

# Being a good adult for children

What does it mean to be a good (meaning also to be kind and capable) adult for children? Which factors play a part in how we see and meet children?

## 1. Our innate qualities shape us.

We all have different temperaments, different personality traits and ways of being. We are different in terms of how sensitive and responsive we are to the needs of others, whether interpreting situations come naturally to us, and how we manage to support children to find their own solutions to their problems. How patient we are, how well we manage to keep calm - even when something is challenging to us. Being a good and capable adult for children may not come naturally to everyone. The vast majority can still *become* good and capable with training.

## 2. How we ourselves were met when we were children also shapes us.

Most of us grew up with parents who made some mistakes along the way. Most of the time they managed to be warm, caring, supportive and to provide a safe environment which made us feel good. But sometimes we may have been met in ways that made us feel insecure, inadequate or a nuisance.

As adults experiences from our own childhood and upbringing can appear and influence our way of being, and it is important that we are aware of how this affects us.

## 3. Extraordinary experiences in life can also shape us.

Painful experiences can lead to changes in our thought patterns, in our experience of emotions and bodily reactions, and can make us more vulnerable in everyday life.

## 4. How we feel about our lives, our everyday life right now, affects us.

This is true also concerning how we see and respond to children. Do you have an everyday life that feels meaningful and fulfilling? Do you have good relationships with other adults? Do you have enough time on your hands? Are your finances, health and work situation okay? If these things are in place, it may seem easier to have the capacity to be good to, and good for others as well.

We all want to be good, kind and capable adults for children. Many parents are very concerned about doing everything right and go to great lengths to make it happen. Some may go *too* far. Children do not need adults who are perfect. It is okay to make mistakes every now and then or to prioritize our own needs before our children's needs from time to time.

However children need adults who wish to be good, kind and capable. Adults who want children to feel safe with them, to feel appreciated, and to feel that they have value in themselves. This is fundamentally important for learning, for children's development, and their health.

Many of the things we do every day with children feels quite manageable and okay. We are able to just be ourselves, do what we are good at, and continue with what works.

Other times, or with some children, it becomes more complicated. These are some useful tricks that can be helpful:

- Check and adjust your own state of mind: What is happening inside me now? What can I do to adjust myself into the state I need to be in to manage what is required?
- Check and adjust the child's state of mind: what is happening inside the child now? How does the child experience this, and how does the child experience me? What can I do to help the child to enter a state that makes it possible to manage?
- When the state of mind, or condition, is good enough: help the child manage.
- If something went wrong between the two of you: take responsibility, repair the relationship, and recharge your batteries. Then we are ready for the next challenge.

Did this make sense? For most people who occasionally feel that it is demanding to get through the day with children in a good way, it may be useful to explore these things a little more. That is why we have made a series of films with associated tasks that can be used as self-developmental tools by anyone responsible for children.