



**Bonds make you strong**





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# Preface

In the life of a child, relationships form the foundation for his development - from the very first day on. All development processes are thereby based on the relationship of a child to at least one caregiver. In this brochure, we will show what is important in the shaping of this relationship. It is aimed at the closest caregivers for infants and children, and, in eight messages, tells you what a child needs from the start in order to become strong.

On this basis, children receive the necessary tools that they will need so that they can master the challenges and development tasks of the years to come.



**“I want to become strong,**

**...contact and physical closeness”**

**...security and reliability”**

**...attention and dialogue”**

**...a secure bond”**

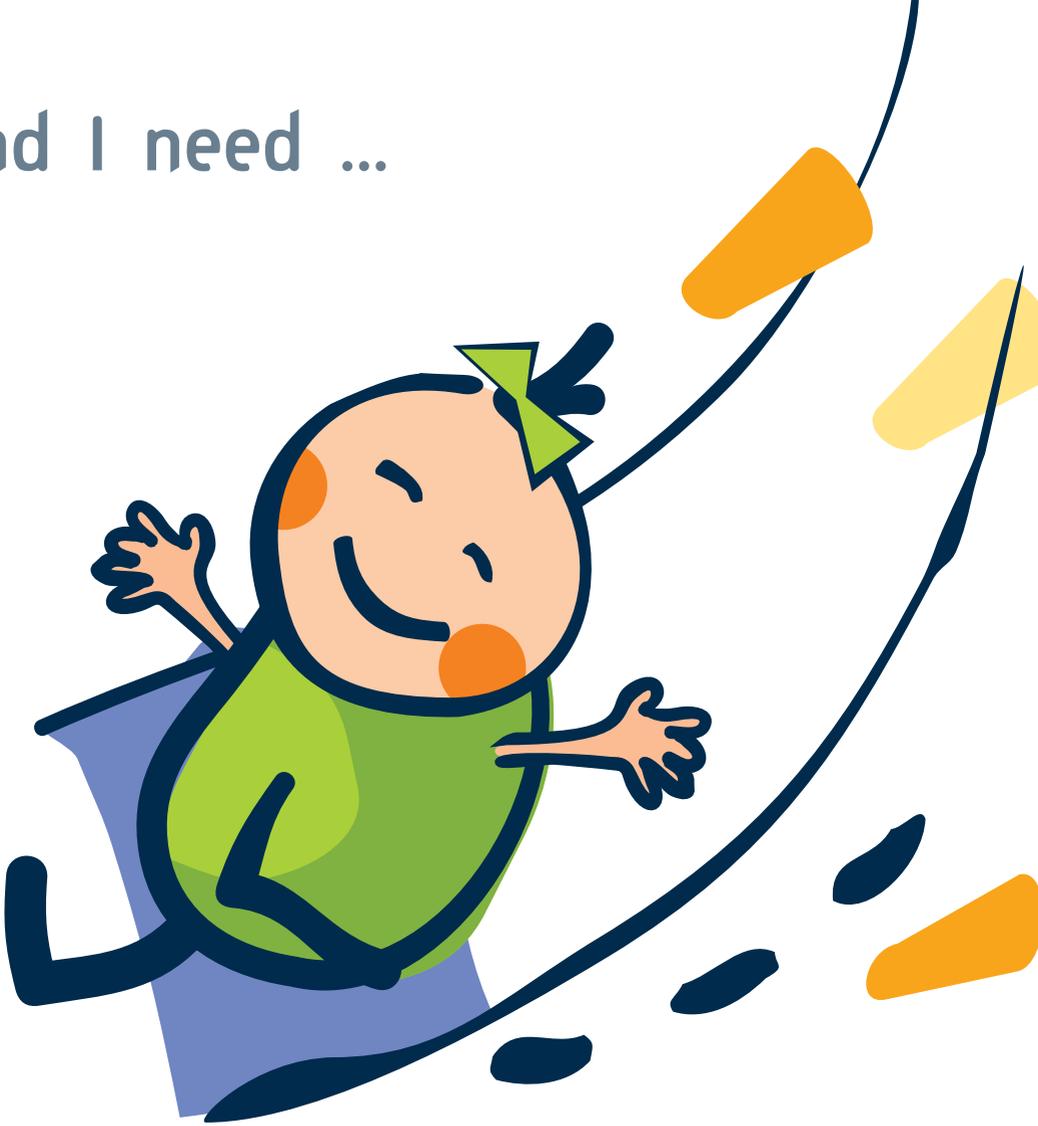
**...acknowledgement of my uniqueness”**

**...trust in my abilities”**

**...a stimulating development environment”**

**...orientation”**

and I need ...



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...contact and physical closeness.”

**I have arrived in the world. I breathe. Now I am curious and want to come into contact with my environment. In this way, I will receive varied and indispensable impulses for my future development.**

- Even before my birth, I liked the voices of my parents and I enjoyed it when my mum caressed her stomach.
- I like the skin contact with my parents; I need it, actually.
- Even without speech, I can show how I feel and what I want in a way that can be understood.
- I want to be able to maintain eye contact with my mummy or my daddy when we're going somewhere.
- I want my mummy and daddy to devote time to me, and I want to be able to respond insofar as that is possible for me.

- Even in the mother's womb, the unborn baby picks up impressions from the surroundings. When she hears the voices of her parents, she begins to get in touch with them.
- So that the newborn baby does not feel alone and abandoned after birth, it is important that she is immediately placed on her mother's stomach. This skin-to-skin contact is very important for the emotional mother-child bond. This physical contact is important in the first months of life.
- An infant lets her surroundings know how she feels by crying, making baby noises, and through facial expressions and movements. When a baby cries, the mother or father promptly takes care of their child. They thereby show her that they are there and that they have not left her alone. They give her the security that later allows her to be able to wait.
- When travelling in a pram, a sling or a Snuggly, the baby feels most comfortable if she is turned with her face towards her mother or father, and is thus guaranteed contact with a familiar person. While being carried, sitting on the side of the hip is the ideal position. The child can thereby choose whether to look at her caregiver or at her surroundings. If the child cannot see her reference person, she can get confused by the many unknown and unfamiliar impressions, and can feel left alone.

- After birth, the mother and father should continue the contact established with the baby during pregnancy by talking, speaking, singing and laughing. They thereby give the baby the opportunity to respond through mimic and gesture, and thus they communicate with each other. When a baby turns her glance away, she shows that she needs a break: she has to process what she has just experienced. If the parents ask their baby how she feels, she will not answer in words, but with a satisfied expression or with cooing sounds. She understands their caring and affectionate tone.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...security and reliability.”

**In order to succeed in my development, I want to experience unlimited security and reliability as an infant and small child.**

- I want to be able to feel secure and safe.
- I am scarcely able to change my situation alone. I therefore need attention and reliability when I require it.
- I need a caregiver who will sensitively respond to me.
- I perceive things with all my senses. The feeling that I thereby experience will accompany me throughout my whole life.
- It is sometimes almost impossible to calm me. And precisely then I really need lots of security and reliability.

- The urge for security, reliability and to be cared for corresponds to a natural need that is inherent in all of us. The infant feels cared for and safe in the arms of his mother or another caregiver. From there, he can best succeed in successfully moving into a new, strange and unfamiliar world.
- Infants first have to learn to distinguish their own feelings, and cannot always cope with them alone. Added to this, it is not yet possible for them to change their situation themselves.  
Infants who whine or cry quickly need a caregiver who can promptly provide them with a feeling of security and care.  
Whining or crying infants should neither be reprimanded for this, nor have the attention withheld. This would be harmful to the child's development.
- Emotional communication is being developed during the first months of a child's life. This takes place through a “3r” caregiver, usually the mother or father. A “3r” caregiver is readily available, really familiar and reliable. This person must sensitively pick up the child's signals, try to understand them and respond.
- Even in the pre-speech period, the child perceives the behaviour and actions of his caregivers with all his five senses.  
The feelings that are thereby experienced leave traces in the brain. In the



further course of life, these stored feelings can have an influence on how the child, young person or adult feels in everyday life. The connection with the original experiences is unconscious, however. It is therefore very important that a child feels secure.

- There are infants who are very difficult to calm, and they sometimes bring their mother and father to their limits. It is precisely these children who have a strong need to experience reliability and security. In order for the parents to be able to convey this to the child, they should be able to request help and relief from outside at all times.

# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...attention and dialogue.”

**As an infant, I love it when my mother or my father gives me their complete attention. Be that during nursing, eating or while exploring my surroundings. When mother and father talk to me, I will learn the language, and can experience how important I and my messages are.**

- I love the face of my caregiver and I like to imitate his/her facial expression or sounds.
- I like it when mummy or daddy explains to me what they do, even if I don't understand everything at the moment.
- When I discover something new, I try to make eye contact with my caregiver. This helps me and gives me security.
- My caregiver names many of the things that I touch or point to.
- After experiencing unlimited attention for a longer period, I like to be on my own again for a while.
- Turn towards me and look me in the eye when you communicate with me.

- Infants love to look at the human face. This often takes place while nursing or changing nappies. If the infant can look at the face of her caregiver she can imitate it and express herself with sounds, which is very pleasurable to her. The caregiver can pick up the sounds and expressions of the child, and can respond to them and continue them, and in this way provide the child with an important basis for learning the language.
- If actions are accompanied by the corresponding words in the mother tongue, the child will see and feel a connection between the action and the words. A further foundation for language development is thereby laid.
- As soon as the child can move actively, and wants to discover and try out new things she will seek the attention of her caregiver through eye contact. She wants to know what the caregiver thinks about her intention. She orients herself on the facial expression and on the linguistic behaviour.

- When the child starts to point at objects, the caregiver should name these objects and discuss them with the child. If the child describes what she sees with her own word creations, the caregiver notes this and names them with the words in the respective mother – or father – tongue. The child will thereby feel being taken seriously when speaking. In this way, she will learn the language in a natural way.
- Children who experience undivided attention and lively conversation with the caregiver over a certain period are satisfied in their needs for contact and exchange. This, and their natural desire for acting on their own, makes it possible for them to then wish and be able to consider both themselves and their surroundings alone for a while.
- Always meeting children at eye-level expresses the fact that the adult takes the child seriously and wants to engage in personal contact.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...a secure bond.”

**Mother and father have recognised my needs from the very beginnings; they have interpreted these correctly and have reacted to them promptly. They have dealt with me in a sensitive manner. I now know that I can rely on them. I have built a secure bond with them and have developed basic trust.**

**As a result, I can now gain new experiences outside this secure framework and outside the family, and I can become more and more independent.**

- I am sometimes afraid of strangers, and I am happy when I am carefully introduced to new people.
- I want to explore and discover, and it is therefore important to me that I can always return quickly to mummy and daddy again.
- I need the security that my caregivers are there for me.
- I can express with whom I would like to be and who not. Take me seriously.
- If I have to be alone with strangers, stay there until I feel safe.

- The infant’s fear of strangers towards the end of the first year of life shows that he can now differentiate between known/trusted and unknown persons. Potential new caregivers must be introduced to the child slowly and carefully, step by step.
- In order to dare to take the first steps of discovery away from the safe caregiver, the child must be able to return to this person at any time.
- Sensations can be remembered from the very start of life, and the basic tools necessary for a person to master his/her life are built up in the first three years. It is therefore important that mother, father and all the caregivers inside and outside the family provide a secure bond, and pay the highest attention possible to the associated feelings of a child.

- If the child wants to distinguish himself from other persons, this must be taken seriously. If this need is not dealt with, feelings of powerlessness and helplessness will soon start to appear and will characterise the child's basic feeling.
- If a day-care mother or kindergarten organisation is entrusted with the care of a child, the presence of the mother or father is necessary until the child has experienced security with the new caregiver. A settling-in period whose length is determined by the child is necessary in any case.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...acknowledgement of my uniqueness.”

**I am unique. I have brought my temperament and my talents into the world with me. My complete development is based on them. Depending on my environment, I will go about this in my own unique and individual manner.**

- I want my uniqueness to be acknowledged.
- I don't like it when you compare me to others.
- I need time for my development.
- If I annoy you, tell me what has annoyed you, but don't question me as a person.
- When you acknowledge my strengths, I feel appreciated and will be happy to develop further.

- The acknowledgement of the uniqueness of every child does not allow adults to deal with a child according to their own discretion, as if she were an object.
- The acknowledgement of the uniqueness of every child excludes comparing one child with another with regard to better or worse. This can place a child under pressure to perform, which will undermine the self confidence she is developing.
- The acknowledgement of the uniqueness means to allow each child time for her individual development. There is an old saying that grass does not grow faster if you pull it.
- Disparaging comments that relate to the child as a person give the child the feeling that she is being rejected. The child should clearly see: “It's the things I do that disturb my parents and about which they are annoyed. They are not annoyed with me as a person.”
- If the focus is on appreciation, and if mother, father and other caregivers consider the strengths and resources of the child and not her weaknesses, the child will feel loved and accepted.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...trust in my abilities.”

**I believe in myself and I am convinced that I can achieve something through my own strength. I learned that from you. I can rely on my mother and my father, and I feel assisted and supported by them.**

- If I indicate that I need something, it is good for me if someone comes promptly.
- I want to be active, to take part in everyday life and to find out what I would like to do.
- I explore, copy, repeat and pretend to do things. If I am supported in this, I will learn by it.
- I have found something out by myself and I would like to show it. Be happy with me. This encourages me to do more.

- If, in the first months of life, an infant indicates that he needs someone, and the mother or the father, or another person that he knows, comes, the infant will have the experience of self-efficacy.

- The child gains trust in his own actions if he can help in his care and can choose the food, if he continually finds opportunities in

daily life to find out more about himself, and how he wants to occupy himself over a certain period of time. These experiences strengthen the child's confidence in himself and build up his self-confidence.

- The typical behaviour patterns in early childhood are exploration, investigation, discovery and the repetition of certain operations, imitation and pretending to do something. In this way, the child educates himself and builds up his own individual educational history. This kind of education is different from what is brought to him from outside, regardless of the prerequisites of each child.
- Finding something out by oneself, dealing with it, being able to talk about it and to thereby gain acknowledgement in one's surroundings builds up the feeling of self esteem. At a later stage, this will form the basis of the readiness to accept knowledge from outside in an emotionally positive environment, and to process this in a pro-active manner.
- Nothing will prevent self-acting children from exploring their world. They have a natural urge to learn.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...a stimulating development environment.”

**In order for me to be able to develop well, I need attention and a stimulating environment that supports me in my desire for knowledge. I need a circle of children and adults around me and I need materials with which I can occupy myself and experiment in my own way.**

- I want to stimulate and sharpen all my senses. Give me the possibilities to do this.
- Give me materials from everyday life. I am curious and I want to explore.
- I need an environment that will stimulate my senses and my inborn need for movement. I will then develop using my own strength.
- Talk, laugh and pay attention to me. See to it that I can also be together with other adults and children.
- Even when I discover new things or when I'm together with other adults and children, it is important to me that I have a familiar person in the vicinity.
- Stimulate my curiosity, and I will actively explore my surroundings.

- At the start of her life, the child has the need to be safely held and supported, and to be protected from too many sensual impressions. With increasing development, she needs a development environment that is adapted to her needs, and that stimulates all her senses – hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling – and makes movement possible. Televisions and computers have no place in a stimulating development environment for infants and small children.
- Regardless of the environment the child is born into, there are always materials that will arouse her curiosity and that she can select and try out according to her interests. Items without any specific purpose that can be found in any household stimulate the child's fantasy and promote her creativity.
- In an environment that stimulates the senses and that allows movement, the child herself knows when she is ready for the next step in her development, for example, when she is able to sit down without aid, or when she will take the first steps on her own.

- From the very start, mother and father form a part of a stimulating environment that is adapted to the child. They rock the child in their arms, they chat, laugh and have fun together with the child, they sing, dance, let her listen to music, look at picture books together, tell stories, and give her the space and time to explore her world. With time, the child should get to know new role models and other children, and interact with them. Whether at home or in a foreign environment, the child will want to interact with very different people.
- It is important for the child that she can always count on familiar caregivers while discovering things and while getting to know a new environment. Their presence provides the child with a secure base, and makes it possible for her to look around at new things and to discover strange things.
- Mother and father stimulate the curiosity of the child through a stimulating environment. In this way, they have a major impact on her development. The child then starts activities on her own initiative, and does not just wait for these to be determined from outside and then offered to her.



# “I want to become strong, and I need... ...orientation.”

So that I can find my orientation in everyday life and find my way about well, I need caregivers who are there for me. I need fixed daily structures, I need rules on how we live together, and I need rituals. In this way, I can become strong.

- Luckily, I have been able to orientate myself completely on my mother and father during the first months of my life.
- My daily experiences have made a deep impression on my brain.
- I need a familiar object that I can feel and smell. This calms me and gives me security.
- If you include me in your daily activities, I can also take part in them some-time, and enjoy doing so.
- A regular daily routine can give me security.
- I place value on a space that is adapted to my development, in which I can orientate myself and move freely.
- I begin to say “no” and “I”. Support me, and give me time to learn how I can develop and assert my independence.

- After birth, the newborn child is plunged into an environment that is completely unknown to him. He experiences the fact that there is day and night. He is exposed to unknown noises, new smells. But mother and father are always there. Their presence is the first orientation in the new life.
- Regular attention, constantly recurring events, the daily experiences of care and food engrave themselves into the brains of infants and small children.
- By himself, the infant discovers uniform actions – such as sucking his thumb, caressing the tip of the nose, pressing a fluffy toy animal into his arm. This can mean calmness and orientation for the child.
- Everyday actions, such as changing a nappy, bathing or dressing and undressing should follow a calm and established sequence, and should be adapted to signals from the child. In this way, the child has the possibility to assist, and thereby enjoying himself.

- Largely regulated daily routines such as eating, doing things and sleeping in connection with rituals, such as good-night stories and much more, create a reliable framework for the child.
- In the second year of life, it is important to have clear guidelines within the family life. What has emerged from the first year in procedures, rituals and structures becomes pedagogically binding and expands according to the age of the child.
- As he matures, the child discovers his intellectual abilities and, with the emergence of self-consciousness, the ability to say NO and I. He explores his limits of conduct, challenges his parents and tests their consistent behaviour. It is important to realize that the ability to respect rules is a learning process. This needs time and must be consistent.

The autonomy phase that now begins is a completely normal and important stage in the development of his personality, and demands "Freedom within limits" from the parents, which conveys both orientation and support, as well as promoting the autonomy of the child.



# Explanations



For a successful development, every infant and every small child needs at least one caregiver who makes it possible for her to build up a secure bond. This caregiver comes with a pedagogic approach that is characterised by sensitivity. He/she allows him/herself to be guided by the child's individuality, and offers the child space for self activity.

The findings of scientific research over the last 30 years form the basis for the eight messages in this brochure. The messages should convey what a child needs during pregnancy and in the first three years of life in order to become strong.

Research on early development has been carried out in different cultures and countries throughout the world. Therefore the consequences thereof are applicable to all children, regardless of where they grow up.

From the first moment of her life, the infant wants to enter into a relationship with people. The latest findings show that the care, education and self-learning of a child take place first and foremost through relationships. These three words are now established in infant and small child pedagogy. They bring about clarity on what is being said in discussions.

By **care**, we mean attention, nutrition and care. We can build up a secure bond with the child through sensitive care and by providing physical and psychological protection.

By **education**, we mean every activity of caregivers with which they stimulate the individual socio-emotional, physical and cognitive developmental processes of a child and keep her further developments progressing. These activities also include the creation of a narrower and a wider environment.

Through education, we also provide the child with the tools with which she can expand her individual capabilities. She should be able to master her own personal challenges in a self-determined and differentiating manner.

If the parents ensure care and education in this sense, they will create the best foundation for the development of the self educational strengths of the child: she can then educate herself further within her social environment.

**Education** in the infant and small child stages takes place through all the senses.

The child intrinsically concerns herself with the "world". The repeated experiences are stored – together with the sensations and feelings associated with them.

This kind of education – which is described as **self education** – is the foundation on which, in the future, the child will experience, understand and master her relations with other people and with the world.



# Strong through relationships: What do mothers and fathers need?

## Mothers and fathers already have a number of things

Mothers and fathers have natural abilities to orient themselves in their behaviour towards the child.

- they keep their face at a distance of approx. 20 cm – in this way, the newborn child can see them clearly;
- they imitate the sounds of the child and speak in melodic patterns – this is important for the development of speech;
- the baby's sweet appearance triggers spontaneous caring behaviour in them.

## Mothers and fathers need time

Time so that they can grow into their many tasks as parents. Time so that they can become familiar with their child and get to know his uniqueness all the better.

- Every child receives the time he needs from his parents. This time differs from child to child, and also depends on whether it is the first child, or whether brothers or sisters are already there.
- In order to master their many challenges, the mothers and fathers also need time for themselves and as a pair.
- Relation-strengthening assistance requires joy, interest and „being good enough“.

## Mothers and fathers require an appreciative environment and encouragement

Looking after infants and small children is a fulfilling and joyful task. However, it also confronts mothers and fathers with challenging situations. The parents' sleep is often interrupted and not always do the parents immediately understand why their baby is crying and why they cannot calm their baby instantly. They then need an understanding environment that is sympathetic, that encourages them and that even offers them some support.

## Mothers and fathers need networks

Networks allow exchanges, information, support and offers of professional assistance. Open, spontaneous discussions with other mothers and fathers provide support. Embedded in a sympathetic environment, mothers and fathers gain confidence in their supporting and teaching skills. They learn to listen to what their instincts tell them when assessing a situation.

Depending on the living conditions of a family, assistance in the house or with the daily care of the child can be helpful.

If situations arise in which the parents no longer know what to do or have been brought to their own limits, there are specialists who can provide information and support in conversations. They professionally assist the mothers and fathers through challenging phases.

# Parental education CH

## The best support in being a parent

**The baby is suddenly here. And nothing will ever again be as it used to.**

Everything was so far away and hardly tangible during pregnancy. And now? Everything changes. The whole life, the job, the environment. The baby is so sweet, but what happens if she continues crying, if she can't be calmed, if we come to our limits? What do we have to do in order to be good parents?

Parent education can answer many questions. It shows parents their strengths, gives them courage, provides networks, encourages new things and makes parents more secure in their everyday education. Parent education has many forms: individual events, multi-part courses, discussion and group opportunities, advisers and on-line offers cover the varied needs of parents. As the umbrella organisation for around 1,000 organisations that offer parent education in Switzerland, Elternbildung CH bundles and coordinates areas of training, public relations and quality assessment.

Elternbildung CH offers a comprehensive information platform with events, prints publications and carries out public relations work for parents, specialists and the media.

Find out about the various opportunities or courses in your region: [www.elternbildung.ch](http://www.elternbildung.ch)

## Jacobs Foundation

The private Jacobs Foundation based in Zurich was founded in 1988 by the businessman Klaus J. Jacobs. It has since dedicated itself to the subject of "Productive Youth Development" (PYD), and now has decades of experience in the promotion of science and of concrete intervention programmes and their realisation in the area of the development of children and young people. The foundation understands Productive Youth Development as a concept for the development of children and young people that emphasizes the positive development possibilities of children and young people. In its methods and approaches, the foundation pays particular attention to scientific excellence and knowledge based on evidence. With its investment of 200 million Euro in the Jacobs University Bremen (2006), it has set new standards in the area of private promotion.

Based on the conviction that the early promotion of children has a substantial impact on their later developmental opportunities, the early education of children and the upbringing of children with a development risk is one of the major focuses of the Jacobs Foundation. The foundation has accordingly been supporting various research and intervention projects in this field in the German-speaking area for some years now. The central role of the parents and the family in the healthy development of children in the first year of life is thereby undisputed. With this in mind, the foundation works towards ensuring that integral early education programmes should involve the whole family, and that they should strengthen, for example, the teaching competence of the parents – and above all of those in disadvantaged families and in those with little education.

The "Strong through relationships" campaign is an important step in this direction.

# Useful Links

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Parent education events                | <a href="http://www.elternbildung.ch">www.elternbildung.ch</a>   |
| Mother and father consultation         | <a href="http://www.muetterberatung.ch">www.muetterberatung.ch</a>   |
| Emergency telephone for parents        | <a href="http://www.elternnotruf.ch">www.elternnotruf.ch</a> , Tel. 044 261 88 66                          |
| Child protection in Switzerland        | <a href="http://www.kinderschutz.ch">www.kinderschutz.ch</a>   |
| Pro Juventute                          | <a href="http://www.projuventute.ch">www.projuventute.ch</a>   |
| Pro Familia                            | <a href="http://www.profamilia.ch">www.profamilia.ch</a>   |
| Association of Swiss child day-centres | <a href="http://www.kitas.ch">www.kitas.ch</a>   |
| Family centres                         | <a href="http://www.muetterzentrum.ch">www.muetterzentrum.ch</a>   |
| Parent organisations                   | <a href="http://www.sveo.ch">www.sveo.ch</a>   |
| Compatibility of profession and family | <a href="http://www.plusplus.ch">www.plusplus.ch</a>   |
| Single parents                         | <a href="http://www.einelternfamilie.ch">www.einelternfamilie.ch</a>                                       |
| Fathers                                | <a href="http://www.vaeter.ch">www.vaeter.ch</a>   |
| Child Lobby Switzerland                | <a href="http://www.kinderlobby.ch">www.kinderlobby.ch</a>   |
| Budget matters                         | <a href="http://www.budgetberatung.ch">www.budgetberatung.ch</a>   |
| Intercultural families                 | <a href="http://www.binational.ch">www.binational.ch</a>   |
| Miscellaneous questions                | <a href="http://www.familienhandbuch.ch">www.familienhandbuch.ch</a>                                       |
| Parent strengths test                  | <a href="http://www.elternbildung.zh.ch/elternstaerkentest">www.elternbildung.zh.ch/elternstaerkentest</a> |
| Day families in Switzerland            | <a href="http://www.tagesfamilien.ch">www.tagesfamilien.ch</a>   |
| Twins                                  | <a href="http://www.zwillinge.ch">www.zwillinge.ch</a>   |
| Cry-babies                             | <a href="http://www.schreibbabyhilfe.ch">www.schreibbabyhilfe.ch</a>                                       |
| Parents in an emergency situation      | <a href="http://www.muetterhilfe.ch">www.muetterhilfe.ch</a>   |
| Child and Violence Foundation          | <a href="http://www.kinderundgewalt.ch">www.kinderundgewalt.ch</a>   |

**A list of books that are well worth reading  
can be found on the website [www.elternbildung.ch](http://www.elternbildung.ch)**

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*parental education ch*

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