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Toddlers are Passionate

Your toddler is in a time of self discovery and self focus and also wanting to be independent. Toddlers can become quite distressed as they balance what they want, what they feel and what they can do with what we want them to do. Sometimes everybody's needs cannot be met. For your toddler a tantrum can be a normal part of expressing all

these feelings, wants and needs. It is their way of saying for example:

- 'I don't like what is happening',
- 'I am struggling to understand what is happening, or needed of me ',
- 'This is really hard for me'.
- 'I'm feeling unsure '
- 'Can I have your help?'
- 'This is not what normally happens'
- 'I want to finish this activity'
- 'I can't cope with these feelings'
- 'Why can't I do this?'

Toddlers are not being naughty or trying to manipulate you. They are not able to fully understand other people's feelings and are learning how to calm themselves. When your toddler is overwhelmed like this (tantrum) they can feel scared.

Some reasons for tantrums.

- Tiredness and hunger.
- Overstimulated or overwhelmed.
- Frustrated that they do not have the skills to do something.
- Unable to explain their needs or emotions.

- Limit of attention span reached.
- Struggle to wait for things.
- Protesting or wanting something that the parent has said no to.
- Testing limits or rules.
- Affected by other stresses – starting childcare, a new baby.
- Difficulty controlling their emotions e.g. they may quickly go from excitement to anger.
- Fearful of new situations.
- Temperament – some toddlers are easy going, others are intense.
- Expecting a reward.
- Still learning about others emotions.
- Beginning to realize that they are separate from you meaning they like to say 'me and mine and no'.
- Not understanding time, size and space.

Avoiding tantrums

- Have realistic expectations of your toddler's ability and needs
- Show your toddler love and attention every day. Smile at your toddler. Let them know that you enjoy being with them.
- Create a predictable world for your toddler. Develop routines and rituals so that your toddler feels safe.

- Use positive language and praise – avoid saying “no” all the time, try saying ‘later or after we do this we can do that’, notice and comment or smile/wink when they do the right thing
- Limit the amount of activity and noise – have quiet times during the day.
- Introduce new activities slowly and one at a time. Give your toddler just enough support to smooth the way to learning new things.
- Try to anticipate and if possible avoid difficult situations or activities for your toddler when they are tired, hungry or unwell.
- Pay attention to your toddler’s unspoken/subtle cues so you can help them early. Try to understand what they are feeling and needing.

When your toddler is really distressed (tantrum)

- **Reflect and tune into your own and your child’s feelings.**
 - ▶ Consider what you are thinking and feeling and understand it’s OK for you to have these thoughts and feelings. e.g. anger, embarrassed etc.
 - ▶ Take a moment to calm, perhaps take some deep breaths. This allows you to notice and respond sensitively to the cues and emotional needs of your child. Your child may be feeling

anger, frustration, fear, jealousy or shame and be unable to calm themselves on their own.

- **Reduce the stress. Your toddler does not know what to do with his upset feelings and is relying on your experience, wisdom and support to help him. Some options are:**
 - ▶ to stay near and remain a calm presence.
 - ▶ Use a calm and soothing voice, repeat calming phrases, keep your volume and pitch low . This is not the time to try to reason with your child – he's too emotional to hear you.
 - ▶ Use gentle touch as tolerated by your toddler. Some children respond best to being held. Other children dislike being held while they are upset.
 - ▶ Reduce the stimulation and if necessary take your child to a quieter area.
- **Reframe the behaviour - Some ways to do this are to see the behaviour as**
 - ▶ distressing for your child.
 - ▶ not them misbehaving but a call for help.
 - ▶ a part of normal development.
 - ▶ not a time when they can understand instructions.

- Recognize the stressors - Notice the triggers, think about what caused the build-up of tension, recall any known triggers, ask yourself if you could have done anything differently earlier to prevent the tantrum.
- Respond and learn - as you support your toddler think about what helps them and what doesn't help. Ask how can I provide the help my toddler needs, how did that go for my toddler and me.

The calm response to your toddlers distress teaches them that difficult feelings are OK to have and helps them to feel safe when emotions get to much for them. By having a loving parent help they will learn to manage emotions as they grow.

Taking care of you

- Connecting during more difficult emotions can be exhausting. Tensions can run high.
- Take a mindful minute with some deep breaths to regain composure.
- It is important to take time out and give yourself a break, even if it seems impossible.
- Parent "Time out" is to give you the opportunity to calm and organize your own emotions.
- Seek support from friends, family and parenting support and counselling services.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

For Parenting Support or to Self Refer to a Tresillian Service call:

Tresillian Parent's Help Line
1300 272 736

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