children to relax, to have fun, to be creative and to solve problems
- can help children in expressing their positive and negative feelings.

## Your role in your children’s play and language development

Contrary to the traditional Chinese thinking, which devalues play, you need to:

- encourage your children to play, play with them and get involved in their games and role plays and have fun with them
- avoid taking over or manipulating their games, give them a chance to lead and enjoy their leadership in play
- appreciate and affirm their imagination and creativity while providing them with different play experiences and ideas
- guide them along with values such as sharing and cooperation while listening to their creative ideas and letting them teach you how to play,



## Ways to enhance children's verbal expression

It is the role of the family to:

- give children the time and opportunity to express themselves verbally
- ask children questions so that they think for themselves especially during the early stages of their childhood
- make use of every opportunity to encourage them to talk. Here are some examples:
  - take your children shopping and ask them to search for goods you want to buy, you can take turns in describing some interesting products and guessing what they are
  - when you bath your young children, describe different parts of their body and give them choices of which part they want to wash first such as head or hair, hands or toes
  - when you have a train ride, ask them questions or describe what you see and what you hear
  - describe to your children, things and people around them in great detail. They learn to focus, concentrate and note the details
  - give your children different learning experiences by taking them to see different things and different people in different places. Ask them to describe what they see in a farm, a zoo, a birthday party, a shopping centre etc
  - make use of the opportunities to sharpen your children's senses and practice their language skills when you are waiting at different places (bus stops, clinics etc..). It is often wise to bring along children's books and cards to read, play, and occupy them
  - help your children (from 18 months onwards) to understand the relationships between a cause and a consequence. For instance, when you turn on the switch, the light is on. Teach them how their behaviors have logical consequences





- provide your children with some facts so that they can learn to draw conclusions. For example, tell your children the knife is sharp, so they interpret that "I better not to touch it or else I might get hurt"
- do not criticize your children when they make grammatical mistakes in their verbal expression. You need to rephrase it or say it again correctly
- appreciate your children's choice of words and affirm their ability of expressing themselves creatively. Play word games with them so that they are eager to talk with you. For example, ask them "What do clouds look like?" They may give you all sorts of funny answers, full of creativity and imagination. They may say, "clouds look like a cushion, a sheepskin, a marshmallow, my teddy bear, etc..."

*In this way, children think language is fun! For them, it will be a tool to express themselves fully and happily! A tool to have a special fun time with you!*





## Developing effective communication with your children

Studies in this field have indicated the significance of expression of emotions to the wellbeing of individuals of all ages. However, traditional Chinese culture does not regard the expression of emotions as important, except for positive emotions such as joy and hope. Chinese are taught from a young age not to express their feelings.

### Examples of Chinese tradition in relation to communication of emotions

- Physical expressions of affection such as hugging and kissing are discouraged, especially in public places.
- In men, crying is seen as a weakness. There is an old Chinese saying that “it is acceptable for a man to shed blood but not tears”. In women, crying is discouraged too, as it creates sadness and brings bad luck to the family.
- Expressions of anger, especially in outside the home environment, are regarded as showing lack of self-control and self-cultivation.
- For children, it is unacceptable and indeed is considered very rude and “rebellious” to talk back to parents or any authoritative figure, even explaining oneself.
- It is acceptable for a father to show anger towards his wife, children and subordinates. Whereas a mother can only show anger towards her children, daughters in law and servants.

Chinese tend to suppress their emotions and are not demonstrative of their feelings. This may result in a tense relationship between children and their parents. Children may feel not loved by their parents who may have the best

intentions and make a range of sacrifices for them. This is especially crucial with teenage children who are easily influenced by external forces such as peers, drugs and alcohol.

It is very important for you as a parent to learn how to communicate your feelings effectively with your children at early age. Communication of feelings and thoughts with your children is a skill that needs continuous practice. It is a powerful tool to enhance your relationship with your children.

## Good communication consists of two important components: listening and speaking:

Communication consists generally of two important components, which compliment each other, talking and listening. The following section covers important strategies in:

- listening to your children's feelings
- talking to your children so that they will listen to you.

Once you master these communication skills, you will enjoy the closeness of family relationships and you can discipline your children effectively.

## How to listen to your children's feelings and needs?

### General listening skills

Some of the ways you can improve your skills in listening and responding to your child's feelings and needs include:

- arranging a time and a quiet place to listen to your children. If you are busy, honour your promise of listening to your children later
- paying full attention to your children when they talk
- acknowledging what your children say, e.g. "I understand that ... when you ..."
- using good body language such as eye contact, a smile and head nodding
- asking open questions (which let your children answer in their own words in detail) such as: "*How did it happen?*" or "*How do you feel?*"



- squatting down instead of towering over your children, touching your children or holding them and listening at their level
- avoiding criticising, teasing, ridiculing or judging your children
- listening for a while with empathy to what your child is sharing
- trying to put into your own words what your child has just said to you
- trying to pinpoint your children's feelings and repeating them back.

## How to talk so that your children will listen

Some ways to encourage your child to listen and respond include:

- from an early age, hold discussions with your children as much as possible and train the child to carry out a discussion
- asking the child about topics of interest such as school, friends and sporting activities
- getting involved in your child's daily activities and making time to talk about them
- using words of encouragement and praise
- avoiding embarrassing the child or putting him / her on the spot in front of others
- trying to use "I" instead of "YOU" statements whenever possible.

There is a big difference when you talk to your children with *I-Messages* and *You-Messages*

### Example of *I-Messages* and *You-Messages*

<i>I-Message:</i>	<i>You-Message:</i>
"I am disappointed when you watched TV without doing your homework first."	"You are useless and you are lazy. You only want watch TV all day and not do your homework."



If you were the five - year old child above, how would you feel and react when your mother told you the above "*I-Message*" and "*You-Message*"?

***Which message would you like best and why?***

*You-messages:*

- are labels, judgements and evaluations of things and people
- create negative reactions and feelings
- are hurtful and causing the person who receives it to feel resentful and defensive.

So you need to be aware of what you say to your children and think about changing "*You-Messages*" into "*I-Messages*".

Parents need to communicate their feelings, their needs, their values and their thoughts to children openly and honestly.

*I-Messages:*

- can be used to achieve the goals of meeting your needs, sharing your values, feelings and thoughts
- are self-disclosure of yourself, i.e. who you are, your feelings, needs, beliefs, likes and dislikes, values and thoughts
- let your children know where you stand and how you feel.

## Advantages of disclosing yourself to your children

When you share who you are as a person with your children:

- you get in touch with yourself, maintain awareness and control of your inner experiences
- you feel strong, confident and responsible
- they will understand you better and know the importance of your feelings, values and thoughts
- they will feel more secure and know where you stand
- you avoid conflicts as your children would know what you want



- you are a good role model for them to be assertive and meet their needs in interpersonal relationships
- they will realise that it is safe to express their feelings honestly and openly to you
- you and your children will have a closer family relationship.

There are four types of "*I-Messages*". These include:

### ***1. Declarative I - Messages to disclose the real you***

This is an "*I-Message*" for communication about the self. You share with others who you are. This kind of *I-Message* is clear, direct, honest, real and consistent and reflects the actual nature of your thoughts and feelings.

The declarative *I-Message*:

- tells others your beliefs, ideas, feelings, thoughts, likes, dislikes, and reactions
- normally starts with: "I believe", "I think", "I feel" or "I know"

For example:

*"I believe that everyone is equal, regardless of age, gender, skin color and ethnic background."*

### ***2. Preventive I-Messages to stop conflicts before it starts***

This kind of *I-Message* is to inform your children and others about some of your future needs you want to meet. The preventative *I-Message*:

- tells your children what you want to do or see happen
- increases the chances that others will adjust their actions to meet your needs
- starts with "I would like you . . . so . . ."

For example:

*"I would like you to finish your homework before six o'clock so we can enjoy dinner out together tonight."*



### ***3. Positive I-Messages to improve your relationships***

This *I-Message* describes your positive feelings toward your children. You acknowledge the good behaviours and thoughts your children show to you and others.

Positive *I-Messages* to your children:

- express your love, affection, appreciation and enjoyment toward your children and others
- helps to build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

**For example:**

*"I appreciate your help in setting the dinner table tonight." Or "I am proud of you as you tried your best at school."*

### ***4. Confrontive I-Messages to deal with unacceptable behaviours***

This *I-Message* confronts the child with unacceptable behaviours. This is a powerful message to foster change in your children's behaviour. It has three elements:

- 1. Facts:** a non- blameful description of what the child is saying or doing that is unacceptable. This needs to be
  - observable, the child can remember what he does or did
  - specific, avoid general terms. {e.g. Don't use "bad manners" but use "pick your nose"}.
- 2. Effects:** the specific effects that the child's unacceptable behaviour creates. This needs to be:
  - observable and specific {e.g. the clothes get ruined}
- 3. Feelings:** how you feel about the bad effects of the child's action on you and others. Use feeling-words the child can understand {e.g. I feel angry as the clothes cost us so much money}.





## Resolving conflicts with your children effectively

### Introduction

It is widely known that the most frequent ways for Chinese parents to resolve conflicts with their children are scolding and hitting. However, seeking mutual understanding of each other has also been frequently reported.

The traditional parenting practice of resolving conflict by scolding and hitting has been challenged in today's society for legal as well as social reasons.

Hence, it is vital for you as a parent to learn how to deal with conflicts with your children as early as possible using more socially and legally acceptable ways.

### Practical steps in resolving conflicts with your children

Research findings have suggested that the best way of dealing with conflicts with your children is the win-win resolution, which is based on the following six practical steps problem solving principles:

- Step 1: Defining the problem in terms of needs**
- Step 2: Generating possible solutions (Brainstorm)**
- Step 3: Evaluating solutions**
- Step 4: Deciding on a mutually acceptable solution**
- Step 5: Implementing the solution**
- Step 6: Evaluating the solution**

## Step 1: Defining the problem in terms of needs

This is the most important step in problem solving. It involves:

- *giving enough time to explore and define the problem or conflict*
- *emphasising "I-Messages"<sup>1</sup> to express your needs to your child*
- *listening to and accepting your child's feelings and understanding his / her needs*
- *expressing your negative feelings (such as anger) constructively*
- *reassuring your child that:*
  - *you are both looking for a solution to the problem that will meet both your needs*
  - *neither you nor him will lose; you both win and resolve the problem properly.*

## Step 2: Generating possible solutions (brainstorm)

This is the creative part of conflict resolution. Some possible solutions to solving the problem without deciding which one is best include:

- *ask your child first for his or her possible solutions*
- *avoid teasing or criticising your child's solutions*
- *write down all possible solutions*
- *get at least a few possible solutions before evaluating*
- *restating the aims and encouraging cooperation.*

## Step 3: Evaluating solutions

At this stage, each of the solutions are evaluated to see which best meets your own needs and your child's needs:

- *you both need to be honest and critical of each possible option*
- *you both evaluate all possible solutions*
- *ask practical questions and check the feasibility of each solution*



- *test each possible solution and find the best one with the least defects*
- *listen to both your needs and feelings. Is it fair to both?*

## Step 4: Deciding on a mutually acceptable solution

Next, the best solution out of all is chosen that best meets the needs of you and your child. This can be achieved by:

- *choosing the most possible option that you both agree on*
- *avoiding imposing your solution on your child*
- *ensuring you both understand the chosen solution*

## Step 5: Implementing the solution

Discuss how to implement the solution immediately after a solution is chosen. Here are some suggestions:

- *discuss who does what by when*
- *do not doubt your child and threaten him with consequences*
- *confront your child with "I-Messages" when he fails to do his part later*
- *offer suggestions to help the child to finish his part*
- *avoid nagging and controlling your child as this might create resentment or dependency on you.*

## Step 6: Evaluating the solution

After a period of time discuss with your child how the problem and the solution are going. Here are some suggestions to follow:

- *you or your child may discover the weakness of the solution, which requires modification or rejection for a better solution*
- *listen to both your needs and feelings about the carrying out of the solution*
- *you both need to be open and review the agreed solution*
- *check the progress and amend the solution realistically if necessary.*



You can skip a step or two if a superior good solution comes up that both of you are happy with and which meets your mutual needs. However, you both need to respect, listen and honestly communicate your needs and feelings to each other.

Parents are encouraged to practice an example where they could deal with a real life situation and use the six steps to solve a conflict with your child.



## Discipline

### Introduction

Effective discipline is a skill that all parents need to learn, develop and practice. Discipline is by no means the same as punishment as it is mistakenly understood and practiced by many parents regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. It is by far the hardest and at times the most confusing part of raising children particularly in a multicultural environment.

In general terms, parenting is a positive action, it involves teaching children to behave appropriately, understand right from wrong and respect the rights of others. Parenting also aims to develop a child's abilities and confidence so he feels secure and loved and can control his instincts. Punishment on the other hand is a negative action by parents, perhaps in the face of unacceptable behaviour taken by the child, it may aim to deter the child by making him afraid of unacceptable behaviour.

### Discipline that teaches involves the following

- The child is aware of his behaviour.
- The child has ownership of the problem.
- Suitable options are explored and they are discussed in more details if applicable.
- Both the parent and the child keep their dignity intact.

### Discipline practices in the Chinese culture

Traditionally, the usual way to discipline a child in the Chinese culture is to lecture the child verbally and / or to hit the child physically. Milder forms of punishment include yelling, scolding, silent treatment, financial restriction and physical restrictions that include withholding of food and privileges.

The lectures may include a recollection of events of misbehaviour of the child, blame and a reminder of the shame that the child might have brought to the family's name.

The distinction between discipline and physical punishment is not clear to many Chinese parents. Many Chinese parents believe in the traditional Chinese saying that "an obedient son comes from the head of a stick".

## Child abuse and physical punishment

In many civilized societies, including Australia, it is a crime for parents to abuse their children physically, emotionally, mentally and sexually. Parents will be warned, notified, charged and probably jailed if found to have committed these acts. In addition, their children could possibly be separated from them depending on the nature and the extent of the abuse.

However, child abuse in all its forms still happens in all different societies. In general, there is a fine line between physical punishment and child abuse. Quite often, physical punishment might easily turn into physical abuse, especially when parents lose control of their temper and emotions.

## Impact of physical punishment on children

Below are some of the effects of physical punishment on children. Emotional punishments can have similar effects. Physical punishment:

- may reduce children's creativity and their ability to explore
- creates tension in parent-child relationships where children tend to feel angry, hostile, resentful and distrustful towards their parents
- encourages aggression, which models violence as a solution to problems
- is socially unacceptable in a society which claims to value peaceful solutions
- is an external control rather than internal control, thus children do not learn self-discipline.



In conclusion, using the consequences of misbehavior is often more effective than punishment (physical and emotional) because they are directly linked to the action. Children learn from the consequences of their actions directly and they will remember to improve themselves.

## What is the best style of disciplining children?

Generally speaking, there is no one right way to discipline and raise children effectively. But there are a number of effective parenting styles that incorporate different discipline techniques. Parents may choose and adhere to one specific style that suits their own cultural values. However, it is highly recommended that you as a parent to be consistent in your methods of discipline.

Studies and research in parenting and child psychology have shown three main streams of thought or methods of discipline summarised below.

- **Authoritarian style**

Parents believe in “absolute obedience to authority” and commanding the child what to do and what not to do and leaving no room for creativity and thinking. Misbehaviour is strictly punished.

Although practiced widely by parents within the Chinese community, this style is no longer accepted or tolerated by a rapidly changing society particularly in a multicultural setting.

Rebellion may be the ultimate outcome from strict punishment. Children raised in this way easily copy anyone including undesirable peers.



- **Permissive style**

In this style parents are lenient, take a “hands off” approach, do not set limits for their children’s behaviours and allow them to learn from consequences of their actions. Misbehaviour may be ignored.

Children raised in this way are generally creative and original, but may feel insecure and can make poor choices. They quite often have difficulties adapting in a highly populated community and fitting into the work force.

- **Assertive democratic style**

Where parents delegate responsibilities to their children according to their abilities, clarify issues and give reasons for limits. Children are guided and given lots of practice in making choices. Misbehaviours are handled with appropriate consequences or by problem solving taking into consideration the child’s needs. Out of control children will have “time out” as an alternative to punishment of any kind.

This style is widely practiced by western societies and it is regarded as the best style for a fast changing information era.

Children raised in this way learn to accept responsibility, cope and adapt to changes and to make wiser choices.

## Effective discipline techniques

The following are general advice on some discipline techniques that have been found to be effective in disciplining children.

- Children should learn to understand that there are consequences of their actions and behaviours and potential disciplinary action for negative actions and behaviours. Plan / think ahead and be prepared with actions to help your child understand the consequences. Such a method will develop a sense of responsibility and aspiration in the child as well as helping him to know the limits of his actions and behaviours.





- Act immediately to implement punishment or rewards. Avoid waiting a long time to connect the action with the outcome, as this may not give the appropriate result.
- Use **rewards** rather than **bribes**.
- Be firm in implementing punishment or carrying out the promised rewards. Do not argue with your child about the punishment.
- Set limits for your children that are appropriate for their age.
- Remember that it is not wrong to say “**no**” to your child sometimes but it is wrong to say, “**yes**” all the time.
- Stop inappropriate behaviours with a firm “**no**” in a pleasant voice and a simple and clear explanation.
- Set up a daily routine and make every effort to stick to it.
- Do not offer choices in circumstances where the child has to cooperate with your rules. e.g. say “it is time to go to bed” ... but don’t say “would you like to go to bed”.
- Use distraction to get the child’s attention from unacceptable behaviours.
- Use “time out” as an alternative effective punishment technique.
- Be a good role model in all situations, stay calm, don’t focus on the negatives and reward and praise good behaviours.

## An alternative way to physical punishment: Time out

Time out is an alternative positive strategy to shouting, threatening or smacking. When used appropriately, time out can be effective in helping children learn self-control and acceptable behaviours. By using this method, you as a parent, are giving your child time out from positive reinforcement after inappropriate behaviour.

- Prepare a quiet place in the house, which can be a chair in any room, a space on the floor, the child’s bed etc.



- When a child misbehaves:
  - *explain the issue / misbehaviour and its consequences in a clear manner*
  - *make a direct eye contact with the child and firmly say "if you do not... you are going to sit in time out" and point to the time out space / chair*
  - *if the behaviour persists, take the child to the time out chair / space and say "you have not done what I asked. As a result you have to sit on your time out chair / space" and "you must stay here until I tell you"*
- When the time is up, the child can come back to the situation and are expected to say sorry and to behave cooperatively.
- When both you and the child are overwhelmed and over-stressed, it is useful to use time-out to protect each other physically and emotionally with temporary physical separation.
- It is important to teach your child what time-out means, and what happens before, during and after the time-out.



## Stress management for parents

### What is stress

Stress is one of our reactions as we adjust to our continually changing environment. Stress is unavoidable in life. It is a healthy reaction in many situations, which may be born out of our attempts to acclimatise and react with changes taking place in our lives and its challenges. It may be a reaction to the family, social, employment, financial and political challenges confronting us.

Certain amounts of stress are important and helpful. Stress can help us to engage in an action, can result in a new awareness and may add anticipation and excitement to life. Too much stress can make us sick. Stress can result in feelings of anger, distrust, and depression and this may be associated with health problems such as insomnia, heart problems, headaches and other health conditions,

Raising children can be a very stressful experience. Although it brings happiness and excitement, it is often accompanied with stress and tension regardless of the child's age.

As such managing your stress and anger is a skill that each parent needs to develop and practice to achieve a healthy relationship with their children.

### Chinese parents and stress

Traditionally, most Chinese parents will try to do almost anything and sacrifice their own needs to raise their children in the best possible way. Mothers devote themselves completely to their children, while fathers are the breadwinners of the family.

In the Chinese culture, parents receive high recognition from the community through the good behaviour and successes of their children. Chinese parents will be credited for providing good family education, when their children perform

and achieve well at school. When children misbehave, the disgrace falls on the family. As a result, parents may be very angry and resort to physical punishment to discipline their children's misbehaviour. Parents would also feel very hurt and betrayed by their misbehaved children, as they had sacrificed so much to raise them. Moreover, most Chinese parents take their children's behavioural problems very seriously. Some parents regard their children's misbehaviour as a personal attack and this would reflect on the parent child relationship.

Most Chinese parents would feel angry, guilty, frustrated and stressed when their children do not behave properly at home. This stress and anger is magnified when their children misbehave at school, in public places or in the homes of their relatives and friends.

Even today, the traditional belief that parents are responsible for their children's actions and behaviours still exists within the Chinese communities. The recent Chinese parenting survey showed that most parents feel very angry and guilty about their children's misbehaviour.

When Chinese parents have the above traditional parental values, you can imagine how stressful their life would be.

Do you hold the same Chinese beliefs and find your life very stressful?

Therefore, it is very important for you as a parent to rectify this burdensome and unrealistic belief.

You need to recognise the following:

- children are unique individuals with different personalities, needs, talents, strengths and weaknesses
- children grow at different paces physically, emotionally and intellectually
- it is unfair and unrealistic to compare your children with other children even within your family
- you are not responsible for your children's behaviour but instead you are responsible to teach your children to be responsible for their own behaviour



- you need to challenge the traditional Chinese parenting belief that you cannot take time for yourself.

## Impact of stress and anger on your children

When parents fail to control their children's behavioural problems and fail to discipline their children effectively, the parent's negative emotions will build up. Unresolved frustration and mixed emotions can lead to stress followed by frequent anger outbursts.

However, uncontrollable anger in parents cannot improve their children's behavioural problems. It only produces a vicious stress cycle. Some children react strongly and badly towards their parents' anger and they themselves become angry and rebellious. This can lead to more behavioural problems in response to the parents' anger and unreasonable punishment. Parents can then become more provoked emotionally and heavier punishments will follow.

Hence, there is a great need for parents to re-evaluate some traditional beliefs and learn how to manage their stress and anger.

## Stress and anger management

As stress is a natural human reaction to our daily life, the goal of each and every parent should be directed not to eliminate it but to learn how to manage it effectively and how to use it to help us.

The following are ways to manage your stress better:

### 1. Recognise that you are stressed

- You must say to yourself I am stressed. Do not deny it or ignore it.
- Talk about your feelings with other adult family members or friends.

### 2. Identify the causes of your stress

- Take notice of when, where, why and who made you feel stressed.
- Recognise how this stress affects you and your parenting role.



- Determine how your body responds to the stress, physically and emotionally

### 3. Recognise what you can change as a parent

- Can you avoid the cause of stress?
- Can you reduce your exposure to stress?
- Can you devote the time and energy to make a change?

### 4. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress

- Don't exaggerate the stress. Don't make it a disaster. Don't overreact.
- Work at adopting more moderate views in your parenting role.
- Do not focus on the negative aspects.
- Try to see stress as a normal process in our daily life.
- Try to see stress as something you can cope with.
- Talk to a confidante about your emotional stress.

### 5. Learn to reduce your physical reactions to stress

- Try to do gentle regular daily exercises. Choose a form of exercise that is fun, enjoyable and easy to keep with such as walking, jogging or swimming.
- Exercise slow deep breathing in the open air.
- Find time to sit quietly near a lake and listen to your favourite music
- Get adequate sleep

### 6. Maintain your physical and emotional reserve

- Eat well-balanced nutritious meals.
- Avoid excessive caffeine and other stimulants.
- Mix leisure with work.
- Develop mutually supportive friendships / relationships, mothers group are a great idea.



- Be realistic. Expect some frustrations, failures and sorrows.
- Don't forget yourself. Be kind, gentle and a friend to yourself.

## Other stress management tips

- Do not take your children's misbehaviours personally and seriously.
- Tell your children how do you feel.
- Make use of before and after school care.
- Visit your local maternal and child health centres for practical support.
- Explore and make use of local resources; local councils, local libraries etc...







## Conclusion

In the Chinese culture, Children form a significant part of the adults' life. In addition, for many young Chinese families, children may become the whole world of the family. However, it is regrettable to see that many Chinese parents and families still adopting the old parenting style inherited from ancestors with all its setbacks.

Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.) said, “no parent is born with parenting skills and we all learn along the way”. Also children are born pure and free, but lack knowledge and experience. It is the responsibility of parents first and last to understand children's needs and respond to their concerns.

While children grow little by little in their ability to exercise self-control physically and mentally, parents are required to cope with their children's demands. In addition, parents need to develop and adopt parenting skills that satisfy the needs of their children in this continually changing world.

We hope that the development of this parenting guide will provide you, as parents of Chinese origin, with the right advice, with the proper tools and a map to assist you in building a happy family in a foreign land you now call home-Australia. It is hoped that this guide will assist you to understand and practise a new parenting style without losing the positive Chinese cultural values.

When you ask yourself once again the same question mentioned earlier in this parenting guide, “Why did I come to Australia?” You probably would reply in the same way: “I have come here for a better future for my family, particularly for my children.”

Have you ever wondered how you can achieve the goal of building a happy family, especially for your children? There is no doubt that you have been working hard and providing your children the best you could, like your parents and your grandparents did. However, we are so different from our parents and our grandparents in terms of the time, the society and the complexity and challenges of today's life. More importantly, we are faced with intense cultural conflicts in today's world.

If we want to survive, adapt, and excel in this complex multi-cultural society of Australia, we need to change from our traditional Chinese parenting styles. When you first decided to come to Australia, you knew it was a gamble because you would have to change and could not stay the same. You and your children will enjoy freedom and opportunities, but somehow you would need to create your own styles of parenting in a new country with different cultural, social and educational values.

It would be ideal to combine the best of both worlds: the Eastern Chinese culture and the Western culture. For most of us, it would be wonderful to help our children to be proud of both; the Chinese traditions and heritage and the Australian way of life with all its values and principles.

However, it seems very sad that some Chinese children feel ashamed of their Chinese origin and having strict and traditional parents. These children feel alienated, and think that the traditional Chinese values of filial piety are inhumane and unacceptable. They rebel against these Chinese values and reject the Chinese culture in general. The parents would definitely feel very hurt, betrayed and resentful. They have worked so hard to raise their children in a new country but somehow they feel rejected and abandoned. They ask themselves what wrong have they done to deserve this rejection. The answer probably lies in the balancing of the traditional Chinese culture and its values (especially filial piety), and the dominant Australian culture and its values (such as egalitarianism and individualism). How can these Chinese parents turn around and embrace their rebellious children with love and open arms? Likewise, how can their children turn around and embrace their traditional parents with acceptance and respect?



The background survey to this project has clearly indicated that many Australian Chinese parents would like to learn better ways of disciplining their children, instead of resorting to physical punishment. Many parents would also like to promote their children's self-confidence and think it is important for their children to express their feelings and thoughts.

Before it is too late and both parents and children have entrenched themselves in opposing each other, it is wise for us to learn the lesson. Let us take a closer look, re-evaluate our traditional Chinese values, and just keep the best. At the same time, we need to learn some positive solid practical parenting skills and integrate them into our daily life of parenting our Australian-born Chinese children.

In conclusion, what is the best parenting style for Chinese parents? There is no single answer. What works well in one Chinese family may not work in another. Every family is unique as parents have different backgrounds and the character of both children and parents are different too. However, when you are open-minded, and seek to resolve cultural conflicts peacefully and take the best from both cultures (Eastern and Western), you have made a good start for the best parenting style for you children.

As parents, you realise it is not only important to satisfy the material needs of your children, but it is vital for you also to satisfy the psychological needs of both your children and yourself. If you cannot love and accept yourself, it is very hard for you to love your children unconditionally. When you have faith in yourself, your self-esteem and self-confidence, as parents will increase. You know that you are your children's first teachers in life. You try to build your children's self-confidence as you yourself realise the pain of not being encouraged enough as a child to build your own confidence.

When you gradually master the skills of communication mentioned in this guide, you can listen to your children's feelings. Your children also develop empathy and emotional intelligence. You need to be open enough to listen to your children's suggestions when you are in conflict with each other. Your conflict resolution skills help you to become fair and understanding parents.



You realise the traditional Chinese ways of disciplining children seem to be harmful to your children physically and emotionally. You want to be different but effective as parents. You need to learn not to over-protect your children and let them be responsible for their behaviour. Children learn fast from the consequences of their behaviour, rather than from punishment, especially physical punishment.

Although you may feel stressed in raising your children, you are willing to try to love yourself and recharge your emotional energy. You are no longer bound to the traditional Chinese belief that you have to sacrifice yourself completely for your children. You become realistic, loving, caring, understanding and effective parents. With your insights and experiences, as time goes by with your continuous practice of parenting skills, you can gradually master the best parenting style for your family.



## Support networks

### Family Support Organisations (Victoria)

- Asian Mothers Group (Brunswick - Fitzroy region: 03 9411 3525).
- Australian Breastfeeding Association (03 9885 0653)
- Chinese Community Resource Centre (Melbourne 03 9663 3334).
- Chinese Community Social Services Centre (Burwood 03 9888 8671).
- Chinese Grandparents' Playgroups (NMRCN, Preston: 03 9484 7944).
- Drummond Street Relationship Centre (Carlton 03 9663 6733).
- Maternal and Child Health Line (13 22 29).
- Nursing Mothers Association of Australia (Victoria: 03 9885 0855).
- ParentLine (Victoria toll free number: 13 22 89 seven days a week).
- Parents Without Partners (Victoria: 03 9852 1945).
- ParentZone: parenting classes and relevant information (Victoria: 03 9478 9499).
- Playgroup Victoria (03 9388 1599).
- VICSEG (Chinese mothers' groups: 03 9383 2533).

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