



Above: The Prince and Princess of Wales with baby Prince William in Kensington Palace, 1983.

Diana's Legacy

Princess Diana was the first royal to do away with the traditionally formal method of parenting. Her legacy will live on in the way Kate and William raise their child, says parenting expert Dr Clare Bailey

The Kings and Queens of England can be admired and held up as role models for many things, but perhaps not for their parenting skills. With all eyes on the new addition to the Royal Family, discussion inevitably turns to what sort of parents Kate and William will be.

The Queen's grandfather, George V, was said to be a 'lamentable parent', displaying a

damaging combination of scorn, neglect and short temperedness. His children lived in fear of their father's thrashings and, sadly, their mother, Princess Mary, said to be naturally warm, colluded with their father, saying that 'their father is also their King'.

Given that the ideal parent is one who combines warmth and sensitivity (instead of scorn) with clear expectations (not neglect) and assertive (rather than aggressive) parenting, this would have taken its toll on

the children, Edward and Albert, the Queen's father and later King George VI.

Not surprisingly, Edward, with emotionally unavailable parents and destined to be king, hated his position and abdicated to be with divorcee Wallis Simpson, the woman he loved. And his younger brother Albert became highly strung, suffered from angry outbursts and a crippling stammer, as portrayed in the film, *The King's Speech*.



Above: The Prince of Wales on a second birthday outing in St. James's Park, London, with his nanny Mabel Anderson

His father made the situation worse by shouting: 'Get it out!' at his stammering son. Yet despite his childhood experiences and with the support of his wife, Elizabeth, who was primed by a happy childhood in Scotland, George VI managed to turn around his family life to become (relatively speaking) more relaxed, and shared a love of dogs and horses with his daughter, Princess Elizabeth.

Nevertheless, the demands and constraints of life on the throne meant that royal children were mainly brought up by nannies. Inevitably some were caring and some were cruel.

Prince Charles was fortunate enough to be brought up by Mabel Anderson, a nanny to whom he was devoted. He saw his parents for half an hour in the mornings and evenings and, in line with royal protocol, rarely, if ever, ate with them.

Children were seen and not heard allowing little emotional interaction. So when Queen Elizabeth returned from a six-month royal tour in 1953, instead of giving her son a big warm hug she simply shook Charles' hand.

This would not have been unusual in the 1940s and early 1950s when warmth and physical contact with infants was considered harmful to their development, with some childcare experts believing that it ruined children through 'molly-coddling'.

On top of this, babies were believed to be blank slates, with minimal interaction or engagement with the world around.



Above: Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip and their children, Princess Anne and Prince Charles, at Balmoral, Scotland, August 1952.

Psychiatrist John Bowlby's work was yet to appear on the importance of 'attachment', which showed that the prime carer develops a unique bond that positively influences the child's development and mental health. We now recognise that the baby is responsive to the parents from the moment it is born. Young babies can manage two way 'conversations', copying each other's noises and expressions.

In contrast to previous generations, Princess Diana managed to maintain a warm and close relationship with her boys, William and Harry, despite the demands of her position and of royal protocol. No doubt the support and devotion she gave them in their early years stood the boys in good stead and helped them find the resilience not to go off the rails after her tragically

early death.

She was known for having fun and openly enjoying her time with her sons. She'd often be seen down at their level with her arms round them, laughing and cuddling them.

Diana was the first Royal to insist that the nursery was off her bedroom, not tucked away in a distant wing. She gave her children a bath and took them for treats and to the cinema. She made them a priority in her life and they must have felt appreciated and valued. The fundamental sense of security and confidence she gave to Princes William and Harry will stay with them for life. To his credit Prince Charles seems to have taken the baton and run with a more relaxed and sensitive approach to his children.

So Catherine Middleton, the 'commoner',



Diana, Princess of Wales, enjoys a ride on the Maid of the Mist in Niagara Falls, with her sons Prince Harry and Prince William, 1991.



Above: Prince William holds Kennard Nanau during a visit to Auckland's Starship Childrens Hospital, 2005.

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will be an even fresher breath of air, who, since marrying William has shared with him the joys of her close-knit and supportive family, including eating around the kitchen table with her siblings and parents.

Not a novel concept to many, but this no doubt will herald a welcome new era of royal child rearing, with Carole and Michael Middleton setting a more engaged and supportive tone for the new parents.

As a couple, they have already made it clear that they wish to have space to define and enjoy their relationship with each other and will almost certainly do the same with the baby.

Promises of being a hands-on dad and only having part-time help will almost certainly involve William changing nappies and helping with the baby - all a radical royal development.

Given the overwhelming evidence for the benefit for young children of sensitive, responsive parenting and having an 'attuned' relationship with their main caregivers, I think William and Katherine are likely to do a pretty good job and should be allowed to follow their instincts. My guess is that the royal family will have the good sense to respect their choices for close involvement and bonding with the baby.

The pressure on the couple may come later when they need to start laying down boundaries and expectations appropriate for

a future monarch. They will enter a life in which they have extensive commitments and are expected to serve others – a quality instilled to a greater or lesser extent in previous generations probably at considerable personal cost.

Yet good parenting, or being an 'authoritative' parent, is also about setting effective limits and reasonable expectations. According to research there are four main parenting styles: permissive-indulgent, strict-authoritarian, uninvolved-uncaring and balanced-authoritative (the ideal combination of warmth and structure), all of which affect the child's outlook (do our test to see what parenting method you use).

Some argue that many children today are brought up to expect rights without responsibilities and that parenting has become so child-centred that they grow up with an unfortunate sense of entitlement.

However, that is what the royal baby will be – entitled. Albeit to the throne, rather than in the spoilt sense, I hope. That is if Wills and Kate get the balance of royal parenting right. And the omens are good. ■

What kind of parent are you?

Dr Clare Bailey is a GP and set up Parenting Matters. See www.parentingmatters.co.uk for a quiz to check your parenting style and its implications, and look out for a fully interactive parenting course to be launched in the autumn.



Above: The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge with four-year-old Maeve Low in Singapore, as part of a nine-day tour of the Far East and South Pacific during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, 2012.



Above: Prince William relaxes with his mother, Diana, Princess of Wales, at a polo match in Windsor, July 1989.