

MEDIA RELEASE



Back to school with parents successfully managing children's difficult behavior by teaching kids *self-control*.

Over 100,000 parents have been helped through programs developed by family psychologist Michael Hawton. His new e-course and book *Talk Less, Listen More* helps even more parents worldwide move beyond smacking, authoritarian control and being the ineffective 'best friend'.

Now available online, Hawton's parenting courses are ranked in the top 3 most attended programs in Australia. He is an authority in assisting parents prepare their children for a smiling and pain-free transition back to school.

"The beginning of a new school year is the best time to set up systems for children, especially what is expected from them in terms of their behaviour. Parents should not shy away from having these types of expectations," says Michael Hawton.

"We do this when we stop our children eating this or that junk food, so why shouldn't we also set up expectations about misbehavior as well?"

Teachers act this way at the beginning of each school year. When kids first go to school, their class teacher sets out what's expected and what the class group will and won't be allowed to do. This helps in two ways: the group reinforces what is to be done (such as we all put our lunches and pencil cases here and our bags here) and the teacher doesn't have to show everyone each time what to do, because the habit gets set up at the beginning of the year.

Hawton says that "helping kids into the habit of developing and using their 'mental brakes' can assist their ability to manage their emotions and control their behaviour."

"These are important skills for young people to have as they mature," Michael adds. **"Research has shown that kids who can control their impulses do better in social and academic situations."**

The methods in *Talk Less Listen More* also assist parents to focus on **building their children's resilience and maturity**, by developing their children's ability to tolerate frustrations and difficult emotions.

"The *Talk Less Listen More* e-course and book provides parents with a fundamental understanding of their role as parents - **they have a leadership role, and are not their child's best friend**. It helps parents to **recognise the behaviours they want to stop, the behaviours they want to promote and ways for parents to connect emotionally with their children and build family bonds**.

Many parenting models currently focus on what Hawton calls 'outside-in' parenting, where the parent controls their child's behaviour through external means, such as rewards and punishments, as seen in shows like *Super Nanny*.

"The trouble is that 'outside-in' strategies put a lot of pressure on the parent to maintain control and be the bad guy. These methods do not always allow the child to develop the healthy self-control that they need as they mature toward adulthood," says Hawton.

So what should an exhausted parent do to manage the child who is being difficult or having a tantrum?

Drawing from the latest findings in neuroscience and 25 years experience in his own practice with hundreds of families, Hawton's methods in *Talk Less Listen More*, provide an **alternative he calls 'inside-out' parenting**. The journey to a more harmonious family life starts by helping parents to **effectively deal with a child's meltdown quietly and calmly by talking less and staying calm**.

Some difficult behaviour can be resolved simply by parents listening more to their child and paying closer attention to their child's emotions.

"Talk Less Listen More taught me about 'inside out' parenting. So now when my kids are acting up or getting frustrated, I focus on myself and choosing my reaction. It's brought consciousness into my parenting and it's definitely made a difference with my kids," says Anne-Marie, mother of 3.

Michael Hawton has had a 25-year career in child and family therapy, which includes working as an expert witness in the NSW Children's Court and for the Family Court of Australia, where he has prepared over 1,000 child welfare reports. He has trained over 6,500 family services professionals, both nationally and internationally, in how to manage children's and teenager's difficult behaviour.

A main thread throughout the *Talk Less Listen More* book and e-course," Hawton adds, "is telling your children, upfront, what your expectations are so you won't need to talk as much!"

ONLINE COURSE - *Talk Less Listen More* by Michael Hawton

from \$29 <http://www.parentshop.com.au/making-parenting-easier/>

*based on the number parent workbooks sold over seven years

About Michael Hawton



Michael Hawton is a family psychologist, teacher, author and father of two. He studied teaching and went to Melbourne University where he trained to be a psychologist.

For most of his 25-year career he has worked in the area of child and family therapy. His career has also included working as an expert witness in the NSW Children's Court and for the Family Court of Australia, where he has prepared over 1000 child welfare reports.

He lives in Byron Bay where he has raised two children of his own. Michael and his wife, Simone run the online parent resource company – Parentshop. Michael has trained over 6,500 family services professionals, nationally and internationally, in how to manage children's and teenager's difficult behaviour.

Michael currently travels around Australia to present professional development to family service professionals. His passion is to make a difference to the lives of children and their parents.

Signs your child may be struggling with change

As parents, we can sometimes watch anxiously as our children head off into new frontiers. It's important that we give them positive messages about their ability to cope with the changes they are dealing with.

And while we should monitor how they are going, with older children and teenagers, it's important to give them some independence and a sense of responsibility appropriate to their age. This kind of attitude will help build their inner confidence in their ability to cope with change.

Sometimes, however, there will be changes that our children struggle to adjust to. Or, there may be elements of the change that are causing undue distress. This is when we need to step in and take some action.

Signs your child or teenager may be struggling include:

- Avoiding social situations, wanting to stay home and not go to school or participate in normal activities
- Persistent low mood
- Sudden tearfulness
- Withdrawing from family relationships
- Problems getting to sleep, or regular wakefulness in the night
- Loss of appetite

The best way to assess whether you child is having difficulties adjusting to their new situation is to keep the lines of communication open. Ask how they are going in this area of their life and then really listen to their answer, in an engaged, non-judgmental way, without problem solving or advising.

If your child communicates a worry or concern they have, try to tune in by saying words like, 'You seem really worried about that' or 'I can see that must have been pretty upsetting for you' and then let them say everything they wish to say. Try not to jump straight into problem solving, particularly if they are wound up.

If, after really listening, you believe there is a problem that needs addressing, try to help them figure out a solution that they think they could try.

by Michael Hawton