

Prevention

“You can stop half of your toddler’s tantrums in seconds just by repeating back how your child feels, (“You’re sad daddy had to leave/You’re angry mommy has to feed the baby”) in short, simple phrases. And, even more amazingly, you can prevent 50 to 90 percent of toddler outbursts from ever happening by:

1. avoiding problem situations,
2. connecting with respect all day long,
3. feeding the meter (with frequent time-ins, being silly, build in routines, etc.)”
Dr. Harvey Karp

- **Know your toddler’s temperament.** Is your child laid-back? Cautious? Spirited? Knowing your toddler’s temperament will help you be better at anticipating his needs and reactions so you can be a better parent.
- **Make time each day to connect with your child.** This only needs to be 10-15 min. of your undivided time. No cell phones, TV, movie, or IPAD. This is time just for the two of you playing on the floor. **Time-ins:** Lavish your child with tiny bits of attention, play, praise, gossip, hand checks, et cetera, at least twenty times a day.
- **Planned Bragging:** Call your mother or husband and tell them what a great job Mary did today. “When I called Mary today she came the first time. Boy, is she getting to be a big girl”! Pay attention to them doing something good— Praise and reinforce good behavior.
- **Be prepared to repeat requests several times.** Try not to use the word No when your child asks for something to do or to have that he/she can’t. And try not to ask questions that require your child to answer with a yes or no. Give choices, Do you want to read a story before your bath or after? It’s time for bath, do you want to play with the cups or your dolls in the tub. Do you want to put on your yellow pajamas or your blue pajamas? Child asks for a cookie, “Sure right after dinner”. If they can’t make the choice, you make it for them and say, “Tomorrow you can try to choose again”. Don’t fall into that trap for everything.
- **Confidence builders/Let them do certain tasks:** Brushing teeth, Velcro shoes, Clothes/ Little self-esteem boosters that make your toddler feel good about themselves, (such as asking your child’s opinion “Do you think we should have bananas or strawberries for snack?”
- **Transitions:** Allow your child enough time for tasks or leave extra time to go out. Help your child plan for transitions, use a timer or count down.
 - Give them a job
 - Be silly
- **Physical activity everyday-**make sure they wear themselves out.
- **Redirect them to acceptable behavior:** If your child throws a toy car, you calmly and firmly take it from him and hand him a soft ball instead.

“You can’t throw the ball, but you can roll it”. **Spirited child:** “If you continue to throw it I will have to take the ball away and you can try again tomorrow.”

- **Build in rituals/routines:** to begin the day, end the day and for leaving places. Create fun routines like bedtime sweet talk and special time to help your tot feel smart, happy, and loved. “**Bedtime sweet talk**” A nightly routine that reminds your child of the many good things she did that day and previews some of the fun things she can look forward to the next day.
- **Hand check** Little pen marks you put on the back of your child’s hand when she does good deeds. They’re a terrific way to make her feel good about herself all day long.
- **Not everything needs to be a battle.** Give them a way out. I.e. “I will help you this time” or “Which toys do you want to clean up and I will do the rest”. Don’t worry your child will get to another stage when they will be able to do what you are asking.
- **Ignoring unwanted behavior:** Discourage annoying behaviors (like whining and dawdling) by briefly turning your back to deprive your tot of your attention.
- **Be silly and use a sense of humor:** Use games, i.e time them to see how fast they can do something/ talk in a funny voice/ have their stuffed animal help/ put their pants on their head and shirt for pants.

Taken and adapted from: Dr. Harvey Karp, *The Happiest Toddler on the block:* August, 2008 and Dr. Jane Nelson, *Positive Discipline.* May 2006