

How to help kids be grateful and kind

Being grateful and kind boosts the way we feel, and tends to make us more likeable human beings. So how can we help our tamariki learn these important skills?

Model kindness

Your children will learn how to be kind mostly by watching you, so keep helping others, being friendly, giving compliments and sharing little bits of love. Doing so is a win-win, as it'll be good for your wellbeing too!

Ditto gratitude

Just like sharing or turn taking, gratitude is a social skill children need to see, learn and practice. By showing your appreciation and acknowledging the people and things you're grateful for (and why), you'll help your tamariki learn that gratitude extends far beyond material things.

Empathy starts with emotions

To develop empathy, children need to:

1. feel kindness from you and those who care for them
2. be free to discover and express their emotions
3. see a wide range of emotions in others
4. learn how to put themselves in others shoes.

Recognise kindness

Identify examples of kindness in other people and in your kids' favourite stories. Point out what is good about the way people are acting and talk with your tamariki about situations when they could choose to act like that.

Encourage pitching in

Be grateful when your kids help out. Thank them and praise their efforts, even if they don't get things 100% right. To encourage 'pitching in', rather than ask (complain or nag!), try: "I'm feeling pretty tired tonight. I'd love it if you could help me with the dishes." By giving them a choice, you're empowering them to show empathy and kindness. Tell them what a big difference they've made.

Give with your kids

If you want to make a donation or do something nice (e.g. baking, cooking or buying flowers for someone who's had a tough time), encourage your kids to help and let them come with you when you deliver the goodies so they can discover first hand how it feels to brighten someone's day.

Use special events as 'excuses' to be kind

Children love celebrations and they can be a great opportunity to encourage kindness. At Halloween for instance, you could try collecting non-perishable items instead of lollies, to give to 0800 Hungry or the Christchurch City Mission. At Christmas, you could create a kindness advent calendar where you do one small, kind act each day in the lead up to Christmas.

Create a 'kindness bucket list'

Another fun idea is to create a whānau bucket list of five or ten kind things you'd love to do. Plan them together, and do the acts on the weekend or when your kids are around so they can experience them too.

Whenever you do something, work together to replace it with a new idea. You could try:

- taking flowers from your garden to a friend
- delivering baking to someone awesome
- doing something special for your partner or parents
- sending cards to someone you appreciate
- taking flowers to the cemetery.

Earth love

Spending time in nature is scientifically proven to be good for us! To extend this happiness boost, teach your kids to look after our special outdoor spaces. Pick up litter, recycle and do your bit to look after the planet. And your kids will too.

Mealtime gratitude

A great mealtime conversation is for each member of the whānau to say a few things they're grateful for and why. E.g. I'm grateful for the sunny day because it meant we could play outside. I'm grateful that Dad picked me up from school because I was feeling really tired.

A gratitude diary

Another great way to practice gratitude is to create family (or individual) gratitude diaries where you and your older tamariki can record things you're grateful for.

**GIVING IS
GOOD FOR YOU**

**PARENTING IS A BUSY GIG
BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT GIVING
OUR TIME AND LOVE TO OTHERS
IS PROVEN TO BOOST OUR OWN
WELLBEING TOO.**

For our favourite kids' books, resources and tips, head to allright.org.nz/sparklers/kids

How to help kids manage worries

Our tamariki mightn't have to pay bills, cook dinners or organise carpools but just like us they face daily demands and worries, and what seems trivial to us can be important to them. So what can we do to help?

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Be a first-rate listener

Firstly, think about yourself as a child or young adult. Did anyone make you feel truly listened to? If so, what did they do? Copy this! Be available and interested. Take casual opportunities to ask your tamariki how different things are going. Also, be assured – our brains are malleable and flexible, so children can re-learn coping strategies that don't include lots of worrying. But as always, seek extra help, if you have ongoing concerns.

Show you care

If your child does share a worry, avoid intensely questioning or lecturing them. Just listen attentively, be interested and show you care. They may talk to you while you're doing the dishes or in the car and if so, great! They'll be more relaxed when the focus isn't completely on them.

Validate their feelings

Voice the feelings you pick up (E.g. "That sounds like it's worrying / bothering / bugging you."). And thank them for chatting with you. Remind them that worrying is normal and can even be helpful – motivating us to study, be alert, focus and run faster.

Event-based worries

If something worrying is coming up – i.e. a test or their first day at a new school – encourage them to think of a similar challenge they overcame i.e. their first day of school. Talk about the strengths they have and how these can help. If your child is 11 or older, we recommend our [Find Your Strengths quiz](#).

Teach perspective and humour

Without minimising their worry, remind them that problems are temporary and solvable, and that whatever happens things will be okay. Where appropriate, humour can lighten the mood and foster resilience, as can reminding them that there'll be better days and chances to try again.

Guide kids to solutions

When possible, support tamariki to deal with challenging situations. If your child tells you about a problem, offer to brainstorm solutions together, resisting the urge to jump in and fix the issue. Then encourage them to pick the best solution. When children play an active role, you're teaching them how to problem-solve.

Offer Physical reassurance

If your child is frequently worried or anxious, look for ways to let them know their world is safe. This can mean going back to basics and providing physical reassurance through love, hugs, back-rubs, hand holding or keeping them close.

SHOW THE WAY

THE MOST POWERFUL LESSONS WE TEACH ARE THE ONES WE DEMONSTRATE. YOUR RESPONSE TO YOUR OWN WORRIES, STRESS, AND FRUSTRATIONS CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD TEACHING YOUR TAMARIKI HOW TO DEAL WITH EVERYDAY CHALLENGES. IF YOU'RE RATTLED OR ANGRY WHEN DEALING WITH A TO-DO LIST, YOUR CHILDREN WILL LEARN THAT THIS IS HOW WE RESPOND TO STRESS.

INSTEAD, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE AND VOICE OPTIMISTIC THOUGHTS AS OFTEN AS YOU TALK ABOUT WHAT BOTHERS YOU. BY SHOWING YOUR CHILDREN YOU CAN BOUNCE BACK, YOU'LL HELP THEM LEARN TO RESPOND TO SMALL PROBLEMS WITH OPTIMISM, CONFIDENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.

How to help kids manage worries

Create a 'chat time' or worry box

You might also like to schedule a chat time early in the evening, where 'thoughts' (worries) can be shared, particularly about the next day (to avoid dwelling on these at bedtime). Another great strategy is to create a "worry box" you can store these worries in. The idea is to write them down, fold them up tight and put them in the box, so your child can be free of them until morning.

Externalise worries

For an easy means to talk about worries, we recommend books such as [Maia and the Worry Bug](#). Maia stomps on her worries and throws them out the door. Externalising worries is fantastic for tamariki aged 4-8 years, while Rising Tide has great strategies for children aged 8-13.

Front-foot things

If you suspect your child has a worry, let them know you're there if they want to talk. Avoid bringing up challenges they've had in the past, as this can cause them to refocus on things they've moved on from. A great way to promote open communication is to say: "You can tell me anything" when your tamariki ask if they can tell you something. Foster mindfulness: Learn about mindfulness – focussing on the here and now rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. Try the CD [Sitting Still like a Frog](#), and see our [How to Help Kids Keep Calm](#) sheet for handy techniques like tummy breathing and creating routine.

Build self esteem

If your child worries often, give praise when they:

- Walk into a new place. E.g. "Thanks for coming to the supermarket with me, I loved having your company."
- Manage a new situation: "I liked the way you walked into your class today. You looked really confident and it made me proud."
- Try something new: "I love that you gave that a go, and kept at it."
- Make a decision: "Great decision. Well done."
- Converse with you: "I love talking with you."

Play together

Spend time playing with your child each day. Even if it's just 10 minutes. Give them some undivided attention – bounce on the trampoline, build the Lego tower. Let them see you having fun and enjoying being with them.

For our favourite kids' books, resources and tips, head to allright.org.nz/sparklers/kids

We'd like to thank the following people for helping us create this resource.

- Dr Harith Swadi: Psychiatrist and Clinical Director of the Christchurch Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Services
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- Dr Dean Sutherland: Department of Communication Disorders, University of Canterbury

How to help kids feel good and have fun

Our tamariki need the basics of life – like food, warmth, shelter and clothing – but we ultimately want them to feel loved, secure and happy. So how can we foster their self-esteem and help them feel good?

Have fun together

Any time you play with your children and trigger their imaginations is positive – even if it's just for 10 minutes a day. Every little bit counts!

Encourage creativity

Develop their imaginations by setting up a range of objects and seeing what they come up with. E.g. cardboard boxes, dress up clothes, sellotape, paint, pipe-cleaners, autumn leaves, a blanket over the table, a dance party. Actively encourage your tamariki to 'play' and let them know you enjoy this time too!

Role model happiness

Show them joy. Be playful or even silly in your interactions and talk about what makes you happy. Children tend to follow our lead and copy what we do, so this will help them tune into their positive emotions and have fun with you and others.

Use music

When needed use upbeat music to boost your mood and theirs! Dancing may be required... the combination can be a real feel good fix!

Go old-school

Keep screen time to a minimum and provide toys that encourage imaginative open-ended play. E.g. building blocks, Duplo/Lego, toy kitchens, dollhouse, musical instruments, colouring-in books, dress ups.

Say yes

Try to say 'yes' a lot more than you say 'no'. If your child asks to do something, try to frame your answer to sound like a 'yes'. E.g. If they ask to go outside when there are still jobs to do, instead of: "Not now! We need to finish tidying up." Try: "Yeah, that sounds like fun! First we'll tidy up and then we can go outside."

Think: role models

Keep an eye on what your tamariki are watching, so you can manage their comparisons with fictional TV and YouTube kids.

Offer praise and compliments

Few things will be more important in deciding your child's future than their sense of self-worth. So acknowledge and praise specific things that make your child and whānau special. You might compliment:

- special skills (e.g. drawing, good ideas, skating, singing)
- character strengths (like kindness or a good sense of humour)
- their attempts to try something new, give things a go and persevere.

Show your love

Give hugs, high fives and back rubs, hold their hand, pat their shoulder – show your affection and do things they enjoy! Leave notes in their lunchbox or on their pillow. Describe special shared memories. Make heart-shaped sandwiches. Display photos. Ignore the phone for them. Call when you're away. The little things all add up.

Use a kind voice

Another way to show your love is through your language and tone. The way we talk to and about our tamariki is really important. Talk to your child the way you like to be talked to. Connect before you correct and limit the amount of commands you give. Allow them times to just 'be'.

"JOY IS THE RESULT OF HUMAN CONNECTION" (THE SCIENCE OF PARENTING)

Be their greatest ally

Listen attentively – even to the boring, repeated stories! Laugh at the not-so-funny jokes and acknowledge their big stuff, even if it's not big for you. E.g. "Oh no, your stick broke, it was special. What can we do?" (We promise that if you practice this, it'll feel normal soon!)

Find their super-power

Encourage all the things your tamariki love doing, even if it's not what you're into. While we may love rugby, they may love ballet. It really doesn't matter, as long as they feel good doing it. These small things (like joining the netball team or drawing) may seem trivial, but they could become their favourite passions, the way they find calm or even their careers!

TAKE TIME FOR YOU, TOO!

AS A PARENT, WE OFTEN FEEL GUILTY TAKING TIME FOR OURSELVES. BUT IT'S VITAL YOU FEEL GOOD AND HAVE FUN TOO. CHECK OUT OUR TIPS AT [ALLRIGHT.ORG.NZ/PARENTS](https://allright.org.nz/parents)

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How to help kids keep calm

Experiencing frustration, disappointment, fear and jealousy is challenging, even as adults. So how can we help our tamariki understand and manage strong emotions?

Play detective

For children, behaviour is a key means of communication. Sometimes we have to work like detectives to figure out what their behaviour is really 'saying'.

- **Context:** Have a think about your whānau over the past six months. Children watch us very carefully and pick up on tension even if they don't understand the full story. If there's a clue here, look for ways to reduce stress, alleviate fears or improve things.
- **Relationships:** Think about your child's key relationships – with you, other carers, their friends. How are you/they getting along? If you think an issue with any of these people could be at play, schedule some fun time with your child, or oversee a few playdates with significant friends, to ensure they're positive and fun.
- **Beyond home:** If you can, spend some time at their day-care, kindy or school to see how things are going. If they're struggling with part of their day or the way someone is relating to them call on the support of their teacher. A team approach can be a great thing for your child.

Help them understand emotions

- **Use faces:** With young tamariki, print photos or drawings of different emotions and ask your child to show you how they're feeling. This also helps validate their emotions. Visit allright.org.nz/sparklers/face-game/ for a free print out.
- **Link to emotions:** Help your child 'name' the feelings they're experiencing. E.g. 'Oh your tower fell over! You look a bit sad about that!' or "Wow, you did it all yourself! You must be proud."
- **Notice emotions:** When you read books and watch movies, help identify characters' emotions. E.g. 'She seems nervous about the big race.'

Be a positive role model

Most of what our tamariki learn about emotions comes from us. How we respond to our own worries, stress and frustrations will inform how our kids learn to deal with everyday challenges. By showing you feel different emotions and can bounce back, you'll help them learn to respond to small problems with optimism, calmness and confidence. During stressful times you could even say, "I feel frustrated that I keep making mistakes, so I might just have a quick break and then come back to it".

Tears and safety

Children experience BIG emotions, just like we do. When emotions run high, helping them feel safe can really help. That might mean holding them, talking in a calm voice or encouraging them to take nice deep breaths. Once they're settled, distracting younger children can be a good technique, and praising older kids for calming down can really help to reinforce this response.

A calm space

Make your home as calm as possible and discuss a place where your child feels relaxed and at peace. Designate this as their 'calm space' – a place they can go when they're upset to practice their tummy breathing, colour in or look at books. You could also make them a glitter soother they can shake, watching it 'calm down' as they do.

MINDFULNESS FOR PARENTS

FOCUSING ON THE GOOD IS SOMETHING WE NEVER STOP LEARNING. [HEAD TO THE MIND YOUR HEAD SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE](#) FOR OUR FAVOURITE IDEAS ON MINDFULNESS AND ENJOYING THE MOMENT.

How to help kids keep calm

Teach calming techniques

Trying to teach children the techniques below in the heat of the moment would be like trying to teach an angry bear to play the clarinet! It just won't work. So when your child is calm, try a few of the below.

- **Find what works:** Talk about what helps you calm down and suggest things they could try when they're next upset. Energetic kids may need to run around; others will respond to quiet time; others will need hugs and physical touch. It's a matter of finding the right strategies for your tamariki.
- **Tummy breathing:** See our in-class Tummy Breathing activity and/or watch '[Tummy Breathing, Sesame Street](#)' on YouTube then practice this calming technique together. Let them know they can do this anytime they're upset or want to feel calm.
- **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is beneficial for people of all ages. We recommend the CD [Sitting Still Like A Frog](#) (available at the library). There are also [lots of fun ideas](#) of things you can try together, online.

Mid-meltdown!

Practice the above techniques alongside your tamariki in calm moments, then gently remind them to try one when they are next upset. Praise their efforts, even if they don't quite pull it off. They'll get easier and more effective. Another cause for praise is when they use the technique of their own accord, a sign that they are trying to self-manage their emotions.

Embrace routine

When children can anticipate what is coming next, it creates a sense of control and calm. [Kidpointz.com has fantastic routine charts](#). You could have one for the morning and one for the afternoon/evening.

What about aggression?

Like most aspects of development, each child is different when it comes to aggressive behaviour. 'Big reactors' will rely more heavily on their actions to communicate feelings. Here are some things you can do to help.

- **Be patient:** Early on, emotions will trump thinking skills, even if kids 'know' the rules. It can help to remember that empathy and self-control come with age.
- **Be consistent:** If a child hits out or emotions run too high, simply say: "I need you to calm" and sit with them in their calm space. Avoid negotiating, and calmly repeat this whenever they need to calm down.
- **Lead the way:** This one can be a major challenge, as aggressive acts can be hurtful and infuriating! But when you can, react minimally. A calm response will get better results than a red-hot one, helping you diffuse the situation and 'model' how they should behave when they're upset. Kids love to copy us!
- **Identify triggers:** Aggressive acts can emerge when kids are tired, hungry, overwhelmed, or overstimulated and unsure where to focus their energy. They can also come from feeling insecure or undervalued. Ask yourself: When is your tamariki most likely to 'act out'?

- **Think prevention:** Use what you know to plan ahead. You may be able to stop aggressive behaviour before it starts, or you'll be ready to be calm but firm.

Build their self-esteem

Our children are learning how to adjust their behaviour in almost every situation. Ensure you do lots to help them feel good about who they are and show that you love them unconditionally. Praise specific behaviour. E.g. rather than just "good girl" try "I love the way you tidied up."

Praise effort:

Boost tenacity by encouraging their attempts to try something (e.g. new skills, interests, chores, homework, etc). If they get frustrated or say: "I can't do it!" reassure them: "You can't do it YET but with practice you will, just like when you learned to [insert a success they've had here]. Remember how you tried over and over, then you got it? This is the same."

Celebrate calm moments:

Give your tamariki attention when they're behaving the way you LOVE (calm, content, engrossed in play, sharing, being kind). The best reward (and reinforcement) is your time and attention. Even 10 minutes of play with you a day will make a huge difference... promise!

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Looking after yourself – Mums

My guess is, you're probably in one of two camps

- Looking for the quick and simple solution because you're near wits end,
- Or the other camp who stumbled across this article in disbelief. Let's call you: 'Are you frickin kidding me?' Look after myself? I'm a Mum!

As mums we often prioritise everything and everybody before ourselves.

So first up, recognise you still matter! It's just like our airlines tell us – put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others with theirs!

What the science tells us

Sorry to be so earnest, but sometimes we need convincing, actually Mums always need convincing to take time out (to relax!). Quality 'down' time means you are giving your brain permission to increase levels of the chemicals which produce dopamine and serotonin making you feel more positive. When we just keep on going and so-called 'sucking it up', we end up increasing our levels of stress. In turn we become irritated with our children, less wanting to play, cuddle and praise them, which are essential ingredients for enjoyment and maintaining great relationships with your kids, not to mention your partner!

There are two ways to recharge and keep emotionally healthy - doing something relaxing on your own or doing something enjoyable with others. (The Science of Parenting)

There are 5 things we can do which contribute to a positive overall wellbeing, and before you get all 'I don't have time for this' these are simple and fast ways to implement even when busy and even with kids.

These are:

Give – your time, your skills, your words

- Tick! You're already doing plenty of that as a Mum.
- But many mums (goodness knows how) spend some time volunteering for Plunket, their children's schools and sports/activities clubs and community activities – know that these are great for you (and your child), and also great for connecting with others. Which leads us to:

Connect with others

- Make a date with other mums at the park,
- Join some groups - Plunket groups, playgroups, your child's school parent group or PTA's are great ways to find other parents with the same aged children, for play dates ask the parent around to join you for a coffee/catch up, book clubs, parenting courses - the great secret about parenting courses is they're places you meet other parents who are experiencing the same things as you and friendships develop inside of the group! In all of these places where you meet parent, foster these networks. The best people to connect with are those that you come away from feeling replenished, secure and/or energised.
- Connect with your partner – just make some time for each other with or without the kids (family time is important too, and memory making for your kids). Have an in-home date night, put that phone away sometimes!

Exercise (don't stop reading because you saw that word and immediately decided this is not the webpage for you!)

- we often talk about exercising as "moving your mood" and this is true for your children too, so include them! - go for a walk, scooter ride, bike ride, swim – you'll all feel better for it.

Learn new things

- Visit new places (with our without kids) - art gallery, museum, park, gardens, beaches, another suburb.
- Try something new with your kids – that string game, Sudoku, yoga following a book from the library or YouTube clip, that science experiment the kids have been talking about – being interested in what they're interested in helps you connect too – win, win!

Notice the little things, be present and stay in the moment

- Get down on the floor and play with your child – be present and in the moment with them for just 10-15 minutes a day. It will make a lot of difference for them and you.
- Stop and take notice of the things they see – they often point out things we don't even notice. Stop and enjoy this mini-break with them.
- Try breathing exercises or yoga with or without your kids. We recommend [Sitting Still like a Frog](#) which is at the library – this is a fantastic way for you and your kids to learn about relaxation and self calming (they can use this when they are upset or frightened).

Looking after yourself – Mums

Outside of kid time – and how to get some!

Accept help when it's offered! Think of all the times you've been told "if you ever want me to take the kids for a bit, just let me know." People actually like to help – they filling up their kindness buckets – it's good for them, and good for you!

The great work-life balance myth...

- The simple truth is that work is a part of life – the two can't remain separate – when we're at work, we are still living! Well, one would hope! Erik Erikson was an American psycho-analyst (much like Freud) and we love what he said about it all: "The richest and fullest lives attempt to achieve an inner balance between three realms – work, love and play."

What's cool about this?

- It allows the areas of our lives to cross over into each other – we can play at work – joke with our colleagues and laugh at the funny things that happen, and if we use the definition of love to mean; admire and enjoy, then this can be apparent with our colleagues and clients.
- It gives us permission to take that work call sometimes at home, or answer the email – if our children understand we give them attention, and we give work attention too, they're likely to understand.
- It takes the pressure off us – we don't have to resent our work, but see it contributing positively in some ways.
- And bear in mind too – many times our children LOVE describing what their parents do, their job. They're proud of that – involve them in it as you can.

Super parenting tips that can give fast results and give you time!

- Have a plan around the things that stress you out (especially with kids) eg grocery shopping or not taking them with you.
- Pick your battles, don't be sensitive and remember your kids love you even if they say they don't.
- Learn about your child's age and stage – sometimes we're just expecting a wee bit much.
- Have consistent routines ([see our charts](#)) and family rules.
- Spend 10-15 minutes playing with your children every day.

Your to-do list for today (and everyday if need be):

- Be kind to yourself! If you wouldn't say it to another Mum, don't tell it to yourself.
- Give up comparing yourself to others and lower your bar.
- Eat and sleep (or rest) as well as your kids do.
- Ask for help – from your partner, friends, family and professional supports – often you don't realize how many people have got your back.
- Pamper yourself - a haircut, a long shower or bath, a rub of lipstick.
- Play and have fun! Let it go. I said, let it go!
- And just breathe!

Looking after yourself – Dads

Being a dad can be very awesome...it can also be very challenging, confusing, frustrating, tiring (insert appropriate adjective here). As such, us dads have got to look after ourselves. Why? I'm glad you asked! Answer: so we can give the best of what we have and who we are to our tamariki. How can we do this? Here are some thoughts on the matter...

So, you're a dad. Nice. No matter what else happens in your life, you've done something amazing. You have co-created another human being. Your son(s) or daughter(s) is here on this earth in no small way because of you. This is where fatherhood begins but it definitely isn't where it stops. Fatherhood may be a new undertaking for you, or you might be an old hand, either way, if you are not in a good space physically, mentally or emotionally, it's unlikely you'll be able to do kick-ass dad stuff with or for your kids.

Find the thing you love to do:

I was talking with a colleague last year about how we as males can get obsessed with stuff. Cars, surfing, Trade Me, the gym, Rubik's Cube, medieval combat – you name it and some dude has probably got obsessed with it at some point in time. When I say obsessed, I don't mean an addiction. I just mean enjoying spending time thinking of, learning about or practicing something that you're really interested in – for whatever reason. I'm not sure if many females have this same tendency but I believe it's fairly common for guys. It's kind of like going into the man-cave of your brain.

Anyway, if you are feeling a bit stressed out or your enthusiasm for life is a little on the low side, it just may be you haven't been

engaging in your chosen obsession quite enough. Not sure what I'm talking about. Here's a question for you: When you've had a long, hard day at work, you're in the bad books with your partner, or you just need a bit of time for yourself, what's the thing that you want to do? That thing is what I'm talking about. Of course you could go for a jog. Research will tell you that going for that jog will initiate the release of endorphins, giving you an instant boost. You could go for a jog, you'll probably be better off for it, but if your thing is doing Sudoku, a jog might not quite cut the mustard.

So, what's your chosen obsession, that thing that occupies your mind, allowing you to have a bit of a break and keep a sense of balance in your life? If you haven't been engaging in it much lately, perhaps it's time to get back into it or if you have been, keep doing it - it might be helping you to be the awesome dad that you want to be for your kids.

Make time to catch-up with mates:

Another thing that we as dads can do to keep us on track is to make time to catch up and do something with our mates. I am pretty bad at this to be fair but despite my general inaction, I do appreciate that spending time with others does have some real benefits. First of all, it allows us to do something we enjoy that we don't necessarily do all the time. Watching the rugby, going to a concert, playing squash, having a jam, heading to the local for a quiet one; all these things and many others are activities best done accompanied.

Try empathy on for size:

Speaking of benefits, catching up with friends and being genuinely interested in how they're going gets us out of our

own headspace and makes us think about someone else – yep, showing interest and dare I say it...empathy, is good for you, not to mention the person you're empathising with. Yes, taking the time to find out what's been happening with Brian is a win-win for both you and Brian.

Notice the small stuff and be present:

My last tip on looking after ourselves as dads is an oldie but a goodie. It's something we do all the time without thinking about, but it's something if we are more aware of, could go a long way to maintaining a positive frame of mind and even a general sense of wellbeing...it is... drumroll please...breathing.

Now, you may well scoff at this but believe it or not, a bit of deep breathing does actually help us to relax and feel calm. I'm not talking about practicing transcendental meditation or anything too serious, just taking the time, even once or twice a day to take in a few deep breaths and maybe looking around you, noticing what you see, hear and even smell at that moment. There's actually a whole ton of research into this type of practice, commonly known as mindfulness, but taking a few deep breaths every now and then is not a bad start.

By doing this you'll likely start to feel more present and I'm telling you, when you're spending time with your family, this 'being more present' won't go unnoticed. Potential results include; your kids feeling loved and valued. Potential benefits to you include; your kids feeling loved and valued...and maybe some extra hugs. Totally worth it then, right?!

Written by Dad, Wellbeing Advocate and Community Worker for Methodist Mission – Tim Corry.