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**Dad's dilemma solved**

Feilding fireman gets daughter's disobedience under control



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Triple P in your area



# Tipppaper

Parenting tips and information for every parent

## No.2

> Triple P, Positive Parenting, Realistic expectations, Summer 2012

[www.triplep-staypositive.net](http://www.triplep-staypositive.net)



### Manukau parents join North Island families

Manukau parents will be the latest to benefit from free access to the world-acclaimed Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, joining a government initiative already running in two North Island regions.

The parenting initiative comes to families via a partnership between the Counties Manukau District Health Board and local agencies working with families. Parents in the Bay of Plenty and MidCentral District Health Board regions have been doing Triple P since earlier this year.

The project is coordinated by the Werry Centre, a workforce development organisation. So far 159 local practitioners throughout the three regions have been trained to deliver Triple P to families. The agencies taking the lead to bring support to parents are ProCare Psychological Services in Manukau, Kaitiaki Nursing Service/Western Bay of Plenty PHO and ACROSS Social Services in Mid Central district.

### Fun and infuriating

Raising kids can be fun, infuriating, frightening, wonderful, stressful, exhausting and, sometimes, all those things in one day! So it's not surprising that parenting is often said to be the toughest job of them all.

Fortunately, the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program gives parents the skills they need to build better relationships with their children, solve problems and become more confident as a parent.

And because Triple P is based on more than 30 years' ongoing research around the world, parents can be sure it works for most families.

## New Palmy home triggered toddler's terrible tantrums

Making Palmerston North home for a few years was meant to be an exciting adventure for Mexican couple Patty Rivera, Noel Mauricio and their two little daughters. Although things started well, very soon they were tripped up by three-year-old Paulina and some very trying behaviour they hadn't seen before. Tantrums, toilet problems and daily battles with her youngest daughter meant Patty's high expectations of life in New Zealand gave way to stress and depression.

Life was tough for Patty. Noel is a devoted dad but he spends long hours on his studies at Massey University, taking him away from Patty, Paulina and Lily, 6. Although Paulina had been dry and toilet trained back in Mexico, she began wetting during the day. Tantrums were a regular thing and on outings she'd quite simply run away without warning!

"Screaming and chasing after her was awful but I just didn't know what to do," says Patty.

"I hadn't expected it to be so tough being without the support of our families. I hadn't

expected to be so cold and miserable either. We were making friends but I was feeling very low and I knew I was not coping well with Paulina. Noel of course was very worried about us."

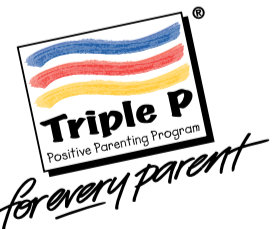
A multicultural playgroup was the bright spot and it was there she found a life saver – the playgroup leader told Patty about Triple P.

The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program is a parenting support system that has been made available free to parents in Mid Central, the Bay of Plenty and, more

recently, in the Manukau region to parents of children aged between three and seven. Triple P is regarded as one of the world's most effective parenting programmes, used by parents in 24 countries.

Once Patty and Noel started working on parenting strategies with a Triple P practitioner, the wetting problem was sorted. Now they're making good progress dealing with the tantrums. ■

*Go to page 3 to read how Patty and Noel used Triple P to settle Paulina's behaviour.*



## Contact?

Go to the website  
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# Fiery daughter left Feilding dad flustered

Feilding dad Kevin Penn is a truck driver by day and a volunteer firefighter all hours. In his world you have to swing into action and follow instructions fast, no mucking about! But that's not the way things were going at home between Kevin and his daughter Alizabeth. When Dad asked her to do something, the three-and-a-half year old would refuse point blank or run away. Struggling to get his small girl to cooperate would often leave Kevin stumped and flustered.



Kevin and Hollie Penn with Alizabeth, left, and William

Life is pretty full on for the Penn family with both parents working and baby son William to care for too. Kevin's time with his kids can often be squeezed – on any day he could be racing out the door in his fire fighting gear when other dads are kicking back with their kids.

Although mum Hollie says she wasn't having real difficulty handling Alizabeth, she could see Kevin's battles impacting on family time and family dynamics.

"No matter how hard Kevin tried with her, she'd just say no or laugh even though she would do things when I asked her to. We couldn't agree about how to handle her and quite often we'd wind up having little spats ourselves. It wasn't much fun and we both wanted to sort this out," says Hollie.

Luckily they didn't have to look far for help. Hollie works at the nearby childhood centre owned by her mother Wendy Fletcher. The centre was just about to host Feilding's first Triple P Discussion Group on the topic "Dealing with disobedience". Hollie and Kevin were among the young mothers and fathers who went along.

The group, Hollie says, was a great success with a warm, friendly atmosphere

and lots of input from parents as well as lots of great tips and strategies to take away.

"Without doubt it's really valuable in my work and it's making a real difference at home with my family," she says.



Kevin and Alizabeth

"We've taken a second look at how we're communicating as a couple, we've taken a second look at our expectations and at the way we have been doing things."

Kevin says he's learned great tips that

have brought harmony at home and a much better relationship with Alizabeth.

"I've changed my approach a bit about how I communicate with her and the way I ask her to do things," he says. "I give her clear instructions and stay calm and give her time to cooperate. And I pick my times too – it's no use asking her to pick up her toys when she's in the middle of something else, or already overtired.

"What we learned at the group was common sense when I look back – including praising her when she does as she has been asked. She's just a little girl and I might have been expecting a bit much.

"Things are way better now. The other day she wanted to come and help me wash my work truck."

Kevin says any doubts he had about going along to a parenting group soon went away.

"Everyone talked about how things were going for them and it was interesting to hear other fathers' views. In a short time we got great guidance. I'd definitely recommend it." ■



## Take your pick

### Triple P choices

In Manukau, Bay of Plenty and Mid Central, Triple P is free for parents of children aged from three to seven years. There's a choice of two ways to get Triple P positive parenting help, so parents can choose the one that suits their family best.

### Join a group

Parents all over the world struggle with many of the same issues, so Triple P has created a series of two-hour "bite size" sessions to help families tackle the most common concerns. Triple P Discussion Groups get to the heart of a specific problem, quickly and directly.

Each Discussion Group session brings together a maximum of 10-12 parents who are experiencing the same parenting issue. There are four problem topics to choose from:

- Dealing with disobedience
- Developing good bedtime routines
- Managing fighting and aggression
- Hassle-free shopping with children

In each relaxed group session, practitioners give parents tips and suggestions for dealing with a child's problem behaviour. Short video clips show other parents successfully dealing with the same issue and parents also get a workbook with simple exercises and information to help them try out the new strategies at home.

It's a two-hour investment for what can be a dramatic pay-off at home.

### Personal sessions

Primary Care Triple P also helps parents tackle one or two issues that are making raising kids more difficult than it should be. But the difference is Primary Care sessions are personal consultations, just the parent and the practitioner. And these private sessions are tailored to specifically target the parent's needs.

Problems tackled can be virtually any parenting issue the family is struggling with – from disobedience, tantrums, aggression and bedtime battles to bullying, shyness, stealing, lying, whining, separation anxiety and more.

A Primary Care consultation lasts anything from 15 minutes to half an hour, and parents would usually go to around four sessions. Parents also get a take-home tip sheet that focuses on their particular parenting problem or issue. ■



## 58%

The proportion of schools in New Zealand that have swimming pools.

Source: [www.watersafety.org.nz](http://www.watersafety.org.nz)

## 5 billion

The estimated hours the world's children spend playing Lego each year.

Source: [www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com)

## 4th

The ranking of New Zealand students in all OECD countries, based on reading skills.

Source: [www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org)



Continued from page 1 >

## How Patty and Noel tempered the tantrums

As soon as she started Triple P, Patty Rivera knew she had to change the way she reacted to her daughter Paulina's behaviour. Dad Noel Mauricio was on board too. He was keen to put the Triple P strategies into practice – and not give in!

"Taking a much more positive approach, staying calm and getting my reactions under control were the starting point for me," says Patty, whose Triple P practitioner was Palmerston North parenting coordinator Rachel Smithers.

It wasn't easy to begin with, but Patty soon learned to stay calm and positive with her daughter. The changes started to happen almost immediately.

Rachel had suggested the couple use a sticker system to encourage Paulina to keep dry during the day. If regular checks over the day showed the little girl was dry, she would earn stickers. If she could earn eight in a week, there would be a reward. The approach worked.

Patty and Noel also wanted a plan to manage Paulina's tantrums. They fine-tuned their approach during four brief Primary Care sessions with Rachel. Time-out was one idea they found worked well.

"It was hard going at first trying to put her into time-out in her room, but we have stuck with it," says Noel. "We still have our moments with her but now she's realising what will happen with the tantrums and playing up, things are getting a lot better. She's realising that no matter how much she yells and screams, she is not going to get what she wants."

Noel says having a united approach and sticking with the strategies has made things easier for him and Patty. It's also made the



Noel Mauricio and Patty Rivera with daughters Lily, left, and Paulina

whole family a lot happier.

"It's getting easier and we can have more fun together," he says.

Patty says she's delighted at how things have turned around for their family. Life in

Palmerston North looks much brighter. And she's been back to playgroup to share the Triple P experience with other parents.

"I'd recommend it to anyone," says Patty. "The strategies really saved us!" ■

## Nerves 'melt away' in parent group



Parents all over the Manawatu and Mid Central district are saying great things about Triple P Discussion Groups and Palmerston North's Nikki Walden is on the receiving end of much of the praise.

Nikki is a social worker and one of the two Triple P coordinators at ACROSS Social Services, which brings the positive parenting help to families in the region. The free parenting support, offered through the discussion groups and also in one-to-one sessions, has been warmly welcomed – both by those working with families and by parents who've been among the first to "do" Triple P.

"We're getting really good feedback from parents who have come to discussion groups," says Nikki. "And although we haven't been running them for long, we're hearing from parents who are really pleased with the results they're getting at home – just from coming along to one discussion group."

This year has a busy one for Nikki. She's been helping other freshly-trained Triple P practitioners get discussion groups going around the region. She's been heard

regularly on radio, talking about raising kids and letting parents know how Triple P can help them. And she's running her own Triple P Discussion Groups at pre-schools and other family-friendly venues.

"Quite a few (parents) are a bit nervous when they arrive – they wonder what they're coming to," she says of her discussion groups. "But that soon melts away because they see almost immediately that other parents are struggling with the same things – really everyday things like disobedience and kids fighting."

Discussion groups bring together a maximum of 12 parents, all looking for answers to the same problem. Each group concentrates on just one issue at a time. Parents choose from four discussion group topics: fighting and aggression, hassle-free shopping, disobedience, and bedtime routines.

"The group atmosphere is very non-

threatening and there's always a bit of laughter. It helps to normalise seeking parenting support and advice on dealing with challenging behaviour," says Nikki.

"The way the groups are structured helps people to settle in and feel comfortable and ready to listen very quickly. The DVD shown right near the start is a great tool for parents to watch others like them without feeling threatened. It's thought provoking and they start to get the message about the way they have been doing things."

Nikki says in just two hours she sees parents learn a lot about how small changes to their approach to parenting can turn into the big changes they want to see at home.

"They learn fast that it's not about punishment," she says. "It's about using positive solutions that are very effective and easy to understand. Some may see they've had unrealistic expectations but they go home saying 'we're not that bad.'"

Triple P makes it easy for everyone to get help, says Nikki. And the take-home workbooks help parents stay on track with the easy strategies they've learned, and be ready when those tricky times with the kids crop up again. ■



Nikki Walden

## 4 Realistic expectations



# Perfect kids? Be realistic and take the pressure off



Do you expect your child to be perfectly behaved all the time? Do you think you should be able to easily cope with work, family, kids and housework, and still come up smiling? Then you could be expecting too much of yourself or your kids. One of Triple P's Five Steps to Positive Parenting is to "have realistic expectations". Because when you are realistic about what's possible and what isn't, life can become a lot easier.

For starters, it helps to understand that children aren't all the same. They're individuals with distinct personalities. Even kids of the same age develop at different rates. So it's important that you don't expect more of your child than he or she is physically or intellectually capable of doing. Just because your friend's four year old is able to dress herself, don't think your child should be too.

On the other hand, don't expect less of your child than they're capable of. It's understandable that many mums and dads continue to dress, feed or brush their child's teeth as they are growing up. It's usually quicker to do it yourself, rather than wait for your little one to put on a pair of pants or pack a school bag. But it's vital to help your child learn new skills, as soon as they're ready. It's good for their independence and sense of achievement. But the added bonus is there will be less pressure on you too.

It's also important to remember that nobody's perfect. Not your kids and not you. If you expect your child will always be polite, tidy up, or always be happy and

cooperative, you're setting yourself up for disappointment – and for conflict with your child. Kids do make mistakes, but most mistakes aren't intentional. So it's OK to let your child try and fail.

What's happening with your children's friends? Sometimes it helps to find out about other families' expectations and decide whether those rules or behaviour are useful in your home.

Also remember that too many rules can play a part in a child's misbehaviour. That's because lots of rules equals lots of chances to break the rules! Think about what really matters to you. For example, maybe you reprimand your children for wearing their shoes in the house. But if that's not something you really care about, perhaps it's a rule you could drop.

And finally, don't forget to go easy on yourself too. You probably want to be the very best parent ever to have children. But that's unrealistic. You are human. You will make mistakes. Don't get too frustrated or upset when you make a mistake because everyone learns through experience. ■



## Contact?

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## Not now! I'm on the phone



Ten minutes on the phone without an interruption or a tantrum: Is it too much for a mum or dad to expect?

Triple P's Professor Matt Sanders says that ten minutes may be too much to expect, unless you've prepared your child in advance.

"A child who acts out may simply be finding it difficult to share their mum or dad with the unknown person on the end of the phone," says Professor Sanders.

But, if you give your child a minute or two of attention when they seem to want it, Professor Sanders says they may not bother you for the rest of your phone call. That direct attention may be enough to satisfy the child that their parent is still there for them.

Even so, children still need to learn polite ways of interrupting. So it's all about planning ahead for these kinds of high-risk situations, rather than reacting to them when they happen.

"Setting simple rules can help," says Professor Sanders.

"Try saying something like, 'Play with your quiet toys until Mum is finished on the phone'. Rules should tell your child what to do rather than what not to do. Positive instructions are more likely to be learned and followed than negative ones such as 'Don't make that noise'."

Professor Sanders says smaller children may only be able to occupy themselves for a short period of time.

"If you know you're going to be on the phone for a while, explain ahead of time that you'll be busy doing something important and cannot be interrupted. You can practise this. Pick up the phone and speak for two to three minutes. If your child continues to play, praise them for letting you speak on the phone.

'Maggie, I'm really pleased that you played quietly while I was on the phone.'

You could encourage your child by giving them a reward when they follow the rules, he says. Tell them what they can earn – perhaps a favourite snack or special activity.

Eventually, as your child learns to occupy themselves you won't need to remind them of the rules, rewards and consequences each time. Make sure that the consequences of breaking the rules are consistent.

"Make rewards less predictable by not always giving them out," says Professor Sanders. "And continue praising your child for occupying themselves when you're on the phone – they've earned it."

Find more great Triple P tips at  
[www.triplep-staypositive.net](http://www.triplep-staypositive.net)

## PARENTS SAY

We asked mums and dads if their kids do chores and if they get paid for doing them. Here's what they said:

**Kate Rogers, Auckland, mother of Paige, 6**

"She has to make her bed and sometimes she helps me to tidy up. I don't pay her but when she's been helping she often gets a treat or reward in the weekend and she knows that."

**Pele Lam Sam, Auckland, mother of Anthony, 9**

"He helps me all the time. His father is disabled and as well as doing chores, Anthony gives me a hand with his dad. He understands he has to help at home but I always thank him and tell him he's a great boy. We don't pay him but we do reward him for helping. Perhaps that might be buying something for him or just getting a DVD."

**Mark Williams, Tauranga, father of Lucy, 6, and Jamie, 8**

"They have to make their beds and they take turns to set the table and help with the dishes. It's still a bit of a struggle getting them to help sometimes. We don't pay them but we remind them that they should be helping because they are part of the family. When they have been helping with chores we might have a treat."

**Mel Fieldsend, Palmerston North, mother of Danni, 15, Michaela, 11, and Matthew, 8**

"Our kids do chores. We worked out with them what they would do and how they would organise themselves. Things like dishes and taking out the recycling stuff. They all get different amounts of pocket money but if they don't do the chores they have on their list, I deduct probably 10 cents per chore not done. They know this is going to happen so usually they get on and do things."

**Greg Ryan, Auckland, father of Ellie, 7**

"I'm a single parent so half the time she is with her mother. I want to have fun when we are together and not ask her to do too much. But she makes her bed and she feeds her kitten every day. I got the kitten for her so she knows she has to help take care of her. I don't pay her for doing those little things though."

**Lyn Johnson, Auckland, mother of Sarah, 8, and Luke, 7**

"We're a really busy, active family. The kids know they have to help tidy up and set the table and bring the groceries in from the car or help carry the rubbish out if I ask them. Things change from week to week at our place when their dad and I get busy. The kids usually pitch in. We don't pay them but we are thinking about starting pocket money and maybe we will give them extra for helping with bigger jobs at home."

**Mary Simpson, Auckland, mother of Amy, 8**

"She helps with the dishes and setting the table. I give her the same amount of pocket money every week. If she wants to earn more we talk about other little jobs she can do and she writes things up on a list in the kitchen for me as she does them."



## Ten minutes with... Jasmine Murphy



Jasmine Murphy is clinical lead for ProCare Psychological Services, the agency that's leading the team bringing free parenting support to parents in Counties Manukau. She's a senior child and adolescent psychologist and the mother of two young children.

**What's more common – parents expecting too much or too little of their kids?**

Too much. I think as a society, everyone expects a little too much of themselves.

**What advice would you give to a parent who thinks their child isn't meeting the "normal" developmental milestones?**

Don't panic but do talk to someone you trust about your concerns. For example, family/whanau, teachers, your doctor or Plunket nurse. That should help you decide if you need to get further professional advice.

**Parents often compare their own children to other people's children. Is this helpful or harmful or a bit of both?**

Both! It's helpful in that it gives a basis for what to expect and what to encourage developmentally. But it can be harmful in that all children are different and comparing yours with others can help to set up unrealistic expectations.

**What would you advise a parent who discovers their child's behaviour is very different at home to their behaviour at school or kindergarten?**

Discuss your concerns with the teacher and seek advice and support around ways to manage the child at home. Find out more too about what is working well for your child at school.

**In what ways do parents compare themselves to other parents?**

Often parents will compare themselves with others as to how much extra stuff they are doing with children outside school. If they see others doing more, they wonder if they are providing their child with enough activities and opportunities to develop. Or parents may compare how much easier other people's kids seem to be than theirs.



Jasmine Murphy

**Is it possible to be 'a perfect parent'?**

No, everyone has different ways of parenting and expectations of themselves as parents which influence how they parent. We all know that nobody is perfect. Most people are doing their best and it's important for parents to pat themselves on the back sometimes. ■



## Let kids choose their chores

**So, you want your children to help with the housework. If you've got more than one child, it's a good idea to start all your children at the same time, even if they are different ages. Children will be happier about the new responsibilities if they don't feel they are being singled out. It won't seem like a punishment.**

Even so, always be aware of the physical limitations of your child. Make sure you are clear what tasks you think they are capable of.

I'd recommend a job roster that you put on the fridge. You can avoid fights about who does what, and it will remind each child what they need to do. Involve your

children in the planning by asking them to suggest chores they might like to do. If they don't want to do anything – and that's likely! – tell them you'll decide if they don't.

You might like to initially offer some reward for jobs done. Perhaps it's a special activity or pocket money. But you may consider reducing rewards over time as

your child learns the roster. You will also have to spell out the consequences for not doing chores. Maybe that's going to bed early or not watching certain television shows.

You may prefer your child learns to do chores because it's what you do as a family, not just a way to get rewards or avoid punishment.

If your child doesn't complete a chore the way you like, don't debate them about it. Ignore their protests and immediately carry out the consequence that you'd agreed on earlier. Be consistent and patient, and each week review whether

they've done the jobs on the roster. Praise them when they deserve it. And encourage improvement when you see it. You and your child will eventually both reap the rewards.

A word of warning though: Children can be manipulative when they don't particularly want to do something. If your child wants to do something else and promises they will do the chores as soon as they have finished, don't get caught out. Children won't always keep to the bargain. ■

– Professor Matt Sanders



## Boredom busters for a happy holiday



There's plenty for kids to do at Auckland's waterfront precinct

Whether your family is a highly-active bunch or 'just hang out' folk, there's heaps of free or low-cost family fun to be had over the summer holidays. In New Zealand, we have endless beaches, bush and parks to explore. Look out for free movies, concerts and festivals in our parks over the months ahead. And of course there are all those Christmas events coming up fast too. So, how about a few boredom-busting ideas to get you thinking?



## Water safety is cool for kids

Having fun at the beach and by rivers, lakes and swimming pools is what Christmas holidays are all about for Kiwi families. But water is a big hazard for Kiwi kids. Even if they have had swimming lessons, they're not drown-proof, says Water Safety New Zealand.

### Watch out!

Supervising children near water is the single most important precaution you can take, says Water Safety New Zealand. Proper supervision means responsible adults should have young children in their care both within sight, and within reach, at all times.

### Introduce them to water

With the right opportunities and with encouragement, kids can become confident and competent in water. Right from birth you can gently introduce them to it and build their confidence by making bath time fun, adding safe toys to keep them amused.

At 18 months, a child should understand simple water safety rules, such as waiting for an adult before they go into water and always walking carefully around a pool side.

### Get wet

You can start teaching kids to swim and to learn water survival and safety skills when they're about three years old. But always remember swimming lessons can't make a child totally water safe. There's a big difference between being in a controlled environment with parents and teachers, to accidentally falling into water!

### Attention class!

Private swim schools offer classes for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers for water confidence and familiarisation. Water Safety

### Deck the halls

Christmas carols, Christmas parades and big public Christmas concerts are too good to miss. Auckland's annual Santa Parade is on Sunday November 25 and the city's annual Christmas in the Park concert on December 8 should attract thousands of families to the Domain. Tauranga and Palmerston North hold their parades on Saturday December 1. Both have stalls and other family fun on the day. In Auckland and Tauranga the streets with houses participating in the traditional Christmas lights are a sight to behold after dark.

### Bring the sunscreen

Head to the beach but first find the right bit of child-friendly seashore for your family. Try Mount Maunganui's surf and harbour beaches, which are popular with all ages.

Auckland's city beaches are tidal but very sheltered, with calm waters making them perfect for kids. Top spots for young children are Mission Bay, St Heliers, Pt Chevalier, Maraetai and Cheltenham Beach. The city's new waterfront precinct is great for families, with events for kids all summer and a sheltered swimming area for young children.

### Go bush

When it comes to beautiful bushland and green spaces, we're very spoiled for choice. In the Bay of Plenty, the old Te Puna Quarry site is a very popular recreation reserve for families. It has many easy little walking tracks, lovely gardens, streams, great picnic spots and you can take the dog – on a lead.

To explore the bushland or just keep cool beside a stream, local maps, information centres and websites make it easy to find the right patch. Check for amenities like taps,

toilets, play equipment and picnic tables before you choose your destination.

### Get your (walking) boots on

Walking is good for just about everyone. Work out how to make it fun and just a bit challenging. Choose a route where there are things to see and talk about and maybe a place to stop for refreshments. Make sure it's 'do-able' for all members of the family – not too hard, too hot, or too long. Be sure to set off with suitable shoes, hats, drink, food – and a clear idea of where you're going and how long it will take.

### Under the stars

Kids love camping if you get it right but mosquitos, freezing nights or blazing sun can send the most resilient families packing fast. This is an adventure that requires planning, realistic expectations and adequate gear – and the odds in your favour.

If you are up for freedom camping with minimal facilities check the Department of Conservation sites in regional and national parks. But if you like to be camping with other families and great facilities, family holiday parks are dotted all over the country. See [www.holidayparks.co.nz](http://www.holidayparks.co.nz)

### Summer events: What's on near you?

Check out these websites for more places to go and things to do:  
[www.christmasinthepark.co.nz](http://www.christmasinthepark.co.nz)  
[www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)  
[www.aucklandmuseum.com](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com)  
[www.tauranga.govt.nz](http://www.tauranga.govt.nz)  
[www.pncc.govt.nz](http://www.pncc.govt.nz)  
[www.holidayparks.co.nz](http://www.holidayparks.co.nz)

New Zealand recommends you choose a swim school that:

- Has teachers with nationally-recognised swimming teaching qualifications
- Offers programmes based on the sound progression of swimming and water safety skills
- Provides quality practice time for your child to develop good swim and survival skills
- Teaches parents about the importance of

constant supervision when their child is in and around the water

### Water hazards

And beware of any water containers a young child could fall into – washing machines, dog bowls, fish ponds, nappy buckets, toilets and baths, for example. They are dangerous too.

Thanks to [www.watersafety.org.nz](http://www.watersafety.org.nz)



# 'Tis the season to be thrifty



Giving and receiving Christmas presents is great fun but getting through the festive season can be tough on the family budget. But it is possible to enjoy Christmas without running up huge credit card debts. You just need to start with a plan, rather than with a last-minute rush of shopping, says popular New Zealand personal finance writer (and mother) Diana Clement. Diana recommends you first decide on a strategy for your extended family and work on this together.

"Adopting the 'secret santa' approach can save a fortune on gifts for the wider circle but still create a happy family tradition," says Diana. "Each family member only buys one gift of an agreed, modest value for another family member. Who each person buys for is worked out by drawing names out of a hat."

"Closer to home in your immediate family you could decide on a dollar limit for gifts. While this may take a bit of getting used to for those who love to indulge or be indulged – and hang the cost – it sure takes the pressure off everyone."

Alternatively, she says, ask everyone to write a Christmas wish list and that way, whatever you choose to buy from the wish list will be appreciated, not wasted.

Diana also suggests doing some research on the net if you are after something special – such as a bicycle or a barbecue. That way you'll find options to fit the budget much faster.

While the weekend markets always have an amazing array of stuff at good prices, at this time of year their stalls are piled high with gifts from trinkets to toys, clothes, house things and more. Best to get there really early for the greatest finds and prices, Diana says.

Another way to conserve cash is to make gifts. "Even if you're not crafty or creative there's plenty you could make for someone on the gift list," says Diana. "Yummy food treats never go astray anytime. Try making jams or relishes and find pretty jars to put



them in. Find a simple recipe for sweets or biscuits you can decorate as gifts for friends. Buy tiny plants and fill them with little salad seedlings or small flowers. Get the kids in on this and make a day of gift making."

And whatever you make or buy, you don't have to spend a fortune on presentation.

Dive into the local 'two dollar' shops for cheap, attractive ribbons boxes and wrapping stuff. The Warehouse also goes big on Christmas decorations. ■

## The Christmas Crunch (and how to say "No" to your kids)

Even when a family's finances are healthy, Christmas is the event mostly likely to strain the bank balance. So with the global economy causing people everywhere to be a little more cautious, Christmas 2012 will present an even greater challenge for the many parents trying to live within a new, but not necessarily improved, budget.

Some families may not be able to spend as freely as they have in the past. There may be belt tightening, perhaps fewer presents or more modest gifts.

But for your children's sake, it's important that traditions such as birthdays and Christmas don't get lost in any frugality drive. Because kids thrive in a world of certainty and predictability, these kinds of celebrations reassure children that the family – and their world – is safe.

For smaller children, it is usually just a matter of them having something brightly wrapped to open. They love the excitement of the day itself and the thought of Santa. But to help older kids make sense of the new situation, it's OK to explain why they may not receive the kinds of presents they have in the past.

Children have a remarkable capacity for empathy and understanding, so sitting down with your child and outlining what's

happened will temper their expectations. For example, you may say: "Dad's not getting as much work as he used to, so we're going to have to do things a little differently this year." You can explain that you still have to meet regular needs and pay bills, so that while there will be gifts, there may not be as many as in the past.

Remember, it's perfectly acceptable to say 'no' to a child who is pestering you for a toy or game that is beyond your reach. Think about it purely from a life skill perspective. Children need to learn to cope with disappointment, frustration and not always getting what they want. And parents need to have the confidence to be firm. You can't go rubbery at the knees and cave in, just because your child says, "Everyone else has got one of these and therefore I need one." Statements like that are exaggerations that aren't true.

But you should still promise your children

that Christmas is going to be a special time. You could remind them that there'll be the usual turkey dinner, perhaps you have a celebration with the aunts and uncles, go to see Christmas lights or attend Midnight Mass. Remind them of the routines and highlights your family considers the important rituals of the season. You could even make some gifts and cards with them to demonstrate the spirit of the season.

Above all, Christmas is a time to spend with your loved ones. Your celebration can – and should – be preserved, irrespective of your financial situation.

– Professor Matt Sanders

Professor Matt Sanders is a clinical psychologist whose Triple P programme is used in 24 countries around the world.



### Kids can shop

Here are Triple P's top 5 tips for stress-free Christmas shopping with kids:

1. Choose the least hectic time of day, to suit your child's routine.
2. Several brief trips are better than one marathon expedition.
3. Avoid kids nagging by explaining what the shopping trip is for, where you're going and what you're planning to buy.
4. Before you leave set rules such as: stay close, use a pleasant voice and do as you're told.
5. Praise your child when they stick to the rules. If they break the rules, remind them which rule they've broken. If they break it again, back up with a consequence such as quiet time.

– Professor Matt Sanders



# Local parenting help is easy to find

Parents who've already been using Triple P parenting tips and strategies in the Bay of Plenty and the Manawatu say it's bringing good changes at home – and a great sense of relief.

Now families in Counties Manukau will enjoy the benefits of parenting support from practitioners who have recently been trained in Primary Care Triple P, which is a short series of brief, personal sessions. The roll out of parenting support will soon extend to Waitemata families in this Ministry of Health trial project, which is being overseen by workforce development agency, the Werry Centre.

The parenting programme is available free to local parents of children from three to seven. They can get support, advice and learn parenting strategies either one-to-one or at small discussion groups, with a focus on the everyday challenges of raising kids.

The newly-trained Triple P practitioners already working with families in counties Manukau were selected from agencies involved in health. In Manukau, ProCare Psychological Services is leading the development of the practitioner networks and meeting with local families.

## 'The aim is to be accessible'

"The aim of this programme is for parenting help to be very accessible," says the Werry Centre's project coordinator Lisa Maughan. "For example, in the regions that are part of this project, people might

seek parenting help through their health provider, parish, marae or school. Or they might want individual help or go to a discussion group. The options for doing Triple P are versatile and we hope parents get support in a way that is comfortable.

"It's encouraging to be getting good feedback from parents who are putting what they have learned into practice. It's also another good step forward to have a new group of enthusiastic practitioners in Manukau."

Parents interested in finding out how Triple P can help them can contact a practitioner directly (see table below). ■



## Your Tippiaper

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**Families Achieving Balance**  
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**Parenting for Men**  
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**Footsteps Counselling Services**  
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**The Omokoroa Centre Trust**  
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