



# SPECIAL ADDITION \* SUMMER 2005



## Do Parents Need Lessons?

On 23 February, **Jamie Owen**

interviewed Nicole James, Development Officer for The Parent Network on his Radio Wales show, *The Jamie Owen Show*.

**Jamie Owen (JO):** It's odd, isn't it, that given all those years you spend in school you're never sat down and told how to be a parent, arguably the most important and responsible role you could ever take on. No one prepares you for coping with the stress, managing the behaviour of your child, and how to keep your relationship together when the storm of a new arrival hits.

Nicole James is a mum herself and the development officer for the Parent Network group. Do you really think that we need lessons in parent

craft? Is it possible to teach people how to be parents? Isn't it instinctive?

**Nicole James (NJ):** I think yes - I think in some cases it would be very helpful to have lessons. I mean, you have all these classes when you're preparing to have a child, when you're pregnant, and the mums and the dads go expectantly to the classes and you learn all these wonderful things, and then you have the child and you go home from hospital and that's it - good luck. Now what? Now what do we do?

So I think yes, I think some basic classes would be very helpful, but I think what parents mostly need is support. I think when you have a new baby, sure, the first month or so friends and family are all helping you and offering advice and everything, and then it just kind of pitters out and everybody goes back to their daily life and sometimes you're stuck.

And I think we need support - it's not just in raising the children, it's also just in being a parent. It's *all* the aspects. It's the child

## **Have questions?** **Need information?**

**Here are some websites that could help:**

### **Top Pick:**

**Neath Port Talbot Net Mums**  
**[www.netmums.com/neath-porttalbot](http://www.netmums.com/neath-porttalbot)**

Part of a national site ([www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)), this is a GREAT site for NPT parents! It provides mums AND dads with tons of useful, local information and resources! You really need to check it out!!!

**Practical Parenting**  
**[www.practicalparent.org.uk](http://www.practicalparent.org.uk)**

"Practical Parenting Advice is a FREE one-stop resource for parents and professionals wanting tips and support on child behaviour, development and family relationships."

**BBC Parenting**  
**[www.bbc.co.uk/parenting](http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting)**

"Practical solutions from the experts to help with the everyday challenges of parenting whether you're planning a pregnancy or dealing with unruly teenagers."

### **Parentsnet**

**[www.learning.wales.gov.uk/parents](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/parents)**

A brand new website from the Welsh Assembly Government designed specifically for parents, it provides lots of information about your child's education in Wales.

**Raising Kids** **[www.raisingkids.co.uk](http://www.raisingkids.co.uk)**

"Raisingkids.co.uk offers support, information, and friendship to everyone who's raising kids- whatever your circumstances or income."

**For Parents By Parents**  
**[www.forparentsbyparents.com](http://www.forparentsbyparents.com)**

"The ForParentsByParents web site provides a forum for parents to share their own experiences of parenting."

**Directgov / Info for Parents**  
**[www.direct.gov.uk/Audiences/Parents](http://www.direct.gov.uk/Audiences/Parents)**

Information for parents on your child's education, rights and safety, as well as advice on a range of issues including health in pregnancy, adoption procedures, childcare, parents' rights, internet safety and more.

*Please note: We are providing these links as a source of information only. Whilst we make every effort to ensure only suitable and relevant sites are listed, we cannot be responsible for those websites and their content which are beyond our control. We therefore make no representation as to their quality, suitability, functionality or legality and you waive any claim you may have against us with respect to such websites.*



## Tired of temper tantrums? Struggling with your teen?

Even the most caring parents have trouble with their kids at some point. But unless the situation becomes extreme, support and advice can be hard to find.

Luckily, **Parenting Matters** offers free, 8-10 week courses that aim to help parents find ways to cope with unwanted or difficult behaviour. The courses are available to anyone living in Neath Port Talbot county.

"Our course is for parents of 4 to 14 year olds," explains John Sayce, manager of the project. "When kids get that bit older, there isn't the same level of support you have when the child is very young—from your midwife, health visitor and so on.

"But children's problems don't go away just because they get older, and for some parents the problems can get quite severe. Staying out late, throwing temper tantrums, refusing to go to school—these are the things that parents mostly struggle with."

The **free courses** offered by **Parenting Matters** help parents find positive ways to respond to difficult behaviour and to develop strategies for emphasising good behaviour.

To learn more about how **Parenting Matters** may be able to help you, simply ring them on **01639 620 771** and one of their friendly staff will be happy to speak with you.

### Enjoy chocolate without the calories!

How? Read a chocolate-inspired book! Try:

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*  
by Roald Dahl,

*Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel

*Chocolat* by Joanne Harris.

## Today's Family Car... the car companies have finally woken up!



*By Mark James, Motoring Journalist*

Car seats, prams, changing bags, sports kit and the weekly shop - a relatively new dad myself, I know all too well the challenge of getting everything into one vehicle. Like me, you may be finding yourself thinking; **is it finally time to buy the dreaded 'family car'?**

While those words may have sent shudders down virtually every car-loving driver's spine a few years ago, today there are plenty of cars that are 'cool', enjoyable to drive and family friendly!

Yes, after years of offering a choice of saloons or estates, the car companies have finally started to look at families in a different light! MPVs, mini-MPVs, 7-seater estates, 7-seater SUVs and (newest of all) the "six-seater" are all after your money these days.

### Here are my picks for the current "best of the bunch":

**Best Estate:** Volvo V50 (there had to be a Volvo in here somewhere!)

**Best SUV:** The Land Rover Discovery 3 (if the school run involves mountains or jungle!)

**Best MPV:** The Volkswagen Touran (just ignore anyone who tells you it's boxy!)

**Best Mini-MPV:** The SEAT Altea (particularly with either of the diesel engines)

**Best Saloon:** The new Audi A4 (this was the most difficult choice - there are loads of good saloons around!)

**"The Ultimate Family Car":** Honda FR-V (two rows of three seats, like the Fiat Multipla, but nothing like as ugly!)

**Best Gadget:** DVD players and satellite navigation are great, but Citroen's "Lane Departure Warning System" actually vibrates the driver's seat if you stray across the white line!

With the new car market significantly down on previous years, now could be the perfect time to haggle a great deal on the family car you always knew you'd have to buy one day!

*Mark can be heard each month on "The Jamie Owen Show" on Radio Wales, and seen regularly on "X-Ray" on BBC 1 Wales.*

If you have a car question, please submit it to The Parent Network via post or email, and we'll forward it to Mark for you!

**Top 10 issues of interest to Parents in NPT:**

1. Transport
2. Leisure
3. Play Facilities
4. Environment
5. Drugs / Crime
6. Support Services
7. Schools
8. Family Friendly Policies
9. Pushchair / Wheelchair Access
10. Childcare



**What do YOU think?**

We want to hear YOUR opinions, experiences, suggestions, and ideas, about these and any other issues you may have!

**Please tell us!**

Phone: 01639 620 771 (ask for Nicole)  
 Text: 07913 941 211  
 Email: info@TheParentNetworkNPT.org.uk

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**Game Time!**

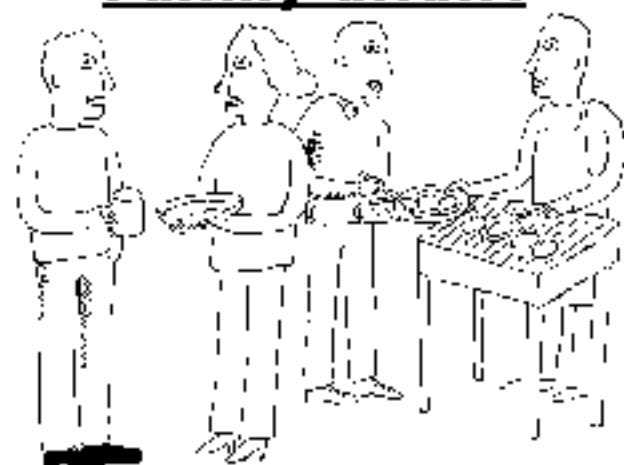
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**The Parent Network is open to ALL kinds of parents!**

Can you find some of the different kinds in this word search?

E	M	C	S	T	J	Y	V	P	L	T	H	H	R	P
Y	M	J	K	L	F	S	O	A	V	N	S	K	E	Y
D	M	O	I	W	W	J	G	R	G	E	Q	J	T	R
D	E	R	H	H	E	N	Z	T	D	R	E	E	S	P
Y	X	I	J	T	I	G	Q	T	G	A	G	E	O	K
Q	O	L	R	K	A	W	R	I	X	P	L	Q	F	B
R	L	U	R	R	U	Y	I	M	A	P	F	K	H	C
G	I	O	N	M	A	U	A	E	W	E	U	E	Z	A
G	W	J	N	G	U	M	B	T	H	T	L	Z	U	J
H	K	M	Q	S	E	M	Q	T	S	S	L	E	I	N
E	L	G	N	I	S	R	D	F	V	K	T	N	X	I
E	N	G	N	F	A	I	S	U	D	D	I	V	I	X
A	U	S	Y	L	U	Y	A	J	A	Y	M	B	E	O
A	D	O	P	T	I	V	E	D	P	P	E	W	B	H
H	M	P	V	R	E	D	L	O	N	N	R	I	X	U

**Family affair:**



The following people were at a family gathering:

- a grandfather,
- a grandmother,
- two fathers,
- two mothers,
- four children,
- three grandchildren,
- one brother,
- two sisters,
- two sons,
- two daughters,
- one father-in-law,
- one mother-in-law,
- and
- one daughter-in-law.

What is the smallest number of people who could have been at the gathering?

(Hint: The answer is not 23.)

- |           |           |              |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Adoptive  | Married   | Single       |
| Dads      | Mum       | Stay-at-home |
| Foster    | Older     | Step-parent  |
| Full-time | Part-time | Working      |
|           |           | Younger      |

**Answers on page SA4**

raising, it's keeping your relationship going if you're in a relationship, it's how to keep yourself healthy, how to keep the family safe - it's all these different things as well as raising the child, making sure they're learning things, managing their behaviour and all those different things... it's just so much.

**JO:** Do we have a uniquely British problem in not supporting new parents?

**NJ:** (laughs) – absolutely not!

**JO:** You are not from the UK - I hope you don't mind pointing that out.

**NJ:** I'm from the States.

**JO:** Is it the same in the States?

**NJ:** Absolutely. It's been a number of years now since I lived in the States, but I go home about once a year and I always go to the book stores and just like here, in the bookstores in the states, there's whole sections just on parenting and child raising. There's whole sections in the magazine racks of mum and baby magazines and parenting magazines and family magazines.

I mean, there wouldn't be such a market for all of this if there wasn't an incredible need for that information. Even on television now we have so many TV shows on managing your child's behaviour, on parenting, on having a baby, all these things. Obviously people want that information.

**JO:** When you had a baby, what was the biggest shock about it all – what had you prepared for least?

**NJ:** I *thought* I was very prepared for the sleep deprivation. I knew it was gonna be tough, that I was ready for it and...nothing, *nothing* can prepare you for the reality of having a child. Sleep deprivation doesn't even *begin* to describe it.

He's 16 months old now and I'm *still* trying to catch up on my sleep, and now of course we're entering the wonderful toddler stage where he's discovering how to say 'no' and 'I want this' and I want it now and mummy says 'no, you can't have that' so I'll throw a temper tantrum...and what do you do?

Luckily, one of the programmes I'm working very closely with is called the **Parenting Matters Project** in Neath Port Talbot and they actually offer free courses to parents in Neath Port Talbot on things like managing behaviour and everything, so luckily I personally *have* a good support network. When I'm having a problem I can say 'what do I do' and I get all this wonderful advice. But I think the majority

of parents don't have that and what we really need is *support* and being able to talk to somebody.

I think so often you have a problem or situation with your child and you think 'I'm the only one. My child is the only child who is doing this. I'm the only parent going through this.' And I think if you can talk to some other parents who say, 'Oh no, I've been in the exact same situation,' you just feel so much *relief* that I'm *not* the only one.

**JO:** And do you also think that it almost gives a sign of exasperation or that we're embarrassed to ask for help - we feel that we should instinctively know the answers and therefore it's a sign of failure to seek advice from somewhere else?

**NJ:** Absolutely. And again, I think that it's the same in the States, it's the same anywhere you go. It's almost as though there's a stigma about it—that if I ask for help, or if I say I'm having a problem, well, I must be a terrible parent, I've failed in some way.

Absolutely not! I think if you ask for help you're showing that you're a really *good* parent. I don't care how perfect you are and how perfect your kids are, you're *gonna* run into situations where you need some help. *Every* parent does.

*The Jamie Owen Show can be heard daily on Radio Wales from 11:00—Noon.*

### **Answers to the Puzzles on Page SS3**

**Family Affair** *Answer:* The smallest number is 7. Remember that a grandfather is also a father, a mother can also be a daughter—and even a daughter-in-law. The people at the gathering were as follows: an elderly couple, their son and his wife, and their three children—a boy and two girls.

