



Building “Piece” of Mind

The 18-month visit

Tantrums, time out, and time in

Toddlers are happier and healthier when they feel safe and connected. The way you and others relate to your child affects the many new connections that are forming in the toddler’s brain. These early brain connections are the basis for learning, behavior and health. Early, caring relationships prepare your child’s brain for the future.

Tantrums

By the time children are 18 months old, they may start to have tantrums. Many times, these tantrums happen because they can’t tell you what they want in words (“I want you to read to me NOW!”). As they begin to talk more, this type of tantrum may happen less.

Encourage children to use words:

- Smile when they use happy sounds or words to get your attention.
- Look at them when they use words (even if they are interrupting).
- Answer them when they use words and they are not interrupting.

When you do this, you are teaching your child that using words is the best way to get what he wants.

Tantrums may also happen when you set limits by saying no. When you say no, distract your child with something else to do. “How about we pound on these noisy pots and pans instead?”

If the tantrum continues, ignore it as much as possible. If tantrums result in more attention, the tantrums will likely continue.

Time-out

Consider teaching “time-out” if your child starts to:

- hit
- kick
- spit

Time-out must mean “quiet and still.” If your child isn’t being quiet and still, it isn’t time-out. Very few 18-month-olds know how to be quiet and still. You will teach him this by ending time-out the moment he is quiet and still.

Step one

- When your child is hitting, kicking, spitting or losing control, pick him up but look away so he knows this is not a hug.
- Gently hold him in your lap.
- Sit until he becomes quiet and still. At first, it may just be a brief moment.
- As soon as he is quiet and still, time-out is over. He is allowed off your lap.

Over time, your child will learn that time-out is shorter if he is simply quiet and still. Once your child is able to calm himself quickly and consistently in your lap, it is time for step two.

Step two

- Have your child sit by himself in a chair.
- You can put your hand on his lap or shoulder, but look away.
- Have your child sit there until he is quiet and still.
- As soon as he is quiet and still, time-out is over.

Once your child is able put himself in the chair and quickly calm himself, then you can begin to use a timer. Time-out should last about one minute per year of age. Only try this when your child understands that time-out means being quiet and still.

Time-out works best when:

- You use it for one or two behaviors at a time
- There is a lot of “time in”

As your child ages, time-out may work because, when in time-out, your child is being ignored. No child likes that! This is especially true if he knows what time-in feels like.

Time-in

Time-in occurs when your child is the center of your attention! Teach him that picking up a book or a toy results in reading and snuggles or play time together (time-in). If hitting results in time-out, but picking up a book results in time-in, he will learn to stop hitting and to start picking up a book instead.

Calm down

Time out teaches your child to calm down. It helps him remain in control despite strong emotions.

Time out is healthier and safer than spanking or other forms of punishment. Physical punishment teaches children that “adults hit when they are angry”.

Time out teaches children “this is how I calm myself.”



An introduction to Purposeful Parenting

Purposeful Parenting begins by thinking about the final result. What do parents want for their children? All parents want their adult children to be healthy, happy, and productive. They want them to be all that they can be. This is the long-term goal of parenting.

All children, including children with disabilities, are born with a desire to learn new skills. All children are driven to grow, to learn, to contribute, and to connect with others. But before they can learn new skills, think creatively, or be productive, their most basic needs must be met:

- bodily needs, like breathing, water, food, and sleep
- the need to feel safe
- the need to feel loved, accepted, and valued.

Meeting these basic needs allows children to be healthy and to learn. It helps them start to build self-esteem and a desire to be good at whatever they do. Over time, they then begin to decide for themselves what it means to be healthy, happy, and successful.

Unmet needs, though, can cause stress. If it is brief and mild, stress can be positive and lead to growth and the learning new skills. However, too much stress can be toxic. This toxic stress can affect the basic growth and function of the brain. It can prevent children from becoming the healthy, happy and productive adults we hope they will be someday.

The six parts of Purposeful Parenting

By being Protective, Personal, Progressive, Positive, Playful, and Purposeful, parents and caregivers can decrease toxic stress. Decreasing toxic stress releases that in-born drive to grow, to learn, to contribute, and to connect with others. Purposeful Parenting helps children to be all that they can be.

Protective

- Prevent toxic stress by always meeting the child's basic needs.
- Be sure that the child has enough food, water, shelter, and sleep.
- Be sure that the child feels safe and always knows that someone they trust is there to care for them.

- Avoid being too protective. Don't "hover"! Over time, children must begin to feel capable and safe on their own.

Personal

- Show love and acceptance. Strong personal relationships decrease toxic stress.
- Be kind and gentle. Being mean, harsh, or violent may hurt the relationship and create toxic stress.
- Avoid calling the child names like bad or good, dumb or smart, mean or nice. However, naming emotions and behaviors may help your child to learn ("You look mad" or "Hitting is not helpful"). You may not like the emotion or behavior, but always love the child unconditionally.
- Match your teaching to the child's personal needs, strengths, and way of learning.
- Teach children helpful behaviors ("The next time you are mad, try using your words"). Avoid just saying "stop it" or "no!"

Progressive

- Infants and children are always changing. Discipline and parenting skills need to change, too.
- Learn about child development. Knowing "what to expect" reduces frustration and stress for both you and your child.
- Notice and support the new skills your child is learning and practicing ("Thanks for using your words" or "Good job sharing").
- Remember: It is much easier to teach the behavior we want than to control unwanted behavior!

Be Positive...

- In regard. Love the child if not the behavior. Avoid punishments like spanking. They may actually increase stress because they turn parents into threats (the parents are no longer being "protective"). Spankings may also damage the relationship (the parents are no longer being "personal"). Physical punishments also become less effective over time and teach children that adults react to strong emotions with violence.
- In outlook. Optimism reduces stress and builds confidence. Say things like "I know you can do better the next time."

- In reward. Catch your child "being good" to nurture new behavior. Reward the child's efforts.

Playful

- Be playful. Play time is a chance to practice new skills and helps learning. Reading together is a good example. Try to read with your child for at least 20 minutes each day.
- Be involved. Finding the time to play can be hard, but it strengthens the relationship with your child.
- Be a follower, at least some of the time. Allow your child to be creative and to lead your play together.

Purposeful

- Being protective, personal, progressive, positive and playful is not always easy. When parents are having a hard time meeting their own need for food, sleep, shelter, confidence, or connection with others, they may be less responsive to the needs of their children. Parents must therefore be "purposeful:" to be mindful of their child's needs and to be intentional in their attempts to meet those needs, even when the going gets tough.
- Think again about the long-term goals or purpose of parenting. Nurture the basic skills that children need to be successful. These include:
 - language
 - social skills
 - self-control (also known as emotional regulation)
- Remember that the word discipline means "to teach." Punishments and other attempts "to teach" children what NOT to do are much harder than modeling, noting, and encouraging all of the behaviors that we want!
- Find out the "purpose" of your child's behaviors. Many times, repeated behaviors help a child meet a basic need. For example, crying may be the child's way of saying "I'm tired," "I'm scared," "I want some attention," "I need to prove that I can do this," or "I have an idea or plan." Once you've figured out the "purpose" of a behavior, help your child to learn new skills to meet these needs.