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Reasons for Behaviour

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is the emergence of the ability to think and understand

The benefits of understanding cognitive development

Allows parents to understand what is normal and appropriate for general age groups.

- Toys , games, and activities are easier to choose if you understand the stages of a child's cognitive development.
- If you know that most children do some things at a certain age, you will know that you don't need to change that behaviour.
- You will understand that it is not your fault your child is doing something annoying. By understanding normal development, you can tell when a child's development may be lagging behind their peers. In most cases, it's fine, but there are some red flags in children's development that may be worth raising with a doctor or specialist.



How to aid their cognitive development

Use unplanned events to help children learn

Children may blow bubbles in their drink. You can ask them why they think milk bubbles last so long but water bubbles do not. You can compare them to water bubbles that disappear almost immediately. You can talk with your kids about what happens when they put different foods or objects in milk.

Encourage children's thinking – even if it's annoying!

Plenty of mothers worry about the mess their toddlers and small children make while eating. But sometimes this mess is the key to unlocking the next stage of your child's cognitive development. For example, a toddler starts dropping peas on the floor—one by one—at dinner time. Wow, that's quite a cognitive skill he's developing there: picking up small objects one by one, understanding the power of gravity and seeing the results of his hard work.

Children use hands-on experience to learn

Children use concrete, hands-on experiences to help them understand the world around them. That toddler dropping peas on the floor may be trying to understand, "If I drop this, what happens next?" Be happy to know your child is learning, even if you will need to pick up the peas!

Examples

If you've ever tried reasoning with a 2-year-old, you know the meaning of futility. Toddlers are wondrously curious and beguiling. They're also irrational, self-centered, and convinced of their own omnipotence.

But you can't blame them -- that's just the way their brains are wired.

Still in an early stage of cognitive development, toddlers think in fundamentally different ways from older children and adults.

Fortunately, understanding how your toddler's mind works can help you to endure, and even to enjoy, the terrible twos. Here, our experts decode some of the more maddening, mystifying toddler tactics -- and offer ways to help you deal.

The Drama Queen

The scene: Your toddler pinches her finger in a toy. You rush over to find a tiny red mark but no broken skin. You offer to kiss her boo-boo, but she wails, "I need a Band-Aid!"

You think: "Get a grip!"

She thinks: "Help! I'm broken! Fix me!"



When an infant plays with her toes or studies her wiggling fingers, she has no idea that these body parts belong to her. But toddlers have figured it out: This is me, this is my body -- and they love their body.

Toddlers make no distinction between the physical, mental, or emotional "me," so every little nick, real or imagined, is an insult to self. That's why a 2-year-old will sob over every hangnail. It's as if their whole being has been punctured. Band-Aids offer concrete comfort.

They're a tangible way of saying, I know that you have been wronged, your body has been wronged, here's something that will make it better. Your best bet: Skip the reasoning, stock up on an ample supply of bandages, and take advantage while you can of their miraculous tear-stopping powers.



The Bargainer

The scene: Your 2-year-old watches as you deposit two scoopfuls of ice cream into his small plastic bowl, then two equal-size scoops into a larger bowl for his sister. As you place the bowls on the table, he wails, "I didn't get as much!"

You think: "But I gave you both two identical scoops!"

He thinks: "She has more ice cream than me!"

Toddlers can't comprehend that containers of different shapes and sizes can hold equal amounts of stuff. Kids don't develop this cognitive ability, known as "conservation," until age 6 or 7.

If you show a younger child two tall glasses filled equally with water and let him watch as you pour one into a shorter, wider glass, he'll invariably say the taller glass has more water. That's why it's pointless to try to convince your toddler that he has the same amount of juice as someone with a taller cup. To the toddler, bigger is more. You'll avoid tears of (perceived) injustice by recognizing that with toddlers, equal servings aren't enough: similar containers are also required.

Miss Independence

The scene: You have 30 minutes to get your 2-1/2-year-old dressed, fed, and in the car. You start to take off her pajamas, but she insists, "Me do it!" You watch as she struggles to get the top over her head, her frustration mounting. She refuses your offer to help: "No, me do it!"

You think: "Aaaaargh!"

She thinks: "I know I can do it!"



Whereas infants have no sense of themselves as separate individuals, toddlers are newly aware of, and eager to test, their autonomy. This push for independence is a good thing, though it can be frustrating for the parents. You want your child to become self-sufficient, even though in the moment you want to get them out the door.

If you can surrender to the reality that everything takes longer with a toddler -- bathing, dressing, eating, walking -- you'll take pressure off yourself and your child. Try to start a little bit earlier. Let your child do the parts she can do and help her with what she can't. Boost her chances for success by choosing slip-on clothes (no buttons, snaps, or zippers) and Velcro-fastened shoes. What toddlers really want is the pride of accomplishment, so look for ways to let them experience that.

The Bully

The scene: Your 20-month-old whacks another child on the head with a plastic shovel and grabs the pail out of his hands. The child erupts in tears, while your little bruiser happily sets to work on a sandcastle. Mortified, you rush over, reprimand your child, and insist that he return the pail and apologize. Instead, he clings to it and wails, "Mine!"

You think: "Is 2 too young for reform school?"

He thinks: "I want the pail!"



Toddlers are intrinsically egocentric. Until about age 3, children believe that they are the center of the universe and that everyone else thinks so too. It really is all about them. Toddlerhood is the celebration of me.

Fortunately, by age 3 most children will develop greater sense of empathy. Meanwhile, if your tot insists on grabbing for another child's toy, it's probably best to remove him from the situation. Don't ignore aggression. If your toddler strikes another child, get down on his eye level and say something like, "Look, he's crying, it

hurt when you hit him". This is how to teach children about feelings, so that by the time they're 3, they won't want to hurt others.

Miss Follow-the-Leader

The scene: Your toddler sees her big sister playing with her Barbie and cries because she wants to play with Barbie. You persuade your daughter to give your tot a turn; she nobly hands over the doll and begins playing with her toy ponies instead. Your toddler drops Barbie and reaches for a horse: "I want pony!"

You think: "I give up!"

She thinks: "I want to do what she's doing!"



Toddlers learn by mimicking, explains High. At this age, there's a whole lot of watching and copying, which is why toddlers want what others have. It's through imitation that they learn language and social skills and how to manipulate their world.

The next time your toddler melts down because she doesn't want her tricycle, she wants her brother's Big Wheel, try to interpret her tantrum as a yearning to learn. It may help you to weather the storm with more understanding and less irritation -- even as you hold your ground against unreasonable demands. You may avert some tantrums by keeping doubles of favourite (less expensive) toys, especially if you have close-in-age children or you regularly host play dates.

The (Un)Realist

The scene: Your 22-month-old, who used to love her bath, now refuses to sit in the tub and becomes hysterical when you open the drain to empty the water.

You think: "The terrible twos are here!"

She thinks: "The drain is going to suck me down!"



Toddlers engage in "magical thinking," meaning they're unable to distinguish the real from the imaginary and frequently attribute living characteristics to inanimate objects: The moon follows them, trees wave to them, the car "sleeps" in the garage, and the bathtub drain swallows whole tubs of water -- so why not them too? You can try reassuring your child that she'd never fit, but it may be more persuasive to cover the drain with a "magic" no-skid bath mat that "keeps drains from opening."

Magical thinking also partly explains why toddlers have trouble taking "no" for an answer. Toddlers think that if they wish or imagine something, it will happen -- whether it's having Corn Pops for breakfast (no matter how many times Mommy says there are none) or wearing the pink mittens that have been lost for a month.

The good news is that you can use your child's magical thinking to deal with fears, which may set in at this age. Create a ritual of blowing away bad dreams, or let your child sleep in Dad's T-shirt, or with a family photo, to ease fears of the dark or monsters.

Mr. Here-and-Now

The scene: Your 33-month-old has been invited to a birthday party, scheduled for Sunday at noon. You make the mistake of telling him on Thursday: "Guess where we're going this weekend? Eric's party!" Your toddler is elated: "Let's go now!" You explain



that the party isn't for another three days. For the next few hours, your toddler asks every five minutes if it's time to go to Eric's party.

You think: "Me and my big mouth!"

He thinks: "Mommy won't take me to the party!"

Toddlers exist entirely in the present, explains High. They don't have a concept of three, never mind three days from now. To save yourself and your child frustration, give short advance notice for upcoming events. After lunch or when you wake up in the morning are understandable amounts of time for your toddler.

Of course, the fact that toddlers exist in a "timeless" universe means they're as disinclined to hurry as they are to wait. The music class happening in half an hour can't compete with the captivating caterpillar crawling across the driveway.

If you're not hurrying to a necessary appointment, consider occasionally going with your child's flow: Forget story hour, sit on the ground and marvel at the ant hill. But in any case, resist making threats you're not willing to keep. If you say to your child, "If we don't get your shoes on, we can't go to the park," be prepared to hear, "Okay," as your toddler continues stacking her blocks.

The Benign Dictator

The scene: Your child will only drink from the red sippy cup, refuses any sandwich not cut in precise triangles, and can't sleep without his trains lined up in a certain order next to his bed.

You think: "My child is neurotic!"

He thinks: "I'm in control."



As toddlers explore the world beyond their parents' lap, they can be overwhelmed by all there is to absorb. That's why, even as they venture out, they cling to the familiar, insisting on always wearing the same shirt or eating from the same plate.

Predictability makes toddlers feel safe. Most things in their lives they really can't control. The only things they can decide are these kinds of details: I will sit in the same chair, I will drink from the blue cup. Accommodate their toddlers' quirky requests within reason. It can help to tame their anxieties. But that doesn't mean you should go out of your way to satisfy your tot's every whim. The trick is to let your child feel some control, without letting him run the show. Allow him to choose his dinosaur pajamas every night but not when and if he'll go to bed. As much as toddlers desire independence, they need to know their parents are in charge in order to feel secure.

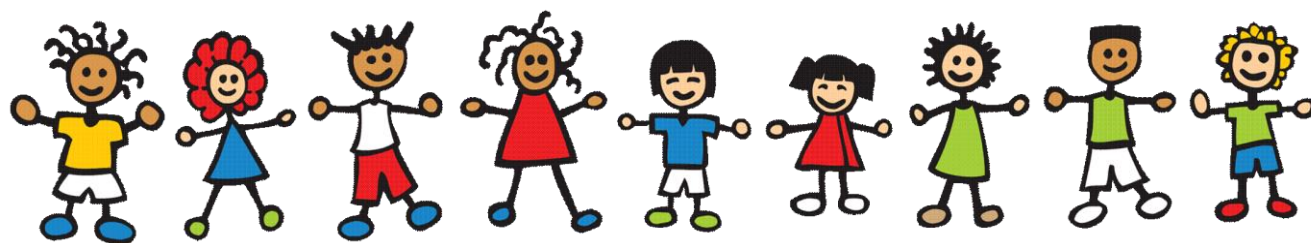
While it can be frustrating to have your easygoing baby turn into a tough-to-manage toddler, just remember that your child isn't being manipulative but is going through a normal developmental stage as he takes on the world around him.

How Can You Help Improve Your Child's Reasoning?

One of the keys to nurturing the development of reasoning abilities in children is to recognize that these are skills. And skills are learned best by doing.

Thus, the place to begin is to model sound thinking skills for your children. Let them witness what high quality reasoning is like. Next, discuss what constitutes sound reasoning with your child.

For instance, when my four year old son asserted that humans cannot be animals because most animals have four legs and some type of fur and humans do not, I reviewed the available evidence with him as well as the definition of animal. It is also possible to do this by reviewing the reasoning of characters in books, comics, or on TV. In addition, provide your child with plenty of opportunities to practice sound reasoning. The most obvious way to do this is simply to engage in conversations with your child.



"Having a 2-year-old is like having a blender without a lid."

— Jerry Seinfeld

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