

# Best Practices for Managing and Enjoying the Toddler Years

Handout

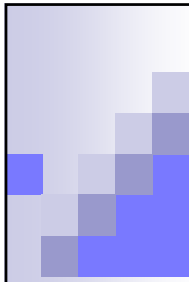
November 12, 2008

Presented By:  
Stephanie Cromwell



Sponsored by NIH Child Care Board & ORS/Division of Amenities  
and Transportation Services.





## Best Practices for Managing & Enjoying the Toddler Years

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### Objectives

Identify a framework for parental strategies to manage common toddler issues.

Parents will identify strategies that:

- Reinforce the value of playing with your toddler
- Facilitate an understanding of toddler speech development
- Assist with the management of toddlers' frustrations – and tantrums
- Promote healthy meals
- Address toilet training challenges
- Create healthy sleep routines

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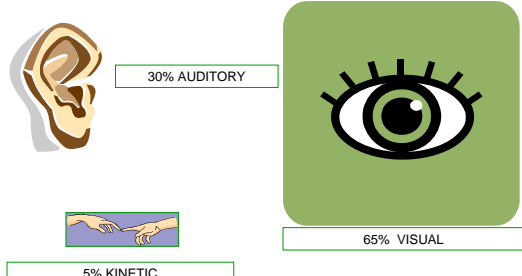
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### Three Basic Learning Styles (adults)



30% AUDITORY

65% VISUAL

5% KINETIC

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### Three Basic Learning Styles (toddler)

60% KINETIC

20% AUDITORY

20% VISUAL

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### Positive Parenting Tips for Playing With Your Toddler

- Set up a special time to read books with your toddler.
- Encourage your child to engage in pretend play.
- Play parade or follow the leader with your toddler.
- Help your child to explore her surroundings by taking her on a walk or wagon ride.
- Encourage your child to tell you his name and age.
- Teach your child simple songs like Itsy Bitsy Spider, or other cultural childhood rhymes

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### Play Time Strategies

**Use all the senses when experiencing a toy.**

**Use rhythm and rhymes.**

**Have your child watch you while you are doing tasks.**

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## Learning speech – the critical task

- Brain development jumps ahead
- Toddlers understand most speech
- They are frustrated when they are not understood
- Speak with your child constantly



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## Learning Speech Strategies



Let them touch while you talk about an item.



Say a word, ask them to repeat it.



Recite a running dialogue about both of your activities.

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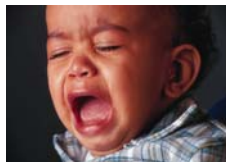
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## Tantrums

- Strategize to avoid tantrums
- Identify triggers
- Keep calm; speak quietly
- Protect an out-of control child
- Reassure and explain
- Don't give in to avoid a tantrum



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## Tantrum Strategies



Rub their back or hug the child.



Sing a soft song.



Show them how to be angry.

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## Healthy eating habits

- Appetites are light during these years
- Focus on what they eat, not when or how much
- Use bottles only for water



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## Healthy Eating Strategies



Let them touch the food – and feed themselves.



Tell toddlers about vegetables and fruits and how they make bodies strong.



Eat healthy food.

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## Toilet learning

- Readiness is key
- Expect it to take several months
- Never punish mistakes
- Some regression is normal, but avoid returning to diapers



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## Toilet Training Strategies



Touch wipes, potty, water and soap so that the novelty can wear off.



Sing potty songs.



Let them watch.

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## Healthy sleep habits

- They need 13 hours of sleep
- Routines are key
- Move from crib to bed at 14 – 16 months
- Earlier bedtimes avoid the “second wind”
- Avoid TV, sugar, and caffeine



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## Healthy Sleep Strategies



**Offer a lovey.** Pick up, comfort, – and put back.



**Listen to what they are 'telling' you when they fight sleep.**



**Create a routine with bath, lotion, classical music and a book.**

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Thank you!

Please complete the seminar evaluation, your input is important.

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## **Toilet learning can be easy**

Let your child set the pace for toilet training. S/he is ready when:

- ☺ Your child can speak well enough to indicate a need for the bathroom.
- ☺ Your child feels uncomfortable in soiled or wet diapers.
- ☺ Your child objects to messy play or food.
- ☺ Your child is interested in the bathroom.

Help your child learn:

- ☺ Purchase a potty chair. A potty chair gives a feeling of security; adult toilets look scary to little ones.
- ☺ Make sure the child's clothes are easy for him/her to remove.
- ☺ Show your child how you use the toilet.
- ☺ Don't start toilet training at a stressful time (holidays, vacations, new house, new sibling, etc.).
- ☺ Expect regression during illness, travel, or stress, into the early elementary school years.
- ☺ Most children take several months to become toilet trained. Staying dry at night, the final challenge, usually happens from 12 -18 months after training begins.



## **Meal times can be relaxed**

### **❖ Give lots of healthful choices**

As long as all the food you offer your child is healthful, you can allow them to choose which they like (within a limited range). Your child may lean towards one type of food for several days, then another. This is normal and healthy. The foods they prefer most are likely to be your favorites, so make sure you are making healthful choices, too.

### **❖ Introduce new foods gradually**

Most toddlers and twos need to see a new food on their plates up to ten times before they want to try it. If they are allowed to help prepare the food, they are much more likely to sample it. Unprocessed foods are best. They often prefer single foods to casseroles or mixes.

### **❖ Bottles (and pacifiers)**

Don't rush to wean a child; it is a gradual process. A special training cup or a cup with a straw encourages a child to leave the bottle behind. Don't use shaming or threats to wean. Allow your child to decide when to give up a pacifier. If it bothers you, make sure your child has another "lovey" (blanket, stuffed toy, etc.), and that surroundings are peaceful and secure, then suggest that they might want to leave the pacifier behind. Never use shaming or threats. Most children who are pressured to give up a pacifier experience stress which may result in other problem behaviors (e.g., thumb-sucking).

### **❖ Snacks count, and so do family meals**

Your child needs about six to seven meals each day. It's fine to serve a snack after work, and have them eat lightly during dinner. Expect your child to be able to sit at the dinner table for about five to seven minutes.

## Help your child learn to speak

- ✚ Listen and respond to what your child is saying, even if you don't understand some of it.
- ✚ Don't correct your child's speech – they will self-correct over time. Focus instead on the meaning and respond to that.
- ✚ Use the “nicknames” your child gives to people or objects (e.g., “ba-ba” for “bottle”) to help your child connect language to meanings.
- ✚ Children learn language better from high-pitched tones, so it's fine to “baby-talk”.
- ✚ Read to them every day, Be flexible; it's fine to tell the story as you turn the pages instead of reading word-for-word.
- ✚ Books with rhyming words help teach speech.
- ✚ Avoid having the television on when your child is awake. Children don't understand the speech on TV, and the noise interferes with their distinguishing words in your conversations.
- ✚ If your household is bilingual, your child will learn to speak a little later, but ultimately will be much faster at learning languages.
- ✚ Consult a speech specialist if your child is not making two-word sentences by age two.
- ✚ Children with older siblings take a little longer to learn to speak.

## **Your child can learn self-control:**

- ☺ Avoid situations that tire your child, or situations in which she has to wait to eat when she is hungry. Make sure she's getting enough rest.
- ☺ For now, avoid changes to the environment or routine, and keep your expectations of her consistent and predictable. If she knows what to expect, she will "lose it" less often. Limit social events to those she can easily manage.
- ☺ Give her choices so she can feel more control over her day - let her choose between two breakfast foods, or two outfits in the morning.
- ☺ Make sure she has a corner to be alone in - not as a punishment, but as a place to retreat to when she needs to collect herself. A pop-up tent, a clean puppy bed, or even a large cardboard box can help her to screen out the distractions and feel more inner calm.

### **When Tantrums Happen:**

- ☺ When your child "loses it", respond in a quiet tone of voice, and keep your movements as calm and deliberate as possible. If you raise your voice or rush, the mood will escalate.
- ☺ If you sense your child is really out of control, keep her from hurting self or others by holding her gently but firmly until you feel her relax a little; then gradually let go.
- ☺ If you're in a public place (the classic embarrassing situation!) remove her immediately.
- ☺ When you feel the rage start to subside and the unhappiness take over, cuddling and distraction can help - she may enjoy hearing a story, or just holding her blanket or stuffed animal. You can also talk over what happened. The main idea to get across is that you are there to control her when she can't control herself, and that she will learn self-control as she gets older.
- ☺ If you continue to see tantrums after about 26 - 27 months, she may be using them to get attention - at that point, a good strategy is to ignore them as much as possible.
- ☺ If tantrums persist, look for a pattern - then try to avoid the cause. Some children have tantrums more often when they are hungry, tired, overexcited, etc.
- ☺ Encourage your child's speech - the sooner they learn to talk, the sooner tantrums usually subside.
- ☺ Don't give in to avoid a tantrum - it will only postpone and exacerbate the problem, long-term.



## **Bedtimes can be peaceful**

At this age, children frequently get involved in power struggles with their parents, over bedtime and other routines. It is their way of asserting themselves as separate individuals. However, parents need to be firm in setting limits and sticking to them, to give the child the reassurance that mom and dad are still in charge.

- Don't allow your child to watch television in the evening. The flickering light from a TV sends the "wake up" message to the brain.
- Avoid chocolate and other sources of caffeine in his diet. Avoid sweets after 5 PM.
- Make sure his room is completely dark when the shade or curtain is closed, so that early morning light won't wake him.
- If he wakes too early in the morning, treat it exactly as you would in the middle of the night; put him back to bed. Tell him "It's not time to get up yet", and that you will come and get him when it's time to get up.
- Be sure he's had plenty of exercise during the day. You may want to have him play outside for a half-hour before dinner to make sure he's had the chance to get tired enough for the 13 hours of sleep per day that he needs (according to the American Academy of Pediatrics).
- Research shows that a warm bath can actually stimulate the nervous system, because it increases blood flow. If he has his bath right after dinner, it might give his system time to return to a more quiet state before bedtime.
- Read the stories outside of his bedroom and earlier in the evening, especially because the stories will echo in his imagination for some time after he hears them.
- As bedtime approaches, let him know it's coming, and try incorporating a few lullabies along with a brief cuddle.
- The more time you spend reprimanding or reasoning with him, the more he will feel rewarded for pushing the limits. A quick and immediate consequence for getting out of bed or calling to you, such as removing a stuffed animal or toy from his room until morning, is much more effective than scolding or pleading. Be sure not to remove the most beloved item he sleeps with (blanket, teddy, etc.), since children use that type of item as a form of self-comforting that helps them to relax.

## Developmental Stages

Psychoanalyst **Erik Erikson** describes the physical, emotional and psychological stages of development and relates specific issues, or developmental work or *tasks*, to each stage. For example, if an infant's physical and emotional needs are met sufficiently, the infant completes his/her task -- developing the ability to trust others. However, a person who is stymied in an attempt at task mastery may go on to the next state but carries with him or her the remnants of the unfinished task. For instance, if a toddler is not allowed to learn by doing, the toddler develops a sense of doubt in his or her abilities, which may complicate later attempts at independence. Similarly, a preschooler who is made to feel that the activities he or she initiates are bad may develop a sense of guilt that inhibits the person later in life.

### **Infant**

#### *Trust vs Mistrust*

Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment

### **Toddler**

#### *Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt*

Works to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem

### **Preschooler**

#### *Initiative vs Guilt*

Begins to initiate, not imitate, activities; develops conscience and sexual identity

### **School-Age Child**

#### *Industry vs Inferiority*

Tries to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills

### **Adolescent**

#### *Identity vs Role Confusion*

Tries integrating many roles (child, sibling, student, athlete, worker) into a self-image under role model and peer pressure

## Resources

### WEBSITES

American Academy of Family Physicians: Toilet Training Your Child  
<http://familydoctor.org/179.xml>

Department for Community Development: Fun Mealtimes With Toddlers  
[http://www.indianchild.com/parenting/toddlers/fun\\_mealtimes\\_with\\_toddlers.htm](http://www.indianchild.com/parenting/toddlers/fun_mealtimes_with_toddlers.htm)

Niagra Region Public Health - Communicating With Your Baby or Toddler  
[http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health\\_wellness/parenting/talking.aspx](http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health_wellness/parenting/talking.aspx)

Kids Health: The Truth About Temper Tantrums  
<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/tantrums.html>

National Network for Child Care: TAMING TEMPER TANTRUMS  
<http://www.nccc.org/Guidance/tam.temp.html>

Today's Parent: Toddler Bedtime Routines  
<http://www.todayparent.com/toddler/sleep/article.jsp?content=754245>

Toddlers Today: Watching the Clock  
Could a strict bedtime be the answer to your over-tired toddler's mood swings?  
<http://toddlers.today.com/resources/articles/bedtime.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Top Resources  
[http://www.cdc.gov/LifeStages/infants\\_toddlers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/LifeStages/infants_toddlers.html)

### BOOKS

**What to Expect: the Toddler Years**  
by [Arlene Eisenberg](#)

**Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development: Birth-3: The Essential Reference for the Early Years**  
by [T. Berry Brazelton](#)

**Your Baby and Child : From Birth to Age Five (Revised Edition)**  
by [Penelope Leach](#)

**MegaSkills (Revised Edition)**  
by Dorothy Rich

**Making the 'Terrible' Twos Terrific!**  
by John Rosemond

**The Parenting Bible**  
by Robin Goldstein

This seminar was presented by  
**Stephanie Cromwell**

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Stephanie Cromwell is an educator who has 10 years experience in the Montgomery County, Maryland school system. She earned her B.A. EDU from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1992. She was an elementary classroom teacher, who was also active in developing and implementing staff development training. She is the wife of a wonderful man, Dave, and mother to 5 year old twins, Charlie and Emma Grace, and 4 year old, Jack.

While researching public and private schools Stephanie became more aware of the different expectations, processes, and approaches educators and administrators had for student development. While each school's philosophy was important and relevant, it seemed that with emphasis on basic skills, standardized testing, and curriculum pressures, there was no time to develop the "whole child". Perhaps the world of education has assumed that parents already have a thorough understanding of how to cultivate intelligent children that are ready for the world! Knowing that good parents want the best for their children, Stephanie decided to research and develop a program called Parents Impact designed to empower parents to take some ownership of their child's education and development and at the same time complement the school's efforts.

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