

Parenting can be difficult. Especially when your sweet and cuddly child becomes a demanding, toy-throwing toddler. Take comfort knowing a lot of what your child is experiencing is normal and other families have been down the same road. As your child grows, it is important to understand the developmental changes and milestones he or she is going through. This can help reduce frustrations and help you set realistic expectations of your child.

Social-Emotional Development Milestones

Ages 0-1	Ages 1-2	Ages 2-3	Ages 3-4	Ages 4-5
<p>6-9 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express several different clear emotions Show more comfort around familiar people and anxiety around strangers Self-soothe with thumb, toy or blanket <p>9-12 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show happiness to see parent's faces or a mirror Give affection and love Have fear with new situations Understand the word "no", but will not always obey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to say "no" to bedtime and other requests Understand words and commands Begin to be helpful around the house Show frustration easily Be able to play alone for a few minutes React to changes in routine Want to try things "by myself" Not share with other children Feel jealous when not receiving attention Hug and kiss familiar people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say no to adult requests Have rapid mood shifts Become shy and start to whine Not like change Defend possessions Separate from parent's more easily Begin to show empathy to other children Need predictable routine (ex. saying bye to parents) Show fear in certain situations (ex. the dark) Want independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares toys and taking turns with help Follow simple rules but always wants to win Might be bossy and defiant Begin dramatic play Show attachment to one friend Be more cooperative with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show awareness of "fairness" and good or bad behavior Awareness of other's feelings Better at sharing and taking turns Listen while others speak Play games with simple rules Stick with a difficult task for longer period

Source: Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre <http://bit.ly/1Dt7K4D>

Teaching acceptable behavior and setting limits is the most loving thing you can do now so your child can grow up safe and become successful. Discipline is about providing the right consequences to encourage your child to make good choices in the future and to learn self-control.

So when does discipline begin? When your child is still a baby. Through hugs, kisses and responsive care, your love sets the stage for discipline later. The early years are important for your child to build a nurturing relationship with you. This creates trust and allows your child to know he or she is still loved even when you correct behavior. Discipline may look different at each stage. In the first 8 months, discipline may mean redirecting your child to another activity when he or she pulls your hair or drops food repeatedly. Although this is how children explore and they aren't trying to bother you on purpose, you can help teach them not to do those actions.

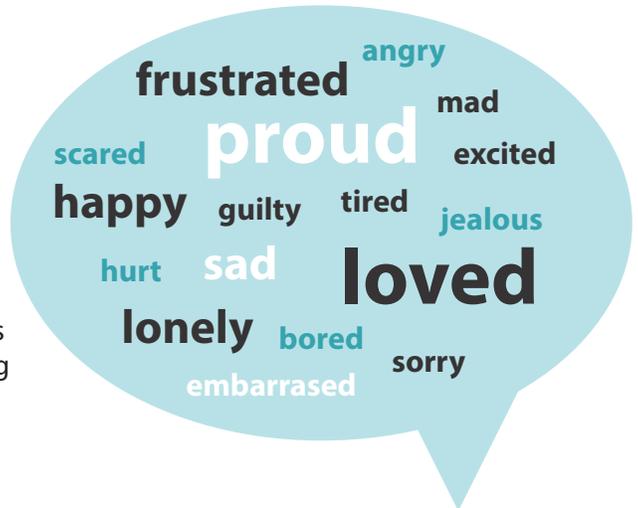
Challenging behavior usually begins with an unmet need or loss of control. Your role is to teach your child to find healthy solutions to deal with feelings. While it can be tempting, giving in to your child's demands is not helpful. Children need to learn to handle disappointment. Don't feel guilty about doing what's best for your child. Children need to know what you expect from them and to have clear limits.

Positive parenting is possible. This approach blends kindness and firmness to raise emotionally healthy and responsible children. It does not mean allowing bad behavior to continue or be ignored. Children, like adults, need to feel respect and empathy. How you communicate teaches them what is acceptable. Acknowledging your child's feelings before addressing the behavior helps them feel heard. Positive parenting focuses on teaching right behavior more than punishing wrong behavior. You can guide your child in a positive, respectful way without sacrificing discipline. For more on positive parenting, visit positiveparentingconnection.net

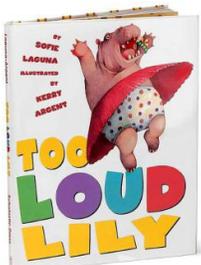


Every family is different. From using time outs to rewards charts, there are many methods families can choose that work best for their child to manage behavior. Using any physical force, like spanking, on your child at any age is not advised. It may stop bad behavior in the short term but is shown to have negative effects in the long run. Below are some helpful strategies to complement your discipline method.

1 Babies have one main communication tool, crying. They use it to communicate a range of feelings from hunger and discomfort to tiredness and pain. As children grow, they need help learning words to communicate feelings and needs to you. Words are important in managing challenging behavior. Some children act out, like throwing toys or lying flat on the floor crying, because that's the best way they know how to deal with their emotions and get your attention. By giving feelings a name and identifying them in action, you help your child understand his or her emotions better. For example, you can say "I see you folding your arms and stomping your feet. You seem frustrated." You can also identify emotions in positive situations. You might say "I saw you laughing and dancing with your friend. Are you happy?"



As you teach words to express feelings, remember to give your child permission to feel. Just like adults, children get angry, feel sadness or get frustrated. Avoid punishing your child for having negative feelings. Instead, focus on showing your child *how* to respond to feelings in a healthy way.



2 You don't have to wait for your child to act out to have a teachable moment. Books are a great way to talk to your child about acceptable behavior in certain situations and how to manage feelings even *before* bad behavior begins. For example, reading the book Too Loud Lily by Sophia Laguna is a great way to talk about the right time to use inside and outside voices, a common problem children have. So, if your child were to wake a sleeping baby with loud laughter, you could remind him or her of the character Lily and how she learned that she needed to use an inside voice at home.

3 Help your child learn problem solving skills by inviting him or her to help find solutions. This skill helps your child learn to find healthy ways to handle feelings in the future. Imagine your child is trying to build a block tower but it keeps falling over. Fed up, he or she pushes the last of the standing blocks over and begins to whine. You could say, "You look frustrated because your blocks won't stay up. What can you do? You can ask for help or take a deep breath and try again. What do you want to do?" This strategy gives a name to the feeling, offers options, and lets your child choose a healthy way to handle the situation.

helpful tips

Avoid negotiating. If the rule is no dessert before dinner, don't give in to the request to have "just one bite" of a cookie first. Tweaking rules sends mixed messages. Children need consistency to feel safe and to understand there is structure. Handling disappointment is an important skill.

Give choices. Offering choices you are comfortable with helps your child have some freedom and avoids unnecessary battles. For example, if you want your child to get dressed, try "Would you like to wear your pants with stripes or your pants with polka dots today?"

Timing of time out. This method is only effective when used correctly and works best for ages 3 and up. Place your child in a private area for one minute for every year of age. For example, a four year old would be in time out for four minutes. At the end, briefly tell your child why they got a time out and then move on.

Follow through. Do not give empty threats you don't plan to carry out. If you are consistent, children will learn there are consequences to misbehavior and that you are serious.

Stay calm. If your goal is to help your child manage his or her emotions, you have to model it. If you are angry, pause to calm yourself and then handle the situation. Avoid yelling. Instead, speak in a low, firm voice.

Plan ahead. Pay attention to patterns in behavior. If your child often gets into trouble in the doctor's office waiting area, next time bring a favorite book or toy. Explain in advance that there will likely be a wait and that you need him or her to sit and play. Communicate expectations ahead of time whenever possible.

Ditch the speech. Children have short attention spans. While it is tempting to give long talks of why what they did was wrong, the shorter the talk, the easier it is for them to understand.