

# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



## When not to worry

*I can't advise you about what you should worry about as a parent. That's your prerogative. But I think there are times when it's not worth worrying too much.*

We all worry as parents. It comes with the job.

There are three things I've noticed about parenting worries. First, small kids give you small worries and big kids can provide big worries. Hmm! That maybe a little scary but you'll be ready to cope when your kids are older.

Second, parents always seem to be concerned about one child at a time. You fix one child up and then suddenly another one presents with an issue or concern. Doh! That's the way of family life.

Third, the bigger the family the less parents worry about individual kids. Concerns tend to be about the family, or the kids in general, in bigger families.

### Don't sweat the small stuff

Lately, I'm finding parents worrying about stuff (kid's behaviour, learning, confidence levels) that they shouldn't really be concerned about. In many cases, maturity will solve these issues.

Also, for many kids a problem today will be forgotten tomorrow, yet we adults tend to hang on longer to those same problems long after the child has given up caring. I can't advise you about what you should worry about as a parent. That's your prerogative. But I think there are times when it's not worth worrying too much.



We all worry as parents

It's not worth worrying when:

**1. a child's misbehaviour fits into the normal behavioural range.** A mum was worried that her four year old may have some problems as he was checking out the genitalia of a mate. Nope – that's pretty natural curiosity for that age group. Working out what's normal is a challenge for inexperienced parents.

**2. a child is moving from one stage to the next.** Kids get 'kinder mouth'; boys can give mum a hard-time at five and again in early adolescence; some girls develop an 'attitude' at seven, and again at thirteen; boys vocabularies shrink to three words in early teens; and fourteen-year-old girls will often have little time for their dads. These behaviours are indicative of different stages of development. Annoying yes, but not always worrying!

**3. a child is displaying an independent streak.** Sometimes kids put their foot down and say: "NO! I'm not trying at that sport or activity anymore because I don't enjoy it". They are no longer willing to unquestioningly do the things that you want them to do because you think those things are good for them. A show of independence is usually a healthy thing, although it can be difficult for parents to swallow.

**4. a child struggles periodically at school, either socially or academically.** The ups and downs of growing up mean that kids don't always learn on an even trajectory. They have good years and bad years at school. They also have good years and bad years socially. That is, they have years where they sit next to their best friends and have a ball. And other years finding and keeping friends can be a little tougher. Helping kids ride the lows and the highs is part of the parenting job. Sometimes we worry at the first sign of a problem. Time and children themselves solve many problems when they get the chance.

If in doubt, talk honestly and openly with some trusted parents, preferably with some experience. Also talk with your child's teachers who generally have had more experience of children of your child's age group than you do.

It's a worry being a parent. But it doesn't always have to be!