

Dos and Don'ts in supporting families who care for a child with additional needs

At Care for the Family we speak with many parents of additional needs children. We asked some of them what helps, and what doesn't help. Parents quickly become the expert on their own child and will know how you can help, all you have to do is ask!

DO affirm my parenting. Find positive things to say. I do know that my child's behaviour can be difficult.
DON'T criticise me. I really am doing my best. I can see your disapproving look.
DO listen to me. I sometimes need to talk and I love it if you really listen.
DON'T ask me what is 'wrong' with my child. In my eyes they are perfect, but of course I sometimes wish they could do all that your child can do.
DO accept my child, and our family, just the way we are. Even though we may not fit into your pattern.
DON'T make judgements about what my child can or cannot do, say, hear, see or understand.
DO get down to my child's level, they do not wish to look up your nostrils or have you towering over them!
DON'T ignore my child. Or me. We have feelings too.
DO include my child in our conversation.
DON'T assume that my child doesn't understand what is being said.
DO use straightforward language with my child –and speak in your normal voice –please.
DON'T tell me that I am coping so well. You have no idea. Really.
DO ask about other family members too, my child's other parent, siblings, grandparents, normal family things!
DON'T tell me that I must be so strong. I am not.
DO offer practical support. I will know what to ask for if I know you are genuinely available. So helpful.
DON'T say you understand unless you really do. I have no idea about your daily life either.
DO always ask. Then be patient while I try to explain.
DON'T try to fix my child, or me. We may not seem perfect to you but we are not broken.

Parents, carers and grandparents have told us that they find it helpful to talk openly with one of our trained Befrienders, a person who is in a similar parenting situation to them. Sign up to our email newsletters.

- **Find out more at:** www.careforthefamily.org.uk/additionalneeds
- **Join us on Facebook:** www.facebook.com/cffadditionalneeds