

# To err is human

There seems to be an increasing trend in our modern society to blame others for mistakes rather than take responsibility for our own contribution.

This behaviour can become established in early childhood, especially if children learn that blaming others and making excuses protect them from a sense of parental rejection.

If children often experience angry or frustrated responses from a parent over a simple human error such as spillage or breakage, the child can take this personally and associate such mistakes with the withdrawal of love. This response makes it difficult for the child to take personal responsibility in the future because to do so will elicit a fear of negative repercussions.

The most important thing for children is to be loved, so it makes sense that children will do everything in their power to make this happen. It's vital that parents step back and act with restraint in relation to normal childhood fumbles that are part of growing up.

Children learn to take responsibility for their actions as adults when they learn that everyone makes mistakes and it is OK to be less than perfect.

Let your child know you realise what they did was accidental rather than purposeful and that you love and support them.

Children who feel loved and valued despite their mistakes develop an internal system of right and wrong that make it easier for them to accept responsibility for actions that negatively affect others.

Blaming others or making excuses for your behaviour can lead to relationship problems in adulthood. If a relationship is less than perfect, you may focus on what your partner is doing rather than on yourself.

When we stop blaming others we start to take control over our lives because we start to look at our own behaviour, something we have power to change.

If our black-and-white thinking leads us to make harsh judgements of others that in turn results in them turning away from us, we can look at this and make attitudinal changes.

Acknowledging patterns in our own behaviour is a key element of self-reliance, as is a belief that we can make different choices. Each of us can choose how we respond to those around us. The choice is ours.

## Survival tips

- **Show compassion when your children make mistakes and try to stay connected despite feelings of frustration or anger.**
- **Take responsibility for your own actions rather than focusing blame on your partner.**
- **Personally acknowledge patterns of behaviour that negatively affect your relationship and choose to act differently.**