

I guess parenting is the one thing most of us are least prepared for. It seems that it is all supposed to come together in some magical way when you are handed this precious little bundle still reeling from the trauma of childbirth. You look around for help and it seems that, apart from glowing smiles and soft noises, you need to get on with it now!

I know the tired and worn argument suggests that our mothers and grandmothers before us seem to have coped, and haven't we done alright and survived the rocky road from childhood to young adulthood with only a few bruises and scars to show for it. Looking around it seems not everyone copes well with the scars.



In recent years, Tusla has begun to shine a light on parenting and its impact on future generations. Not before time I say. I saw some promotion in the local Early Years project in Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre, and I was very happy to engage as it was my first time being a mother. The relief it was to share with other mothers your inner most fears and delights, and to know that you are not alone. The sheer joy of spending time with your precious child in the company of other parents and their little ones to enjoy music, play, swimming and massage has been truly inspirational. To listen to the empowering messages coming from Parenting 24/7 has been fantastic.

I think it's mainly "knowing" that there are others out there going through the sleepless nights, the worries about check-ups, sickness and baby's development. Chatting about these things make them feel less worrisome. I think the biggest learning for me was being able to chat to other mothers. Parenting alone can sometimes be lonely. But when you have other mothers going through the same thing, well that is such a help. Knowing what to expect, or what not to expect, from yourself or your child is good and it's about being prepared. I'm also proud to show off my little princess and she loves being the centre of attention.

I have to say that my own family, particularly my parents, were fantastic in their support and in handing down so much advice as well as practical help.

I hope that we are now turning over a new page on parenting education so we can work together to ensure that the role of parents is seen as the most important job in the country. My little girl has greatly benefited from my learning from other mothers in the Parent and Toddler group. She is in top form chatting, playing, making friends and adding so much pleasure to my life and so many others. I hope I can now help other mothers as they take those first steps into parenthood.

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