



Embracing the Challenging Behaviors of Toddlers



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What we will discuss today:



- Describe challenging behaviors demonstrated by toddlers
- Explore reasons behind challenging behavior for toddlers
- Discuss specific strategies for supporting toddlers when they are experiencing challenges

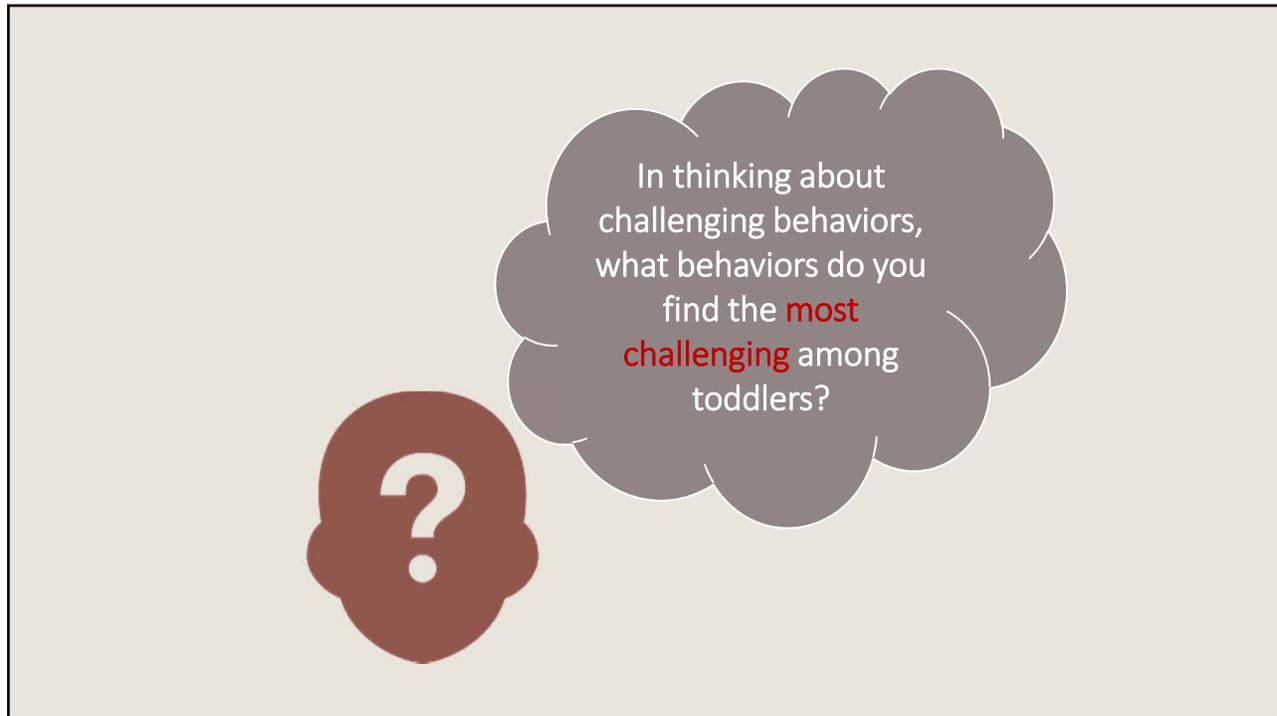
Are challenging behaviors on the rise?

What is challenging behavior?

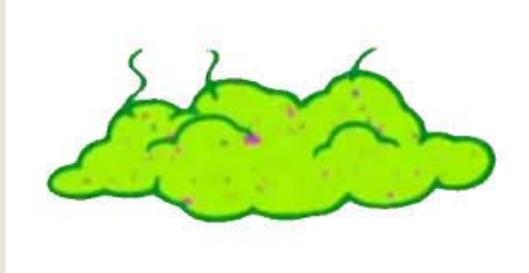


The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning's definition of challenging behavior for children from birth to 5 years old is:

- Any **repeated pattern of behavior** that **interferes with learning** or **engagement in prosocial interactions** with peers and adults, and
- **Behaviors** that are **not responsive** to the use of **developmentally appropriate guidance** procedures.



What causes challenging behaviors?

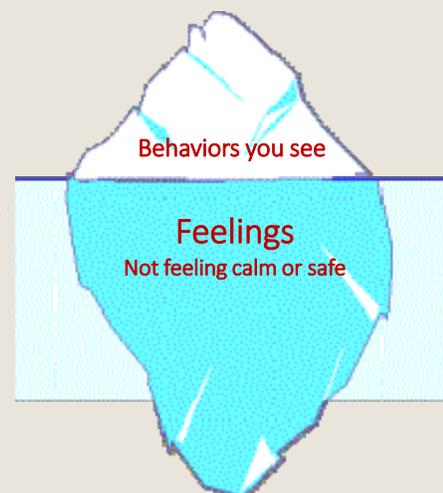


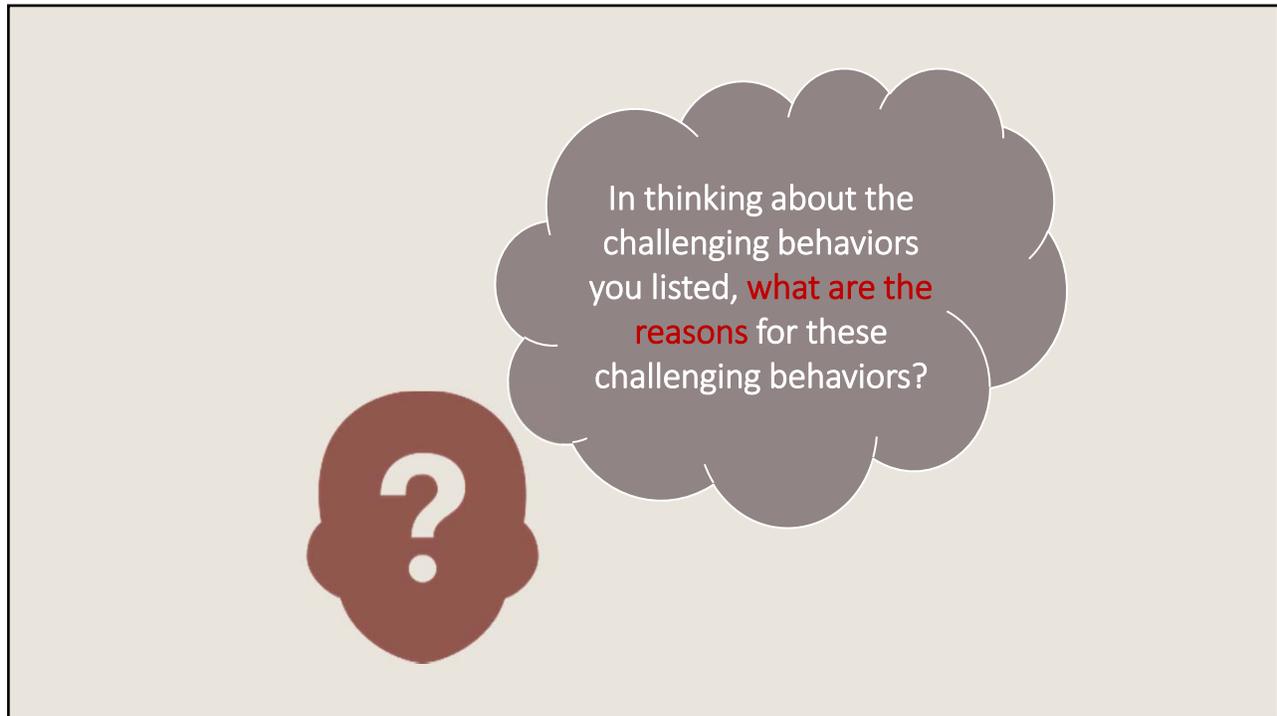
ICK! ICK refers to the negativity or risk factors in an individual's life.

Devereux Center for Resilient Children * www.MoreFLIPIT.org

What does behavior tell us?

- Communication, wanting connection
- Feelings underlie the behavior:
 - Brain needs to feel CALM and SAFE





Common Reasons for Challenging Behaviors

Toddlers are very conscious and aware, but their behavior *isn't*.

Functions

1. Obtain something –Attention of adult or peer –Activity, toy, food, materials
2. Escape something
3. Self stimulation
4. More ICK, overstimulated



In thinking about the challenging behaviors you listed, **how do you respond** to these challenging behaviors?

Got Stress? Flight, fight, freeze, faint



What is foundational for children to feel calm, secure, and safe?

“Time and time again children are heavily reprimanded for committing the offence of crying or being angry. Let’s get this straight: emotions are not bad behavior. Emotions don’t hurt anyone. Suppressing children’s emotions does, on the other, cause them harm: over time, if done repeatedly, it unbalances their brain chemistry, it stresses their immune and digestive systems, and it undermines their ability to relate to others” – Robin G. Heart to Heart Parenting

What makes us resilient to these stressors?

- Healthy relationships
- Healthy self-regulation
- Healthy initiative

Indicators found on the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA-P2)

Strategies



Prevention is the Best Intervention



<https://www.happilyfamily.com/dealing-with-difficult-child/>

Relationships as a Basis of Prevention

- Foundation is having a **relationship-based approach** in child care settings (Fox & Hemmeter, 2014)
 - *Nurturing and supportive relationships*
 - *High quality supportive environments*
 - *Culturally responsive practices*



- **Social and emotional well-being is key to learning** in all other areas of development

Interventions focused on **fostering sensitive and responsive teacher-child interactions** for children who demonstrated challenging behaviors in child care associated improved activity in children's stress response system (declines in cortisol) (Hatfield & Williford, 2016)

Strategies

- Self-Regulate to Co-Regulate
 - Become Self-Aware
 - Be Empathetic
 - Develop children's awareness of feelings and problem solving
 - Using "Conscious Communication"
- 
- Healthy relationships
 - Healthy self-regulation
 - Healthy initiative

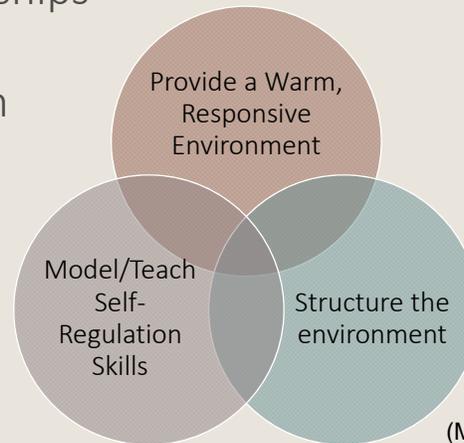
Strategy: Self-Regulate to Co-Regulate

- How are you self-regulating?
- Are you demonstrating behaviors that are calm and safe to the toddler?
- Are you helping the child develop resilience to stressful moments?

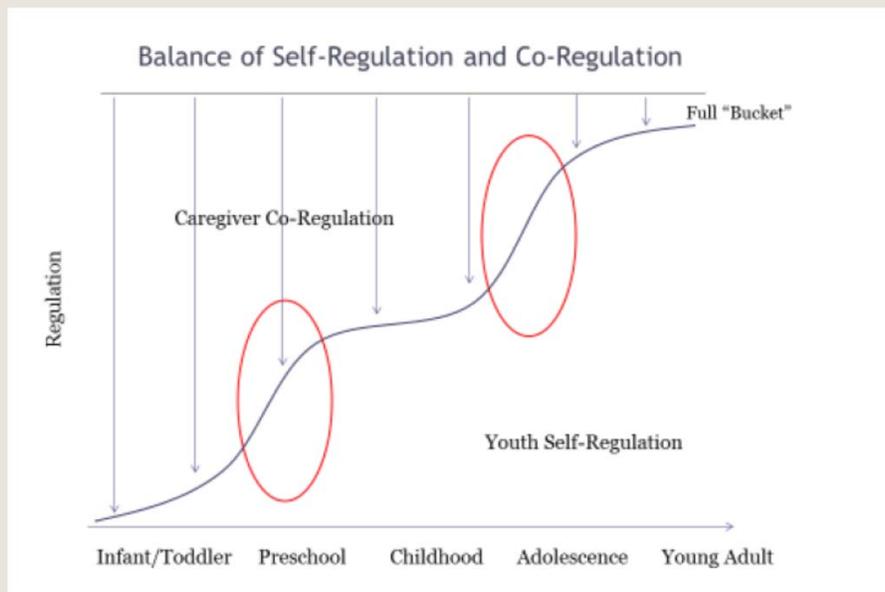


Strategy: Importance of co-regulation

- Is an interactive process of regulatory support in the context of caring relationships
- Occurs across the lifespan



(Murray et al., 2015)



Rosanbalm, K.D., & Murray, D.W. (2017). Caregiver Co-regulation Across Development: A Practice Brief. OPRE Brief #2017-80. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, US. Department of Health and Human Services.

Return to the Breadth

4 – 7 – 8



Rest your tongue behind our front teeth

Close your mouth
Breathe in through your nose
Count to 4

Keep your mouth closed
Hold your breath
Count to 7

Open your mouth
Breathe out in a WHOOSH
Count to 8

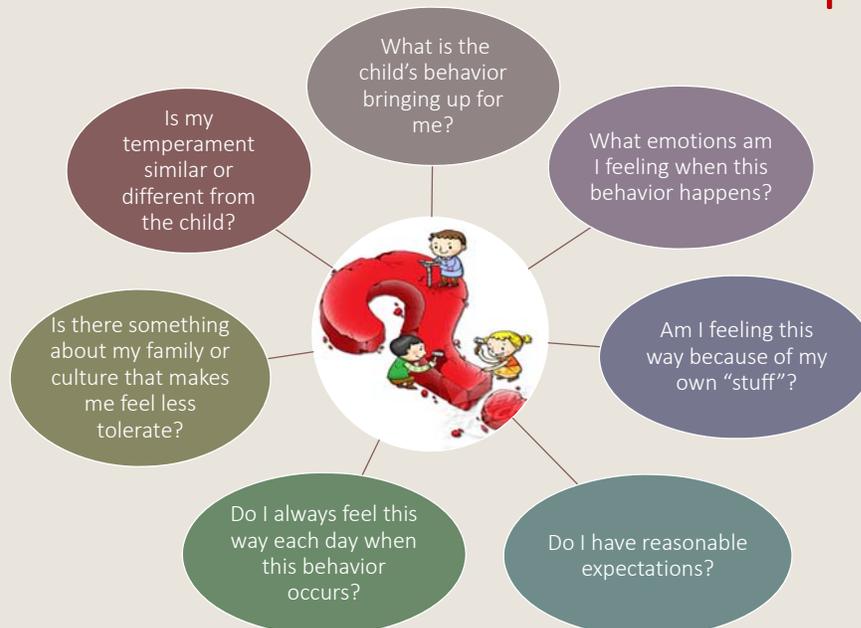
Self-Talk

Sometimes Talking Out Loud

“I’m having some really big feelings right now.
 It’s not because of you.
 We’re going to get through this together.
 I’m going to take a couple of minutes to take care of
 myself.
 And then, I’ve got a really big hug for you if you want it.”

<https://www.happilyfamily.com/how-to-prevent-mommy-meltdowns/>

Strategy: Become Self-Aware and Gain Perspective



Strategy in the Moment: Stay Calm and Communicate Comfort

Communicate Comfort – Get at eye level, then have a

- Calm body
- Calm face
- Calm voice



Communicate Feelings – Even when you don't like the behavior acknowledge the feelings.

Strategy in the Moment: Stay Calm and Communicate Comfort

CONNECTION is KEY,
What is driving the child's behavior?

- What can I do in this very moment to improve my relationship with this child?



Siegel, D.J. (2012) The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.
<http://www.janetlansbury.com/2016/03/how-to-calm-an-angry-child/>

Remember: Child Needs Time to Respond

- Provide enough time for children to respond
- Give the **child 5 to 10 seconds** to respond before you give an additional prompt or request.
- If the child is asked to respond verbally, he may need time to find the right words.

Strategy in the Moment: Conscious Communication

AVOID

- Avoid demands
- Avoid guilt
- Avoid judgement
- Avoid blame
- Avoid dismissing

DO

- Notice without judgement
- Acknowledge feelings
- Validate Needs
- Support, offer solutions, provide quality feedback

www.teach-through-love.com

Let's Practice

Strategy in the Moment: CARES Approach



Emma Girard, Psy.D, 2018

Let's Practice

Strategy: Using Symbols/Visual Tools

- Support transitions
- Provide consistency and predictability
- Establish clear expectations
- Help children in communicating

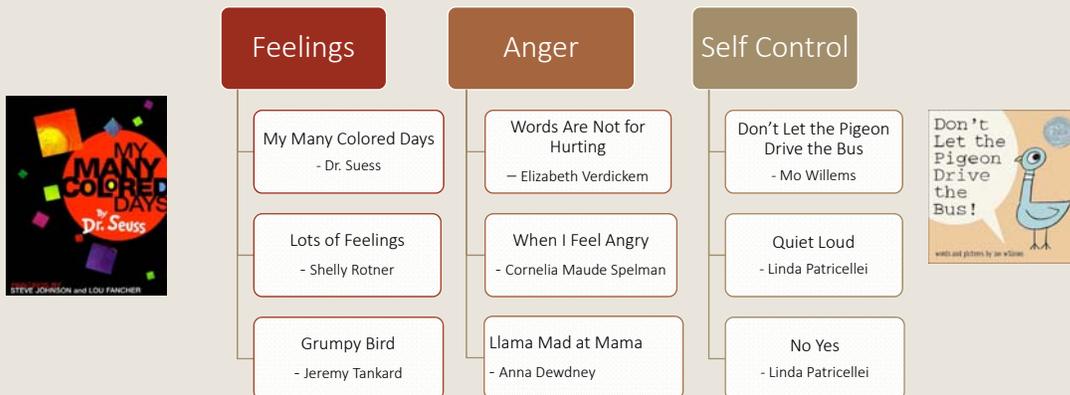


Strategy: Acknowledge aspects of the child you appreciate and like



“If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.” – Rabbi Harold Kushner

Strategy: Picture Books



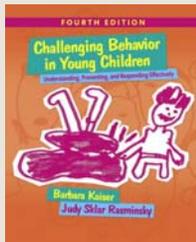
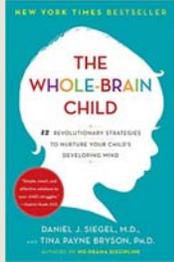
Source: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/7-books-about-feelings-for-babies-and-toddlers>

What are some key take aways?

- Toddlers are not being challenging, they are HAVING or experiencing challenges
- Behavior is communicating a need to feel calm and safe – reflect on the feelings behind the behavior
- Our role as a is to build secure trusting relationships
- Find ways to self-regulate to co-regulate
Connect and respond, don't react
- Use words the connect you with the child and teaches them strategies for self-regulation

What will you do differently to support toddlers with challenging behaviors?

Helpful Resources



Books and Articles

- Brazelton, T. B. (1992). Touchpoints: The essential reference. Reading, MA: Addison
- Landsbury, J. (2014). No Bad Kids: Toddler Discipline without Shame.
- Landbury, J. (2014). Elevating Child Care: A Guide to Respectful Parenting
- Liberman, A. (1993). Emotional life of the toddler. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.
- Sameroff, A. J., McDonough, S. C., & Rosenblum, K. L. (2003). Treating parent infant relationship problems: Strategies for intervention. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.
- Zeanah, C. H., (2000). Handbook of infant mental health (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

On the Web

- www.challengingbehavior.org Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Children with Challenging Behavior
- www.csefel.uiuc.edu Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
- www.zerotothree.org Zero to Three
- www.ptic.org The Program for Infant Toddler Caregiver
- <http://www.janetlandsbury.com/> Janet Landsbury elevating child care



Selected References

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- Diamond, K. E., Justice, L. M., Siegler, R. S., & Snyder, P. A. (2013). Synthesis of IES research on early intervention and early childhood education (NCSEER 2013-3001). U.S Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20133001/pdf/20133001.pdf>
- Erwin, E.J. & Robinson, K.A. (2016). The joy of being: making way for young children’s natural mindfulness. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186, 2, 268-286, DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2015.1029468.
- Hallam, R. A., Fouts, H.N., Bargreen, K.N., & Perkins, K. (2016). Teacher-child interactions during mealtimes: Observations of toddlers in high subsidy child care settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 44, 1, 51-59. doi:10.1007/s10643-014-0678-x
- Knoche, L. L., Edwards, C. P., Sheridan, S. M., Kupzyk, K. A., Marvin, C. A., Cline, K. D., & Clarke, B. L. (2012). Getting Ready: Results of a randomized trial of a relationship-focused intervention on the parent-infant relationship in rural early head start. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 33, 439–458.
- Kramer, P. A., & Smith, G. G. (1998). Easing the pain of divorce through children’s literature. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 26, 2, 89-94.
- Lowe, D. F. (2009). Helping children cope through literature. *Forum on Public Policy Online*, 1, 1-17.
- Watson & Hawley (2010). Addressing Challenging Behaviors in Infants and Toddlers. Individualized Interventions Determining the Meaning of Behavior and Development Appropriate Responses. Retrieved from the web: http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/publications/presentations/watson/Indiana_Session_2_41910CWVH.pdf.
- Tuning In: Parents of Young Children Tell Us What They Think, Know and Need* is a comprehensive research undertaking by ZERO TO THREE and the Bezos Family Foundation, 2016.