

Tantrums and “Terrible Two’s”

“Terrible Two’s” becomes a milestone, which means to a lot of parents who cross the board between two territories, from the cutest and sweetest baby honeymoon to the place marked by tantrums, defiant behavior, and lots of frustration.

The original meaning of “terrible” was anything that causes terror. When you describe the little one as a “terrible two” as a parent, you seem to give your two-year-old the power of causing the feeling of terror in you by how he or she acts out.

Dr. Stephen J. Bavoleck recommends parents replace “terrible two’s” with “terrific two’s” in *Nurturing Parenting*. Dr. Bavoleck says: “Toddlers who are excited about life and want to explore the environment are labeled as ‘terrible’. The “terrible two’s” are adults’ way of saying empowered children are a lot of work to manage.

Why is it terrific for a two-year-old?

At around eighteen months to two years old, the child can walk, run and explore their surroundings more and more with his or her little legs and arms. In addition, the child begins to speak a wide range of words and some phrases to express what he or she wants and needs. It feels so terrific of being able to gain some control over where “I am at” finally.

All human beings have a natural desire for attention, power and to seek emotional connections across their lifespan. As an adult, when you feel that you can relate to someone, to be valued by others around you and feel empowered to gain control of your life, the sense of satisfaction will sprout and you feel happy about being who you are and where you are at. It happens to a toddler as well.

Let’s imagine a toddler carrying two big pockets on them every day. One pocket is for attention and another pocket is for power. Toddlers do not know how to fill the pockets by themselves, so they wait for the parents to fill the pockets for them. When parents fill the pocket with positive attention, such as praise, loving and caring, companionship and playful moments, toddlers feel so good about themselves and are occupied with love and joy. When parents fill the other pocket with empowerment, toddlers feel confident in exploring their environment and they think that they are great enough to do a lot of things. When the two pockets are filled with positive attention and power, there is less room left for negative attention and powerlessness. When parents fill the two pockets with negative attention and powerlessness, the toddlers try to get your attention by whining, clinging and throwing tantrums. They have learned to feel bad and resentful and they think of themselves as inadequate and unable to do things for themselves, which is called “**learned powerlessness**” a term which is said by Dr. Bavolek in *Nurturing Parenting*.

A tantrum is a meltdown and it is often hard to pinpoint the cause of it. However, take heart, tantrums are a normal part of typical child development and all have experienced it.

What causes a tantrum?

It is often hard to pinpoint the cause of a meltdown. There is a lot going on inside the head of a toddler. He truly wants to be independent, but his skills don't yet match his desires. In addition, toddlers are learning how to handle a lot of different emotions, but also how to handle being hungry, tired, bored or overwhelmed. A child could go from smiles to stomping and screaming within seconds. **Remember**, there sometimes is no need to figure out what to do to deal with tantrums. Staying close, calm or giving yourself a time-out is sometimes all you need to do.

Parenting may often bring you feelings of shame, guilt, frustration and hurt but it is important to remember that it is never too late to learn to parent and gain personal growth. Tantrums happen! No matter how hard you try to understand your child's needs, sometimes you just can't prevent a kid from kicking, screaming and crying. It is not fun for you or your child and it can be a helpless and embarrassing feeling especially when it happens at your favorite restaurant or in the middle of the grocery store or party time. When a young child throws a tantrum, it is a parent's perfect time to show him or her how wonderful you are and how powerful you are as an adult to show that you can stay close and stay calm!

Once your child has settled down, ask how they are feeling. If someone was hurt or something was broken during a tantrum, let your child know that this behavior is not acceptable. If the child has not done anything wrong, do not punish them for having a tantrum. Instead, talk to them about their behavior and let them know that their feelings are important and encourage them to use words to express their feelings.

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