

# Recession Challenges for Parents

Parent support charity Parentline Plus is preparing for an increase in calls from parents as the credit crunch and banking crisis are expected to turn into a recession, where household incomes drop and there is an increase in unemployment.

Stress and conflict may arise in some families as a direct result of a squeeze on the household budgets and there will be an anxiety impact from the gloomy economic news on children who will worry about the future for their family.

The charity is urging parents not to be put off asking for help because they fear they will be labelled as 'bad parents.' In a stressful situation, asking for help is a sign of parenting strength, and parents should be encouraged to access the support available, such as the free\* and confidential Parentline service they offer 24 hours a day - 0808 800 2222.

Acting Chief Executive, Lucy Edington explains:

*"We know that many parents are being hit by a triple whammy of higher prices, the end of fixed rate mortgage deals and a fear of losing their job. This is a stressful time. More than ever before, our children are under pressure to have the latest fashion and technology in order to fit in, and now many families simply can't afford to do this."*

*"The credit crisis means that for the first time many parents can no longer buy fashion or high value items in a way that was routine a year or two ago. The squeeze on incomes means parents will sometimes feel that they are somehow*

*letting down their children. This can lead to stress for parents and children at home as an adjustment has to be made to the new situation.”*

The charity recently launched the [www.gotateenager.org.uk](http://www.gotateenager.org.uk) website [1] specifically for parents of teenagers last month, who account for over half of all calls to their helpline. Many of the problems being faced by parents are likely to be increased by a strain on household finances.

## News Worries

With the daily news being led by doom and gloom coverage of the economic crisis, and now extensive coverage about the impending rise in unemployment, these headlines may also take its toll on families in other ways. Recent online research by Parentline Plus suggested that 71% of parents felt their children were affected by major news stories [2] causing many children may be unsettled or feel worried about the future.

Parentline Plus spokeswoman Suzie Hayman commented:

*“It is important to try not to alarm your children and overload them with too much information. Parents will also need to ensure any information that is given is age-appropriate: younger children will be thinking about particular news stories in much simpler terms than older children.”*

*“What can be much tougher is trying to contain your own anxiety. Your children will be taking leads from you and will pick up on any fears you are displaying. If you are feeling anxious, talk to a friend or relative or call the Parentline free of charge\* on 0808 800 2222. Being able to discuss your economic fears confidentially with another adult may make them seem more manageable.”*

## ‘Just Ask’

Parentline Plus is urging parents to ‘Just Ask’. Persuading and encouraging parents to use the support available when they need an extra helping hand, can often prevent their situation from reaching a crisis level. For a lot of parents who are facing the economic realities of a period of unemployment, or a reduction from two incomes down to one, this will be a challenging period.

A starting point is for parents and children to be able to recognise that economic events can’t always be controlled and not to blame themselves. When parents have sought help from the Parentline, the vast majority feel the benefits. One parent said:

*“Parentline Plus helped build up my self-confidence and made me see I’m doing a very worthwhile and important job looking after my daughter.”*

Parentline Plus is keen to point out that there may also be potential positives that can come out of a changed economic situation. In our hectic working culture, parents often feel that they don’t get to spend the time they would like to with their children. While the economic crisis will make life harder for many families, there could also be a renewed opportunity to share good quality time together.

What is crucial is that parents know they can either pick up the phone or make contact by email anonymously and confidentially. The Parentline Plus helpline is free and is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Parents can also visit [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) online and all emails sent in do get answered.

\* Free to landlines and most mobile networks