

5 tips for parents with toddlers

Parenting a toddler is not easy – but there are a few ways to make it easier for yourself (and your little one).



1. Give them lots of attention

Toddlers need a lot of attention from their parents. At this stage of their life they are looking to you for constant information, explanation and guidance. They also need constant reassurance from you and reminders that you love them. It means plenty of one-on-one time with your little one and really at this stage of your life, there isn't something like “too much” attention.

If you are busy at work, stressed or battling any kind of illness, you should know that your child will be affected as well. Toddlers are extremely sensitive to the emotions around them and respond accordingly. If your toddler is clingy, over-emotional, struggling to potty-train or acting especially stubbornly, you may want to look at your life and if your little one is mirroring your behaviour. As the author of *Toddler Taming*, Dr Christopher Green says, “If mum or dad are stressed, then so is the toddler.”

2. You can't do it alone

Toddlers are busy little people who are constantly on the move, looking for trouble. It can be exhausting looking after your child while working, perhaps looking after other



children, work, the house etc. If you have relatives or friends who have offered to help – use them.

If you live far from family or have no friends to lean on, start by finding a play group or get to know other mums who you will be able to talk to, share stories with and turn to for advice.

3. Try to understand your toddler

Your toddler may sometimes behave in ways that frustrate, upset or even make you angry. For instance at playgroup, perhaps your little one keeps grabbing other children's toys or is pushy and bossy on the playground. Don't forget that your child cannot reason yet and is still learning how to manage complicated emotions.

Try not to yell and shout and rather look at reasons for your child's behaviour. Explain to them why certain behaviours are not nice and encourage other ways of playing or interacting. You have to show them the way here and why what they did it is not okay. You also need to remember that your toddler is not being bad as their brains are only able to reason and process knowledge from the age of 5 to 7. So you need to help them understand why we behave in certain ways and not in others.

4. Be consistent

Do not underestimate the power of a toddler's ability to grasp that you are not always serious when you say no. Your no should always be no, otherwise your little one very quickly realises that if they push hard enough (i.e. scream, cry or jump up and down yelling uncontrollably), they will get their way eventually.

If you said they could not have more ice cream, you cannot change your mind five minutes later and give them what they want because you can't stand them crying anymore. You may have peace for ten minutes, but you are setting yourself up for many years of pain. He or she will always know that no matter what you say, you can be pressured into giving them their way eventually, making things much harder for you in future.

5. Figure out your disciplining strategy

If you haven't yet spoken to your partner about how you are going to discipline your child – do so now. This is one of the biggest causes of strain between parents and



makes any conflict situation even worse. You need to know how to react when your toddler misbehaves.

Time-outs are very effective ways of showing your child that you are not happy with what they were doing. Taking them out of a problematic situation and explaining to them what they did wrong is ideal. You should not spank or physically punish a child at this young an age as it does not encourage them to think about what just happened – and rather makes them think about the pain you have caused them.

Toddlers thrive on attention and positive affirmations. Praise them when they have done something good, i.e. “Look at how you are cleaning up! Well done!” and offer plenty of rewards for good behaviour. This is one way of encouraging your little one to seek out more of the hugs and kisses that go along with such “good” behaviour – a great psychological tool to have in your parenting toolbox.