

OPINION

Healthy parents, thriving children: Parental wellbeing has a vital role to play in our island's future

Let's create an environment where parental health is celebrated and supported

PARENTS are the foundation of any community. Here in Jersey, like anywhere, their health and wellbeing directly influence the future of our children and the broader society.

As we strive to build a brighter tomorrow, it's crucial to recognise how prioritising parental health creates a ripple effect that benefits families and our island as a whole.

Why parental health matters

As parents, we naturally prioritise our children's happiness. Yet, in the process, our own wellbeing often takes a back seat. However, scientific research shows that a parent's happiness is deeply connected to their child's wellbeing. Neurologically, children's sensory systems are not capable of self-regulation, they depend on their parents for this, a process known as co-regulation.

Co-regulation begins at birth with practices like skin-to-skin contact. This simple yet powerful act helps to stabilise a baby's heart rate, breathing, and temperature, while fostering a strong connection between parent and child.

This science highlights a vital truth: parents' emotional and physical health directly impacts their children. By prioritising our own happiness and self-care, we not only improve our lives but also create a positive, supportive environment for our children.

The challenges parents face

While Island life may seem idyllic, it comes with an array of challenges. Many parents juggle demanding work schedules, household responsibilities, and care-giving duties, often at the expense of their own health.

Research shows that many women take on an additional 21 hours of work per week after becoming parents. Compounding this, perinatal mental-health issues affect at least one in four new mothers, and one in three fathers report concerns about their mental health. Stress, exhaustion, and a lack of support systems are common struggles faced by parents.

The impact on children

The role of co-regulation continues as children grow, helping them navigate



Alice Vincenti

developing emotions and behaviours. Parents' stress is often read by their children's nervous system, therefore automatically influencing their own mental and emotional wellbeing.

On the other hand, when parents prioritise their own health – through exercise, self-care or seeking mental-health support – they model resilience and self-worth for their children. A healthy parent creates a stable, nurturing environment where children feel safe,

secure, and inspired to thrive. For our island's future generations, this foundation is essential.

Local solutions and support

The good news is that Jersey offers growing resources to support parents. Initiatives like the Parent Health Hub provide tools and programmes designed to help parents prioritise their wellbeing. From MIND Jersey's Mum's Meet, to parent-specific fitness classes and the

Parent Health Hub's online Identity and Regulation programmes, there are options to suit a variety of lifestyles.

Community events and support groups also play a critical role in fostering connection and reducing isolation among parents.

By investing in parental health, we're investing in the future of our children and our island. Parents who take the time to care for themselves not only improve their own lives but also create a healthier, happier community for everyone.

A shared responsibility

The wellbeing of parents is not a luxury, it's a necessity. It's time to make it a priority for everyone. Whether it's attending local programmes, reaching out for help, or simply encouraging a friend to take time for themselves, we all have a role to play in shaping a thriving future for our island.

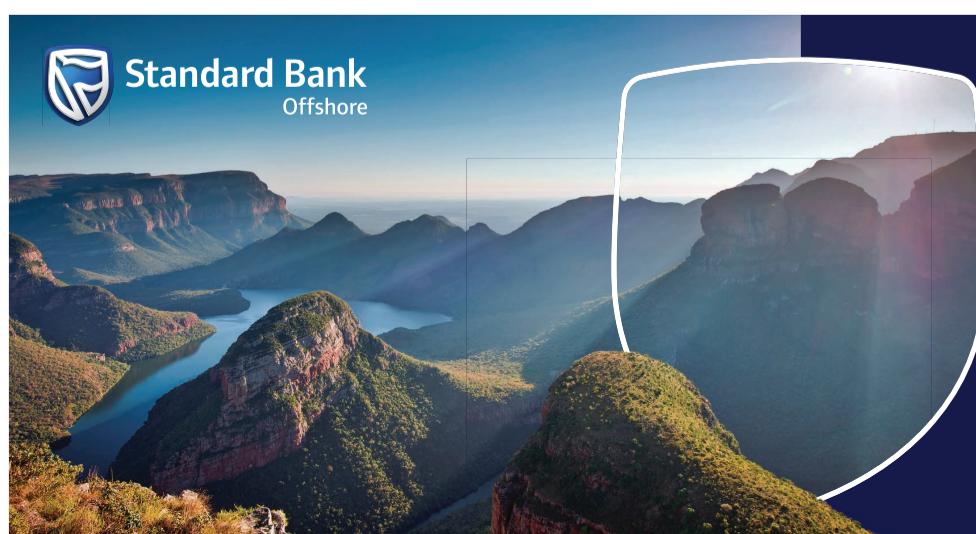
Let's create an environment where parental health is celebrated and supported. Together, we can ensure that healthy parents lead to thriving children and a brighter future for Jersey.

■ **Alice Vincenti** is a specialist paediatric and perinatal occupational therapist. She is founder and director of Parent Health Hub, a platform dedicated to helping parents manage emotional challenges such as overwhelm, frustration, outbursts and dysregulation. She believes that children thrive when their parents are at their best, thereby emphasising the crucial role of parental mental health and wellbeing in child development.



■ Parental Health Hub's mission is to support parents' health enabling them to be the best parents they can be

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