



# Could *reparenting* help you?

**Feel as though you have unresolved issues from your childhood?  
Learning to reparent yourself could allow you to move forward**

**T**hose of you familiar with Philip Larkin's famous poem, *This be the verse*, will know the shocking way he declares that our parents are to blame for our less-than-desirable idiosyncrasies. "They f\*ck you up your mum and dad, they may not mean to, but they do," he writes. "They fill you with the faults they had and add some extra, just for you."

And while his words can be described as rather extreme, there is truth in the idea that our parents and how they bring us up can have an impact on the way we live the rest of our lives.

Childhood trauma sits heavy on some people's shoulders, and whether that's a result of neglect, abuse or having unmet emotional needs, the consequences can be far-reaching. But even those of us who feel we have had a loving and nurturing upbringing can still be harbouring hidden issues stemming from those early years.

Enter the idea of reparenting. This form of psychotherapy aims to address shortfalls in the care we received as a child and enable us to live healthy, happy lives as adults.

"It's when an adult works to meet their own emotional and physical needs that went unmet when they were growing up," explains Chelsea Robinson, a motherhood therapist and founder of Mama's Modern Village ([mamasmodernvillage.com](http://mamasmodernvillage.com)). "Having the skills to manage relationships, set boundaries, cope positively with life's challenges and take care of ourselves is not innate in any of us; in fact, it is something that is learned, and this begins in childhood with our caregivers. If we don't have parents that were able to model these behaviours or set expectations for us in these ways, then we may struggle with these issues in adulthood too."

While this sort of therapy is usually geared towards those who have had traumatic experiences in their childhood, it can actually provide benefits for everyone.

"Reparenting offers us the opportunity to nurture ourselves, to enquire about ourselves and respond with self-care," Jacqueline Carson, a clinical hypnotherapist and psychotherapist ([hypnotherapy-darlington.co.uk](http://hypnotherapy-darlington.co.uk)),

explains. "It is a chance to explore our inner feelings with honesty and to address any triggers."

It can be of particular benefit for those who are struggling with emotional pain, or those who find it difficult to form and maintain healthy relationships, she adds. Anyone who is always seeking approval and validation or who feels a disconnect or isolation from others could also find it useful.

"Ultimately reparenting helps you to understand yourself better, communicate with yourself in a compassionate way, love and nurture yourself, and accept and understand your feelings and emotions," she concludes. "This will allow you to navigate your world more easily, create healthy relationships and set appropriate boundaries."

## RELEARNING IMPORTANT SKILLS

The process of reparenting addresses a number of key areas, which can help us readjust our approach to life and find a new way forward. We'll look at some of these below.

### Boundary-making

Was your childhood a care-free affair, with little or no rules set in stone? Or did you have a strict upbringing, where boundaries were imposed at every turn?

"As children we require healthy boundaries to make us feel safe and secure," says Jacqueline. "Children typically rebel against boundaries so they know where the parameters lie and how far they can go before they will be emotionally caught or supported, so having no boundaries or those which are too rigid can make us feel unsafe."

"Reparenting gives us confidence to challenge our boundaries in adulthood, be open to our vulnerabilities and understand our triggers so that we can readjust our boundaries to a more appropriate setting," she adds.

### Self-discipline

Closely linked to the idea of boundary-making is the concept of self-discipline. As Chelsea explains, a child who grows up without boundaries might experience a



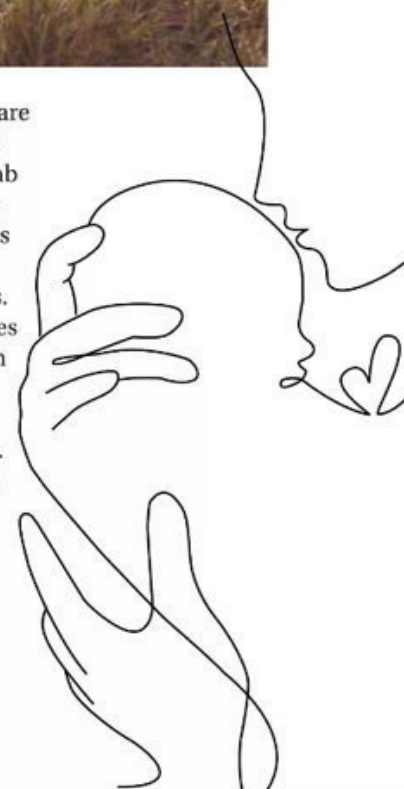


sense of freedom early on that leads them to struggle with self-discipline later as an adult. "As an adult, they might find it difficult to hold themselves accountable, stick to a routine and keep promises," she says. "To begin reparenting yourself in this area, begin by making one promise or commitment to yourself and following through with it," she advises. "It can be as small as waking up when the alarm goes off every morning instead of snoozing for 30 minutes."

### **Emotional regulation and resilience**

We often hear parents imploring their children to 'stop crying' or 'calm down' and while their intentions are good, minimising emotions and

experiences like this can mean that feelings are ignored or overlooked. Chelsea says this can lead kids to not trust their own feelings, numb them and turn them off. "By disowning their emotions, some children never gain the skills to identify their emotions in the first place, let alone the tools to manage them," she says. "Emotional regulation and resilience includes our ability to self-soothe, find comfort within ourselves in distressing situations, tolerate uncomfortable and negative emotions and generally cope in healthy and adaptive ways. When you reparent yourself in this area, you get to know yourself emotionally; begin to identify your emotions, trust in them and safely express them."



### Communication

The way we communicate with others is the basis through which we form relationships with others and has a key role to play in our wellbeing. It's a skill we pick up very early in life. "We learn communication from our parents and care givers even before language develops," Jacqueline explains. "In fact, there are even studies now which indicate that unborn babies learn communication in utero."

As children, she explains, we observe how our parents and caregivers relate to each other; we feel their energy and see their emotions. Naturally, we absorb their communication techniques in our own lives and respond to people in a way that mimics their behaviour - which isn't always beneficial.

"Reparenting can help to unpick some of these patterns, determine what is helpful and what is not, what is it you are trying to communicate, and what is it you are not saying in a relationship and why. This can help you to find your own inner voice and be able to communicate your true feelings confidently within your relationships," Jacqueline says.

### Self-care and self-love

A lot of us struggle to show ourselves compassion and self-love, and this can be a result of the way we were brought up. "If you grew up in a co-dependent household or grew up believing you needed to be perfect in order to be loved, the chances are you will struggle to know your own needs and wants as an adult," says Chelsea. To move away from this, she recommends regularly checking in with yourself, and asking yourself: "What do I want or need at this moment?"

### The process

So, now we know the basics, how exactly can we use this form of therapy in our own lives?

"It is possible to reparent yourself, though most often the therapy is successful using a professional psychotherapist," says Jacqueline. "Sometimes you are aware of the behaviour but may not be sure of the origin and a professional can help you to navigate these behaviours."

If you do decide to try reparenting yourself, Jacqueline recommends setting yourself some ground rules and understanding in advance how you are going to deal with any emotions that come up. She suggests having a trusted friend who can be there for you to offer support if needed.

"Be compassionate and empathetic," Jacqueline adds. "Understand that it is not your fault but equally do not apportion blame either. When we blame others the negative emotion stays in our body and therefore it is necessary to forgive. Forgiveness releases the negative emotion and helps us to move on in a positive way." And above all, try to ready yourself for the process. "You may find that you experience feelings of guilt, shame, grief and loss, and there may be feelings of fear and anxiety," Jacqueline says. "This is not an overnight fix so be prepared for the journey."

Keen to take the idea forward? Try Chelsea's five simple steps in the panel to your right.

### 5 steps to a clearer future

#### Chelsea explains some simple ways to begin to reparent yourself

1. Reflect on your childhood (either solo or with the support of a therapist). So many of us desire to glamorise our childhood. We fear that if we are honest with ourselves about what wasn't so good then we are blaming our parents, when we actually want to acknowledge that they tried their best. Yet, with reparenting, we can sit more comfortably in the grey area, acknowledging what went well and what didn't go well. Try to look back at your childhood as objectively as possible, allowing yourself to admit what you needed and didn't receive.
2. Grab a photo of yourself as a child and begin to talk to that inner child within. Look at the photo daily. Notice what comes up for you now as an adult as you look at that younger picture. Use that picture as one way to connect with your inner child.
3. Get used to asking yourself what you need or want before asking what others are thinking. Make yourself a priority. Before reaching out, reach in. This takes time; it is a practice and it can feel very difficult at first. It's one step in getting to know yourself again and then trusting yourself too.
4. Keep one promise to yourself every day. Show up for yourself every single day in a small way. This is how you can begin to trust yourself and count on yourself in your reparenting journey. Trust is foundational in a parent-child relationship and so many adults didn't have that as a youngster.
5. Ask yourself: "What do I need right now?" when you feel yourself becoming emotionally overwhelmed. Then give yourself just that - be it a hug, a bath, a walk or a good cry. Remember, you can meet your needs as an adult now; you are the one in control. Listen to yourself when you answer this question and follow through.