



FAMILY FORWARD

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TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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7 Annoying Things Toddlers Do That Are Actually Good For Them By Katie M. McLaughlin

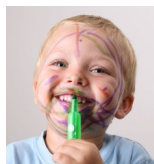
I have only been a mom for two years but I can already say this with certainty: Loving your children does not mean they won't get under your skin sometimes.

Their aggravating ways, which are probably ingrained from birth, are at full throttle in toddlerhood, when meltdowns and chaos and battles of wills are the norm rather than the exception.

But there's a silver lining. Despite the fact that they drive you bonkers, these seven exasperating toddler behaviors are actually really important to your child's learning and emotional development.

So remind yourself of these the next time you're ready to rip your hair out!

1. **Make a total mess.** A study published in Developmental Science suggests that mashing oatmeal between your hands or flinging chunky applesauce across the room can be very educational for the under 3 set. Researchers observed over 70 toddlers and found that those who make a total mess with their food were then able to learn the words associated with those foods faster and more accurately.



2. **Insist on reading the same book over and over again.** Repetition is helpful for toddlers' speech development; hearing the same words and phrases over and over again helps to cement them into their growing vocabulary. Plus, little kids find such joy in knowing what comes next.

3. **Answer every single question with "NO."** It's pretty common for toddlers to overuse the word "NO" and it can be seriously frustrating for parents. But try to remember that tucked inside all that seemingly unwarranted defiance is a child who is just developing her self-identity. She's on an amazing journey of self-discovery that involves the painful realization that her needs and wants are sometimes contrary to her caregiver's.

4. **Cling to you for dear life.** A young child who clings to mommy and daddy is a child who feels safe and secure with them, which is a very good thing. What's more, that tight grip around your neck is your toddler learning how to communicate to you that he feels uneasy in a situation—



which opens the door for you to offer the reassurance he needs, which in turn will make him less clingy next time.

5. **Throw temper tantrums.** Bottling up anger and frustration isn't good for anyone, toddlers included. Your child is at the beginning stage of a journey we're all on: to learn healthy skills and coping mechanisms for dealing with difficult emotions instead of just repressing them. That's not to say parents should give in to the screaming kicking and flailing—rather, keep your cool, figure out what's really going on with your child, and remember that it's an opportunity to teach them about dealing with anger constructively.

6. **Refuse to sit still.** Our kids' natural desire for movement could keep them healthier throughout their lives. In a 2005 study published in the journal Science, researchers at the Mayo Clinic identified a connection between fidgeting and the number on the scale. Not surprisingly, people who had trouble sitting still tended to weigh less than those who were completely comfortable staying off their feet.



7. **Dwadle.** A bit of dilly-dallying is good for him, and for the rest of the family too. In a world where we all feel chronically rushed, with our brains as crammed as our calendars, a child rambling around the house talking to himself instead of putting on his shoes is sometimes a needed reality check. He needs to slow down, and so do I.



Moral of the story: Toddlers can drive us nuts, but that's often a good thing because the stuff that makes us batty is integral to their mental and emotional development. Even so, some days they're lucky they're also adorable!

To read the full article please visit pickanytwo.net

7 Steps for Apologizing to Your Child

By Amy McCreedy

Two minutes after you see a blur of Oliver and Emma scream through the hallway, you hear a major crash in the living room. Immediately, you start berating the kids for running in the house. You head into the room, still yelling, only to find the cat sitting on the end table where the lamp once sat. You turn around to find your kids staring at you with hurt faces. What do you do?

We all make mistakes, and we need to teach our kids—by our own example—to own up to those faults, even when it's really embarrassing for us. Or even when we feel provoked by something our kids have done—like when we finally lose it after listening to our kids whine about something for 10 minutes. The most important thing to remember is to stay calm and be sincere with your apology. These tips can help the next time you need to apologize to your kids:

1. **Own your feelings and take responsibility for them.** It's okay to be frustrated and it's okay to be upset sometimes—we tell our kids this all the time. Just remember that how we respond to those feelings isn't always okay. It's not okay to yell or slam doors. Your kids are watching—so don't react in a way that you would not want them to emulate.
2. **Connect the feeling to the action.** Explain in your apology why you felt the way you did. What happened that caused you to react

that way? Just don't use this as a chance to place blame ("I'm sorry I yelled, but I wouldn't have hurt my foot if you had picked up your cars.")

3. **Apologize for the action.** Point out which action of yours was inappropriate and explain why. Your kids will learn that they can't act that way, either.
4. **Recognize your child's feelings.** Show them that you understand they were hurt or scared. If your action was sparked by something your kids did or didn't do, make sure they understand that your affection is not based on them meeting your expectations.
5. **Share how you plan to avoid this situation in the future.** This is a great opportunity to teach your child how to learn from our mistakes and improve ourselves. Be specific in what you aim to do to keep from blaming others or yelling, for example.
6. **Ask for forgiveness.** This can be as simple as "Can you forgive me?"
7. **Focus on amends and solutions.** Offer to discuss and work out solutions to the issue with your child.

Put these steps together, and you have an apology that would go something like this: "I felt frustrated when you weren't ready for school on time, but it was not okay for me to let out my anger by yelling at you. I'm so sorry I yelled. I'm sure that was scary and hurtful for

you. I need to work harder to use my calm voice, so I put sticky notes around the house to remind me. Can you forgive me? I'd like to talk about how we can fix this problem and move forward."

Remember, apologizing to our kids when we make mistakes, as difficult as it may be sometimes, sets our kids up to recognize their own shortcomings and helps them learn to apologize as well. It also shows them it's okay to make mistakes. Kids that don't experience much failure have trouble knowing what to do when problems do arise—they don't have the confidence to take risks, they won't courageously face their problems head-on or roll with the punches. In the long run, making mistakes and learning from them gives our kids more self-confidence and resiliency. And one way they can learn this is by watching their parents take responsibility for their own mistakes and learning from them.



PHONICS

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How to Raise Resilient Kids

By Kara Carrero — karacarrero.com

Last week our family had plans that fell through and when we mentioned this to our 4-year-old happily declared “That’s ok. You don’t have to apologize to me. I understand.”

I sat there in a little bit of disbelief, expecting to have to squash the meltdowns and fires that I just knew would burst onto the scene at any given time.

“But you might need to apologize to Emma,” Jenn Said. “You know, because she’s a baby.”

It’s these moments that I have hope in these hard days of parenthood that striving to raise resilient kids, while difficult, has a payoff. In fact, maybe by allowing my children to work through their emotions and working so diligently to help them understand how and why things happen the way they do, they are learning to more appropriately handle disappointment even as young kids.

So, I started thinking of all the ways we encourage our girls to bounce back from tough situations and all the ways I forced my high school students to work through their challenges.

How to raise a resilient and confident child

While we might like to think that childhood is all fun and games, the truth is, it isn’t exactly stress-free. Kids have to learn to overcome obstacles even as toddlers, take tests when they’re older, learn new information, change schools and neighborhoods if there’s a move, deal with bullies, and make new friends.

Teaching our kids to be resilient helps them to cope with these changes and stresses that they encounter. And it helps them more appropriately deal with hard

emotions and challenges they have. Resiliency teaches kids to be problem solvers in the face of tough situations so they can find a good solution.

Allow for appropriate risk.

Encourage problem-solving skills that will help them feel confident in their choices. If your child is nervous about doing something they really want to do, like going to sleep over for the first time, help them figure out how to deal with their nervousness.

- Ask your child to think about a way they can practice getting used to being away from home.
- Help them brainstorm ideas.
- Give them the opportunity to figure out what will work best for them.

Don’t accommodate their every need.

No matter if you’re raising a toddler or teen, letting our children struggle is actually a blessing and an important life skill they should encounter before growing up.

Overprotecting a child can fuel anxieties because they tend to become afraid of the unknown even more. Instead, help your child deal with their anxieties by giving them options or helping them understand a bigger picture.

On many occasions, we have had to tell our 4-year-old that we had a certain plan, but if it didn’t pan out, it was not in our control to fix it.

Avoid “why” questions.

“Why” questions aren’t helpful when teaching problem-solving skills. Most likely, your child won’t know “why” they did something so they won’t know how to respond. It’s part of the growing brain and the prefrontal cortex is in charge of making rational choices and overall decision-making...and that part of the brain actually is not fully developed until a

child’s mid-twenties.

Instead, ask “how” questions.

“You left your bike out in the rain and it rusted. *How* will you fix it?” Asking “how” questions will encourage them to figure out the answers they need on their own.

Teach your kids to think in specifics.

Get them thinking about what they need to know to deal with situations. Ask them to think about “where they are going”, “what they will need for an activity”, “what will they say to someone they are meeting for the first time”. Asking them specific questions instead of providing them the answers will allow them to figure things out on their own.

Don’t provide all the answers.

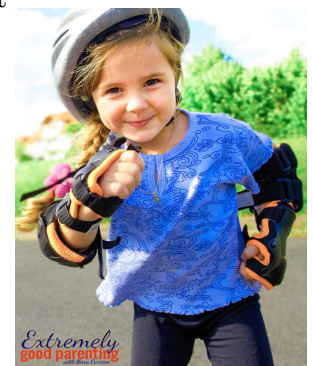
Instead of answering every question your child has, start using the phrase “I don’t know.” or “How can we find the answer to that together?”

Using these phrases will help your child to learn to accept uncertainty and think about how they can deal with challenges.

Let your kids make mistakes.

Failure is not the end of the world. Or as the sign in my middle history teacher’s room declared: “Failure is not fatal.”

It’s a great place to start learning what doesn’t work. Letting kids make mistakes can be painful for parents. But it helps your child learn how to fix problems and make better choices next time.



Tips on Having Tough Conversations With Your Kids

By OutsideTheBoxMom

Addressing tough topics with your kids head-on can be hard. Here are some tips for each topic you might have to address.

1. **Sibling Rivalry** - Kids argue for lots of different reasons. My approach is simple. Treat your kids as individuals, praise them when they get it right, let kids work out their own battles, be available for mediation, and emphasize what they have in common.
2. **Responsibility** - The best way to develop responsibility is to give them responsibility. Even though summer should feel different than the school year, I still require my oldest to spend time/play with his younger sister and keep his chores. This includes making his bed and general upkeep of his room, vacuuming the common areas, emptying the trash bins in each room, and taking the trash can to the street each week.
3. **Following the Rules** - Rules are put in place to keep you safe. Period. If your child is at home alone and someone knocks on the door or rings the doorbell, the best course of action is to pretend that they aren't home. Other rules for being home alone might include checking in with you when they arrive home, not bringing others home from school with them, not answering the door and telephone, and rules about what to eat (not all junk food), what to do (homework, not video games) and what to do in an emergency.
4. **Self-Love** - So many kids lack the confidence to start a new hobby, try a new sport, or make a new friend. They are often waiting for someone to tell them it's okay to do something. I would encourage you to tell your kids and any other kids you have influence over that it's okay to come up with an idea and give it a try. Don't let fear or waiting for permission hold them back.
5. **Teamwork** - I don't know if it's normal or if our society has somehow encouraged it, but so often we see others as competition. Maybe it's the small number of slots offered or maybe it's the need to be in the spotlight. But, we can often accomplish so much more by working as a team.
6. **Peer Pressure** - As tweens and teens spend time with friends and other kids, they can be exposed to things like tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. I believe it is important to talk to our kids about these topics early before their opinions are heavily shaped and influenced by their peers.
7. **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)** - With so many tweens and teens having cell phones, most families having internet at home, and the constant practice of oversharing, kids are striving to fit in, be invited, and to have everything they see. One way to help your kids realize they have many things to be thankful for is to show them that there are other kids who are in need. Take them along when you donate old toys and clothes, choose a charity to support and do it together with your kid.
8. **Self Improvement** - In my post Why Moms Make Great Entrepreneurs, I shared that I learn skills at work that I can apply at home like budgeting, delegating and teamwork. I also have experience as a mom that I can bring to work like being a leader, taking responsibility, multitasking and learning the most efficient way to get something done with limited resources. These same principles apply to kids, too. They are more excited to learn when they see how homework assignments transfer to real life skills.
9. **Body Image** - Somewhere, somehow kids become self-conscious of their bodies. Often, seeing pudge and ugliness where no one else can. These inadequate feelings snowball and they begin scrutinizing every blemish or misplaced strand of hair.

To read the full article please visit <http://outsidetheboxmom.com/9-helpful-tips-really-tough-conversations-kids/> .
