



PREVENT CHILD ABUSE
KENTUCKY

Toddler Time

Your child is growing quickly and becoming a curious toddler. As you celebrate your child's achievements, you may also find yourself frustrated by a toddler who is into everything and goes everywhere.

Toddlers are full of curiosity and energy. They need to explore the world around them, to discover why things work the way they do and numerous other skills. While they are doing all of this, toddlers are also trying to master language skills and learn how to identify and express emotions. As the parent of a toddler, your job is to help your child learn how to express feelings in a healthy way.

Teach and Model Empathy

Help your child understand the effects of his behavior on others. Talk about feelings. Do not demand apologies from your toddler, but talk about how her actions make others feel. This is a more effective way to teach your child empathy than forcing them to apologize.

"No" Time

Many toddlers' favorite word is "no." A toddler is not being defiant or disrespectful when they say "no." Toddlers are learning they have some control over their bodies and their words. Try to give your toddler choices when appropriate. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with "no." It is important, however, to let your child say no and to respect his feelings and wishes.

Discipline

Waiting to introduce discipline into a child's life for too long can make the task much more difficult. Why discipline a toddler? Discipline instills a concept of right and wrong and begins to teach children self-control and respect for the rights and feelings of others. Remember, discipline and punishment are not the same. Punishment teaches only that a specific behavior is not acceptable. Discipline helps the child learn alternative behaviors.

There is no one right way to discipline. An approach that is successful in one situation may not be successful in another. Different children also respond in different ways to discipline methods. Successful caregivers use a variety of age-appropriate strategies to deal with behavioral problems; for example, very young children may benefit from distraction or removal from a situation as a form of discipline.

Toddlers may benefit from a time-out, in which they are given the opportunity to settle down and think about what happened. The general guideline for the time period in which children should be in time-out is one minute for every year of age. Keeping children in time-out longer than necessary leads to their forgetting why they are in time-out in the first place.

Remember, it is more effective to reward good behavior than it is to punish bad behavior. Positively rewarded behavior is often repeated. A reward can be as simple as a smile, a hug, or praise from a parent. Rewards may also be stickers or items earned for good behavior.

Talk with your pediatrician or childcare provider for ideas on age-appropriate discipline techniques.

Rules and Limits

Be clear about your rules and limits with your toddler. Use age appropriate words and make sure the rules for behavior are developmentally appropriate for your child. Use words and examples that your child can understand. Be realistic in what you expect from a toddler.

Set Routines

Young children thrive on routines. Having set times for play, meals and bedtime can ward off many behavioral issues. When introducing new routines and activities, take time to talk to your toddler about what is going to happen and what you expect from her behavior. Help children accept change by creating transitions, e.g. “In five minutes we are going to put up toys and take a bath.”

300 East Main Street, Suite 110
Lexington, KY 40507

859-225-8879
Fax 859-225-8969

1-800-CHILDREN
1-800-244-53736

pcaky@pcaky.org • www.pcaky.org