

## Training Toddlers

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Welcome back to our second week looking at training and discipline.

### Ice-breaker

**I would like us to think of and share, if you would like to, one success story in terms of good behaviour in your child, or a tactic, a distraction, a reward, a consequence that has worked. (keep it brief!)**

I asked you to do this exercise because training our children is hard and we can often compare ourselves or our kids with better behaved kids and think we are doing a terrible job! So remember all that you are achieving, your children are alive and healthy and playing. So don't beat yourself up when you don't achieve perfectly obedient children or even reasonably behaved children especially in the toddler years. Try not to feel overwhelmed when we discuss training today. We all muddle along very well. Just take a few things from today, things you think would work in your family, or one thing you could try, or even none, if you think this does not fit with you. Training takes the whole of childhood, so don't expect too much too soon. In fact we are always trying to improve ourselves aren't we. **The Bible tells us we are never perfect, phew and yet deeply loved and accepted by God when we run to Him!**

At Mum Space we are just trying to provide some ideas from the parenting advice that is out there but which you don't have time or energy to read or listen to. We aim to provide a kind of toolbox of strategies and ideas, which you can pick and choose or leave as you think best for your child. We would love to hear your ideas too.

A quick reminder why we should train and discipline: It brings security to have rules and boundaries, they need guidance on how to behave, they need to learn how to happily live under authority, it improves your relationship with them and they with others, it results in self-discipline and confidence.

Now let's think about this question:

### **Q Why do children misbehave? (brief group discussion)**

#### **HALT:**

**Hungry Anxious Lonely Tired**

(Halt: therefore you stop and think before you react, if you can!)

#### **Other reasons:**

- a) **to get attention: or trying to connect:** toddlers need a lot of attention, they thrive on it and if they are not getting it they can play up in order to get it,

negative attention is better than no attention. All children need attention.

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Apparently, the ideal learning environment is for praise to outweigh correction by 3:1 and for a change in behaviour 10:1. So catch them being good and praise them. 'you have been really kind to your brother when you shared your toy', 'I have been watching you play so nicely, what an imaginative mind you have', 'you ate all your dinner up without a fuss' or 'you ate half your dinner, that's good, maybe you could try the a few peas next time too', instead of 'you didn't eat your peas'. 'Mummy loves it when...'. Put up post-it notes with sentence starters to remind you to praise. Start with once/hour.

Especially in today's world where both parents may be working, the time children spend with them is limited and this can cause toddlers to go into overdrive, trying to get as much attention from you as possible in a short space of time. They behave well at nursery and then it is chaos at home!

- b) **To signal inadequacy:** they cannot do what is asked of them, are we asking too much? They may just want you to help them with it eg clearing up a mess together, 'I will help you clear up your mess, it looks so much nicer when it is all tidy and if we work together we can get it done so much more
- c) **To challenge authority:** they simply want to do what they want when they know it is breaking a rule eg eat that extra biscuit, hit or snatch. This is when we need to discipline firmly. . **There is a brilliant verse from the Bible that has a great way of describing this type of behaviour, it is actually quite a relief! I will paraphrase ' the rule, because of my human nature, made me want to break it, without a rule this did not happen' Romans 7v8. There is something inside all of us that reacts to rules and toddlers can be particularly famous for this!! It is good to ponder why this is sometimes.**
- d) **To hurt:** due to tiredness or frustration or jealousy and competitiveness. Sometimes we need to ask ourselves if we are asking too much of them eg shopping after school pick up or too many activities or groups/clubs, which means they do not have enough down time which helps to calm them and emotional regulate them.
- e) **Frustration because they cannot yet communicate their needs or wants:** something is wrong but your toddler is unable to verbalise it. Teaching your child sign baby sign language from 6 months can help to reduce this, especially the word/sign 'help', instead of losing it because they can't put some big lego together, they can ask for help.
- f) **They may be sickening for something or teething**

**A good Bible verse sums this all up 'Children are going to do foolish things. But correcting them will drive that foolishness far away'. Prov 22v15 or 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child ...'**