

Why being a Dad can sometimes feel like taking part in The Crystal Maze.

Who's ready to take on a challenge?

I wonder if we talk enough about the difficulties of being a father.

Like Mums, Dads have it tough too.

I know from first-hand experience – I'm a dad of two (soon to be three). Some of us adapt like a duck to water, while others face anxiety-riddled days on a regular basis.

So, what kind of struggles are we looking at? I've creatively shoehorned them into Crystal Maze game categories. Let's begin!

Mental – *Keeping your cool*

I have a short-fuse. It's the Irish in me, so it is.

I regularly have to bite down on a metaphoric pillow when rage-inducing situations present themselves – and they do, daily – just to avoid raising my voice at my two girls and risk planting a lasting impression that I'm a horrible, ogre of a man. I don't know if that's just me or if other fathers are imploding to the same degree when their toddler just doesn't get it that we don't have any 'banilla' ice-cream in the freezer.

Rising above your inner hot-head is a hard skill to conquer, but rise we must. Everybody remembers an angry dad and nobody wants to be that guy. Stay cool.

Physical – *I can't get no sleep*

As in, the Faithless tune.

Sleep deprivation can be horrendous to deal with, and in my experience, it starts from the moment a baby is thrust into the world then typically hangs around for many

years. There are always friends and family who bleat on about how little Jimmy slept through and is always good as gold. But wait...

It doesn't matter. Truth is, Jimmy isn't your child.

Your child probably sleeps like shit, which leads to you getting up in the night, 2, 3, 4 times to take them for a wee, to listen to them tell you they're hungry, or they want milk or.. or.. or.. arrrgghh.

It goes on.

Kids have a mystical ability to conjure up a multitude of excuses for not going back to sleep, once awake. They're the ultimate procrastinators. The undisputed kings of dragging it out.

Naturally, all this jazz takes its toll on the parents and having to get through the next day on just a few hours rest can be torture.

- Less concentration than a cheap carton of OJ? Check.
- Eating more than Yogi Bear? Check.
- More nod at the wheel than Hugh Grant and Divine Brown? Definitely.

In all fairness, it gets better as the kids get older. It's just that getting there can be painful.

“I never said it would be easy, I only said it would be worth it.” – Mae West

Skill – *Your crash course in politics*

The art of persuasion and diplomacy is decreed upon you as a parent when you realise that reasoning with a toddler is harder than trying to land an interview with Julian Assange.

You need to level those skills up and fast.

When a little one steadfastly refuses to do as they are told it's time to engage. One of the most important tools in your bag can be reasoning. Psychologists have found that [reasoning with your children is the best way to improve behaviour in the long run](#). Typically, children are more receptive to this from the age of 2.

Mystery – *Achievement unlocked: Mind Reader*

Trying to understand a small child that can't coherently piece together speech is like trying to have a conversation with your best mate in a nightclub. You can make out bits of words and can see their mouth is moving but you simply can't interpret the message.

It's lost.

All you can do is wing it and take a stab in the dark, smile and repeat back what you think they're trying to say. Smile some more.

Did it work? Probably not. Try again.

That will no doubt go on for months and eventually, it'll click. You'll begin to recognise words, through the process of elimination. "What's that, love? You want narna? No? Wee-wee? No? Oh, you want toast."

It becomes like a game. Often amusing and occasionally infuriating, especially if it ends up with food/toys/shoes being launched across the room and a child raging, face-down on the floor.

So, do Dads have it tough?

Are we whining over nothing?

It goes without saying that in a two-parent relationship, Dads do share some of the same burdens that Mums carry.

Agreed, we don't get much sleep and can be irritable. It's important that we're forced to acquire new skills such as reasoning and use them daily, it's for the benefit of our children after all. Having fun trying to decipher our children's ever-developing speech is one of the many highlights of parenthood. Learning to remain calm under pressure is a crucial asset not only when dealing with little ones but adults alike. All these things are tied to the responsibility of parenting.

Embracing and immersing oneself in parenthood and all it brings is a beautiful thing.

Is it the manly, neanderthal way to just suck it up and keep schtum? Maybe that will change over time and more men will feel able to talk more openly about their issues to each other.

Sound familiar? Let us know in the comments which juggling acts you face on a daily basis.