

# ElternMail Berlin

## YOUR BABY IN THE 7<sup>TH</sup> - 9<sup>TH</sup> MONTH OF LIFE

Dear parents,

We are delighted to send you with the latest online edition of “ElternMail Berlin”. In this issue, you will find topics relating to **CONFLICT IN PARENTHOOD** and **CARE WORK**.

Next month you will receive another ElternMail covering the topics of childcare centres, childcare and the settling-in periods.

*Your ElternMail-Team*



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### Introduction

Children need parents who respect, accept and value each other. Your relationship as a couple is the main role model for your child. This is true even if you are no longer a couple but you share responsibility for your child. It is perfectly normal that your relationship will no longer be as harmonious as it was before the birth of your child as a result of unfulfilled needs, stress and everyday life. Lack of sleep can also lead to internal stress, which can have a negative impact on a couple's relationship.

We are delighted to be able to support you and your family with important tips and valuable knowledge in this online edition of ElternMail.

# CONFLICTS IN PARENTHOOD

## Why it's important to strengthen your relationship as a couple

- A loving relationship as a couple improves your wellbeing and energises you.
- Your partnership is the most important relationship role model for your child.
- As parents, your child learns from you how relationships work and how you resolve conflicts with each other.
- Your child learns and benefits from a loving and respectful parent relationship and family atmosphere.
- If you are separated, your child will benefit from you continuing to treat each other with respect and allowing them to have regular contact with the second parent.

Do you ever wish that your partner could read all of your wishes from your eyes and recognise your thoughts, feelings and needs? This is an understandable wish, but it can lead to disappointment in the relationship. Often conflicts arise because people do not express their own needs clearly. Maybe you sometimes catch yourself blaming others for your unfulfilled needs/wants after the event.



Even if you are no longer a couple, it is important that you understand your needs and express them as well as possible. This may not always be possible if the separation was too painful or for other reasons. If you can no longer find a way to talk to each other peacefully, then you should definitely seek support. This will help you, but especially your child. Your child needs both of you and has a right to be raised and supported by both parents.

**If the following or similar statements sound familiar to you, this stressful pattern may also be affecting your relationship:**

“You know I don’t like that!”

“You should have known that!”

“How many times do I have to tell you?”

“It has to come from you. Not just because I ask you to.”

“I knew you’d leave me to deal with it alone again.”

“I’d rather do it alone if you don’t feel like it anyway.”

“It’s obvious that I’m angry.”

Are you struggling to express your wishes and needs to your partner? The following exercise (see p. 3) may help you. This exercise will also help you to deal with your ex-partner.

# CONFLICTS IN PARENTHOOD

## Step 1: Name your feelings in “I AM” messages

Are you feeling unwell at the moment? Are you internally stressed? Maybe also sad and lonely? These feelings are a sort of signpost to your unfulfilled needs. For you and your wellbeing, it's time to learn to name your feelings.

The **feeling list** below can help you to feel and name your feelings.

### I AM...

lonely • exhausted • helpless • desperate • scared • tired • overloaded • sad • angry • furious • overstimulated • annoyed • overwhelmed • disappointed • frustrated

### Avoid statements that blame the other person, such as:

- “You make me angry.”
- “You make me sad.”
- “You annoy me.”
- “You disappoint me.”

### There are three good reasons to express your feelings in this way:

- When you send your feelings to your partner in “I AM” messages, you take responsibility for yourself and your feelings. Your partner may be triggering these feelings in you, but they are not to blame.
- You create closeness with your partner by sharing your feelings with them.
- You lighten your own load because negative feelings become easier as soon as you express them and don't suppress them.

## Step 2: Express your needs in “I WISH” messages

It is important that you are aware of your needs and learn to express them in a positive way.

### List of some needs:

appreciation • recognition • security • peace • support • rest • relaxation • community • connection • understanding • lightness • communication • sleep • intimacy • safety

Once you have sent your partner an “I AM” message in Step 1, in Step 2 tell them what is important to you, what you need or what you are missing.

Some examples of what you can say:

- “I am exhausted and desperately want a break.” (need for relaxation)
- “I am really sad and would like you to give me a hug.” (need for closeness)

Remember: if you don't clearly state what you want and what you need, this can lead to unhappiness – which means that the other person doesn't understand what's going on and may do exactly the wrong thing.



# CONFLICTS IN PARENTHOOD

## Step 3: Ask your partner the “WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO” question

You know how you prefer to do something for people when they ask for help instead of just demanding it, right? Your partner often feels the same way. After you have named “your feeling” in Step 1 and “your need” in Step 2, ask your partner whether they would be willing to support you in fulfilling your need.

Two examples of what you can say:

- “I am exhausted and desperately need a break. Would you be able to take our child out today so I can have a quick lie down?”
- “I’m really sad and need you close to me. Would you be able to give me a hug?”

**Tip:** Phrase your wishes / needs positively. So not: “You never empty the nappy bin.” But: “I am really exhausted right now. Please could you take out the nappy bin?” Find suitable moments together when there is time to talk about issues like this. This will help you to avoid overwhelming the other person with your own thoughts and find a suitable space for such conversations.

### Sudden arguments

Sometimes accusations, differences of opinion or a lack of understanding suddenly arise. Maybe things get louder between you as a couple. Daily life with a child can often lead to more arguments in a couple’s relationship. Your own wishes/needs are often unfulfilled and this leads to arguments and conflicts in the partnership. If you notice things starting to bubble up inside, try to mentally say “stop” and let your partner know that you need a short break. It may be possible to leave the room briefly to calm down. This can help you to have a good conversation instead of getting into an argument.



### What are exit strategies?

Exit strategies are ways to help you get out of an argument with your partner before it escalates. In other words, they’re figurative red buttons that you can press to tell your partner that you need a break from arguing. Exit strategies can show you how to prevent arguments from arising in the first place.

### Preventive exit strategies - ways out

Preventive exit strategies are ways out that help you not to react immediately. You can use different methods to help you calm down. For example, you can use your body to find ways out or use mental concentration.

### Physical strategies

- Leave the room and drink a cold glass of water
- Get out into the fresh air
- Breathe - slow, deep breaths in and out
- Splash cold water on your face or run it over your arms
- Jump, run on the spot or shake your body

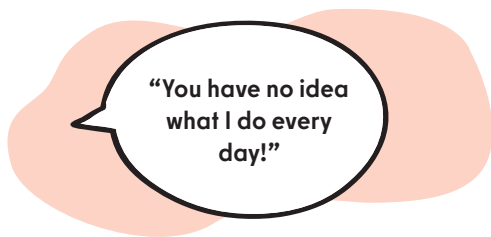
### Mental strategies

- Count in steps (steps of 4, 6, 8)
- Try to remember what you had for lunch the last 3 days
- Think about a nice moment

And remember: conflict is allowed - sometimes it’s even beneficial as long as it doesn’t escalate. After a thunderstorm, the sun may come out again. Reconcile, take pride in yourselves as a couple and what you achieve every day.

If you are separated, it is often not easy to stay in contact with your ex-partner. There are many reasons for separation. Everyone usually has their own perception and point of view. However, you do have one thing in common, even after separation: your child/children! Be aware of how important it is for your child(ren) if you as an ex-couple have a good relationship with each other despite your separation. You might want to seek support to find ways to continue to get on well together as a separated couple.

# CHILDREN, HOUSEHOLD, CARE - CARE WORK



Have you heard this before? Or do you often say it to your partner?

There is a sharp increase in the amount of care work required once you have your first child. Many new parents are suddenly overwhelmed. They often don't realise how much work is involved when the family system changes. Roles may also have changed. Suddenly one partner is much more involved in caring, housework and organisation than the other. Every day, they work through and complete their to-do list. Statistics show that this is usually done by mothers, as they often stay at home after the birth of the child.

## What does care work actually mean?

Care work describes all the work carried out in the domestic environment, such as childcare, family organisation, caring for sick relatives, cooking, housework and maintaining social contacts. Care work happens 24 hours a day, especially during the years when your child is not yet sleeping through the night. Care work doesn't stop at the weekend or on holiday.

**Care work is constant!**



## Examples of visible care work

- Laundry has been done
- Dishwasher has been emptied
- Children have been cared for - visits to playgrounds etc.
- The shopping has been done, presents organised, appointments arranged
- Meals have been cooked

However, visible care work is only a small part of everyday family life. If things go well, it is seen and appreciated by family members.

Invisible care work takes up much more space. It is usually not even recognised externally, as it takes place in our heads.

## Examples of invisible care work

- Organisation of family activities
- Appointments, shopping, meals - which require time, effort and planning
- Who needs what in the family?
- What needs to be packed and organised for which activity?
- What still needs to be done - today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, etc.?
- Are there enough nappies left?
- When is the child's next check-up?



## Good to know: Sharing care work

- Care work does not have to be divided equally (50:50) between you.
- Not everyone has to be able to do everything, as this creates a lot of pressure in family life.
- It's perfectly fine if one of you prefers to cook, for example, and the other prefers to handle DIY.

The idea is that you should have equal amounts of free time when all the tasks have been divided out. It's not about everyone having time for themselves every day, but rather how you manage to make free time part of your everyday family life. The important thing is that everyone gets time to go to the gym, meet friends or catch up on sleep, for example.

# CHILDREN, HOUSEHOLD, CARE - CARE WORK

## Homework for parents who want to improve their situation

Write down everything you have done over the course of a day. Take note of every detail of the care work, e.g. doing the laundry, feeding the neighbour's cat, taking out the rubbish, planning the shopping (are there enough nappies left?) etc.

Yes, this is an additional task, but the extra work will help you to find a good solution. This will help you to be specific instead of sticking to vague statements such as "I'll do more" or "I'm already doing enough".

The next step is to transfer the contents of your two "pots" into one large, common pot. It might help you to list the individual points on a third sheet of paper and then use a highlighter to mark where help is needed and what can perhaps be divided up differently in future.



### The positive effects of this exercise are:

- Being able to see all your tasks on a piece of paper makes it clear which tasks need to be done both in terms of visible and invisible care work.
- This makes it easier for you to identify and recognise the tasks and the amount of care work involved.
- It is important not to judge your situation – there is no better or worse, right or wrong. It is not about comparing tasks, but about discussing how tasks should be allocated in a positive and respectful way.

### Recognition and appreciation

It's important to recognise, appreciate, value and share invisible care work. Of course, paid work can also be recognised and accepted. Equal recognition and division of labour can play a part in keeping your relationship harmonious and balanced.



## SUPPORT SERVICES IN BERLIN



### Berlin Family Portal

The Berlin Family Portal contains a wealth of valuable service information on the topic of family, a calendar of events for children, young people and the whole family, as well as guides on a wide range of topics (e.g. leisure, finances, single parenthood, childcare, etc.)

← [www.berlin.de/familie](http://www.berlin.de/familie)



### Early help services

Early help services are available for parents from pregnancy and families with children up to the age of three. They are particularly aimed at families in difficult circumstances.

Information on this can be found on the following pages:

← [www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kinderschutz/fruehe-hilfen](http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kinderschutz/fruehe-hilfen)

# SUPPORT SERVICES IN BERLIN



## Support services for families in everyday life

Child and youth support services offer a wide range of support options for parents and families, including family education

← [www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kinderschutz/unterstuetzungsangebote](http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kinderschutz/unterstuetzungsangebote)



... and family support

← [www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/familienfoerderung](http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/familienfoerderung)



## Support with conflicts

You can find support for family and couple conflicts, such as in the event of separation or divorce, custody and contact issues and cases of family violence at Berlin's Erziehungs- und Familienberatung (parenting and family counselling centres):

← [www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/erziehungs-und-familienberatung](http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/erziehungs-und-familienberatung)



The Erziehungs- und Familienberatung (parenting and family counselling centres) in Berlin offer courses such as Kinder im Blick (Children in Focus) to help parents cope with separation and co-parenting:

← [www.efb-berlin.de](http://www.efb-berlin.de)



## Help with crises and family violence

Berlin has a tight-knit network of support services for those affected by crises or domestic violence and for their relatives.

The telephone counselling service offers round-the-clock counselling support and opportunities to talk for people in crisis situations:

Telephone counselling service: Tel.: 0800 111 0 111 (free of charge) or 0800 111 0 222 (free of charge) or

← [www.berliner-krisendienst.de](http://www.berliner-krisendienst.de)



← [www.berlin.de/sen/frauen/keine-gewalt/haeusliche-gewalt](http://www.berlin.de/sen/frauen/keine-gewalt/haeusliche-gewalt)



## Violence against women - helpline

This hotline offers support and counselling for women affected by domestic violence.

Tel.: 08000 116 016 (free of charge)

## Counselling for women

← [www.big-berlin.info/node/146](http://www.big-berlin.info/node/146)



## Women's shelters

← [www.big-berlin.info/node/145](http://www.big-berlin.info/node/145)



The **Child Protection Hotline** offers anonymous counselling around the clock if you are worried about a child(ren) or young people: Tel.: 030 61 00 66 and

← [www.berlin.de/notdienst-kinderschutz/hotline](http://www.berlin.de/notdienst-kinderschutz/hotline)



## WELL SUPPORTED, RIGHT FROM THE START

With the **ElternMail Berlin** the **Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family** aims to support and strengthen all parents at the start of their family life and along their journey. The service, which is free of charge for families, is designed to provide mums and dads with helpful information about their child's development and practical tips and advice on local support services.

### Preview of the third online edition of ElternMail - 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> month of your baby's life

1. What benefits do childcare centres offer my child?
2. The right care for my child
3. Important information about everyday life at childcare
4. Settling-in - the first separation from parents



### Legal Notice

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