



# What is the obsession with giving unsolicited parenting advice?

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No sooner than you've announced your pregnancy, the unsolicited parenting advice comes flooding in. Children are our future so it's not surprising that everyone feels invested in helping parents to better nurture their babies and, by extension, the community. And while it may sometimes feel like unwanted parenting advice, it often comes from a good place.

# What is unsolicited parenting advice?

Unsolicited parenting advice and advice to parents to be can come in the form of ‘helpful’ tips, “You just need to sleep when the baby sleeps,” to stating the obvious, “I think he’s tired,” and concerned questions, “Should you be running if you’re pregnant?” Then there’s the lessons learned, “We found out that Olivia has a lactose intolerance, it sounds like Noah might have one too,” ‘harmless’ observations, “She hasn’t started potty training yet then...,” and comparisons to how other parents do it, or did it years ago, “Baby-lead weaning didn’t exist in my day. You ate what you were given, and you turned out OK.” And finally, the questionable parenting advice that is at best unrealistic and at worst, patronizing and ridiculous. “Cherish every moment, anyone?”

It seems like the people with all the pointers are genuinely trying to help, but you wonder why you’re left feeling irritated, judged, undermined, and generally a bit confused. If this sounds familiar, it’s likely you’ve been on the receiving end of unsolicited parenting advice.

## Who are the culprits dishing out the advice to parents to be and new parents that you didn’t ask for?

It might feel like everyone has an opinion on your pregnancy or parenting style. That’s because there are a lot of people with experiences to share—with most of the population either having parents, being parents, or both. It’s a global conversation. This means advice can come from all corners of your world, with well-meaning friends and family members, fellow parents, people without kids, and even strangers on the street—or online—all having something to say on how the next generation is raised!



## The effect of unwanted parenting advice

While most advice to parents to be and new parents comes from a good place and is intended to bring reassurance or make your life easier, it can sometimes do the opposite. For example, in Saudi Arabia, where it is common for extended families to live close by and there is high pressure to conform to expected social norms around the 'right' way of doing things, 84% of parents believe that everyone has a point of view on how to raise their child. In addition to this, a worrying 64% say that it is stressful to know what to do as a result. This is compared with just 17% of parents in Sweden feeling that everyone has an opinion on their parenting and just 9% saying this caused them to feel stressed.

## Our advice?!

Parenthood is a journey that involves both finding things out for yourself and asking others for help. We're all learning on the job, but as your confidence as a parent grows you may find it easier to let other people's opinions wash over you and not let it affect how you view yourself. And while we wouldn't want to tell you what to do, it's worth bearing in mind that every baby and family is different, so what works for others might not work for you. It may take a village to raise a child but what you need

is support rather than judgment.

Read our checklists on how to handle visitors after birth and six easy ways to deal with judging parents.

## **Sources**

The Parenting Index, First Edition 2021, [theparentingindex.com](https://theparentingindex.com)

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