



# Caring for a child with disabilities

Caring for a disabled child can make your daily parenting duties more challenging, especially during difficult or uncertain times. We take a look at what you can do to ensure your child always feels loved and looked after.

## Spend quality time together

- Read to your child, tell them a story or make musical sounds using household objects. Even if verbal communication is a challenge, your child can still tell you when they are enjoying something by laughing and smiling
- Stimulate your child's senses through play. Introduce colours, different materials and noises (such as scrunched up paper or a stone dropping into water). All this will help them engage with their environment
- Even when you are busy, you can still spend time together. Describe to your child exactly what you are doing — from sweeping the floor to washing up dishes — it's all stimulation for them

## Communicate clearly

- Some physical conditions and learning disabilities might mean your child has little or no clear speech, or their speech is slow to develop. When talking to your child, it helps to:
  - Get down to your child's level so they can see and hear you
  - Maintain eye contact, smile and be encouraging
  - Be patient and give your child time to respond
  - Listen, nod your head and make it clear that you hear your child

## Build an emotional connection

- Use physical and verbal support to make sure your child feels loved and accepted
- Remember that positive body language, facial expressions, gestures, sounds and words can make a big difference

## Support their independence

- Build your child's confidence by praising the things they are able to, rather than focusing on the things they aren't able to do
- Only come to your child's assistance when they need it, otherwise they might feel patronised and unable to test out their abilities

## Ask for help

- You are not alone and it's normal to feel stressed, anxious or frustrated when caring for any child, especially during uncertain times
- Share the responsibility of caring for your child with other adult family members
- Connect with people who understand your situation, and share both your challenges and your successes
- Be kind to yourself and take a break when you need to. Our tips sheets on Looking after yourself and Anger management advice can help

## Follow a routine

- Having a set schedule can help you feel more organised and in control — see our Create a routine tip sheet for advice
- Your routine should include daily tasks as well as your child's favourite activities. This way you can have fun together while still being productive
- Factor in free time where you give your child a choice of activities as this will help to boost their confidence
- Use simple language to give clear instructions and use non-verbal communication (gestures, pictures, sounds) to help your child understand what's planned for each day

[EXPLORE THE FULL SERIES OF TIPS](#)[EXPLORE THE VIDEOS](#)

These evidence-based parenting resources were developed by Parenting for Lifelong Health in collaboration with [UNICEF, WHO, and other international agencies](#).

