



DISCIPLINE ISSUES

The Nest's Facebook page gets a lot of questions about discipline issues. This document contains some of the "Greatest Hits". The questions are listed alphabetically by category, and are followed by several answers. At the bottom of the document are lists of commonly-recommended books and other resources.

AGGRESSION

Q I need wisdom about my 16 month old second born girl. She is saucy. She's passionate. She's very intuitive and loves processes. She holds her own and doesn't get pushed around. But, she pushes her 3yo sister (with a dramatic angry baby face), pulls her hair, and pulls her clothes. We sternly say "no thank you", and as it has continued I've hand-swatted. I've tried taking a break and 'attempt' the reconciliation process (say forgive me, give kisses) after but I feel like she's still mean baby sometimes. I feel like because I'm used to the 3 year old and her understanding of discipline, it's hard to back-track my framework of expectations for my 16 month old. What should I try? **Remind me what I can expect/shouldn't expect from a 16 month old.** I don't want to be too hard but I'm not going to "add 10 yrs" to these actions and like them then either.

A A great strategy for this age is to use ACT-

Acknowledge the feeling: "you are feeling frustrated that your sister is not playing with you"

Communicate the limit: "you may not push your sister"

Target an alternative: "you may choose to play with your blocks or come sit on my lap for a minute"

Toddlers have lots of big feelings, but don't have the words to express them so feelings often come out as behaviors. Labeling feelings and separating emotions from behavior helps them learn that having emotions is okay, but there are still limits on what an acceptable behavior looks like. And of course it takes lots of repetition and consistency.

A Being within arm's reach is pretty much my prescription for all toddler issues. They have no impulse control so we have to provide it for them. But it is so exhausting! (My 4th is 21 months, so we're in the thick of it too!) I think "scientist" is such an apt description of toddlers! They are constantly experimenting to figure out how their actions have an effect on the big world around them.

DISOBEDIENCE/REBELLION

Q My 12 month old will not sit still for diaper and clothing changes. I know it sounds a bit extreme but it definitely feels like a tantrum. I remember hearing something from the writers of Love and Logic talking about how this is a common first tantrum. How do you discipline a 12 month old? Also, we've tried reserving special toys for diaper changes and that doesn't help at all.

A It's kind of just something they do. We can't force babies to act like we want them to, unfortunately. I feel like sometimes it's more about our hearts wanting them to be easy to control, when actually they're new little people who are learning about the world & they don't know the "rules" yet. There's not really anything biblically sinful about wanting to explore and see and learn, so for me it's about my own patience & control issues sometimes.

A It's been a struggle for us and my son is now 2. I tell my son that he needs to obey because he can fall off the table. I set limits and if he disobeys then he gets told he will get a time out as soon as he gets off the table. If he continues to fight then he gets a spanking on the spot, because he can injure himself in the struggle and fall off the table. I do try positive distractions though before I get to my discipline: singing bible songs, playing games with his limbs (to get his legs straight so that I can strap on the diaper), tickling and making funny faces to distract him while my hands do the work.

A I agree that babies don't know the rules yet, so this is a good time to be consistent with what the rules are. It might be this baby's time to learn the rules. I don't think we struggled with this exact thing to this degree, so I think you all need to decide as a family how to handle it. If it's a tantrum, discipline as you see fit. If it's exploring, I'd change diapers and clothes in the safest place I could find and always allow way more margin (in time and patience) than I think I'll need. Praying that God would give you exactly the tips you need to be able to tell, as best as we ever can, the heart of your baby and the confidence you need to parent that heart just right. I don't have a specific verse to apply to diaper changes, but I do know that God supplies all our needs, not according to what we have, but according to what He has (Phil 4:19) so I'm praying for wisdom, discernment and patience for you! We know He is a God who hears and is interested and powerful over every detail of our lives, even diaper changes!! Praying for you, sweet mama!

LISTENING

Q Does anyone have tips on how to get your **preschoolers to LISTEN to you** (i.e. so you don't have to ask 5 times for them to put on socks/shoes, buckle their seat belt, etc). Some days I feel like I'm going insane and I'm late everywhere we go!

A Mandy Sisco spoke on this a few months ago in the q&a section of Millye Hale 's talk I think. What she said has changed my parenting and it works! She suggested that kids need to be told very directly what your expectation is by getting down on their level and

looking them in the eye and stating your expectation clearly. Example: directly in front of your child, looking them in the eye, "Mommy needs you to put on your shoes right now, so we can leave the house." I also like to ask my girl, "What did mommy ask you to do?", immediately after I ask her. That way I know she understands what I am asking, and I can give an intentional consequence if she chooses to disobey. It saves me from yelling or repeating myself and going nuts! She also reminded us that when we are running from room to room or hollering from the kitchen across the house, the message can easily get lost on our kids. And take heart mama, and remember it is all good and hard work that you are putting in now for the benefit of grown children and adults who can actually listen!

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Heb 12:11

- A Being within arm's reach is huge for preschoolers. My husband and I talk about how if we feel the need to raise our voices, the problem is we need to raise our rear ends up from where we are and go look our kids in the eye. Clear communication makes a world of difference.
- A Little ones are so easily distracted! Telling them to go upstairs, get their shoes, and put them on when they have to walk into a room full of toys in order to complete that request is setting them up for failure. (I know I even sometimes walk into my closet and forget what I've come in for!)
- A Love the book *Don't Make Me Count To Three*. I reread it because of this issue and have seen fruit in the last several days alone. I noticed I was struggling with anger, and when I traced it back to the start, a lot of it stemmed from allowing mine to not listen or obey the first time, so I was honestly not honoring God or my child with the slope we slid down of "little" acts of disobedience that became constant. I asked forgiveness, reset expectations (and started being more consistent over communicating expectations), and am disciplining consistently now. It's freeing!!
- A (Millye Hale) I do agree expectations must be clear and eye contact is key. If they are sitting on the couch watching a TV show or in the middle of building something with Legos and you need their attention, sit directly in front of them make eye contact but also rest your hands on their shoulder or knees and make your request. Physical touch is endearing and conveys love and respect. Follow up with, "Did you hear mommy? What did I say?" Also be mindful of if they are in the middle of something, come up with something that respects them as well. Say, "I see you're in the middle of building that house, let's put it on the kitchen cabinet so right when we get home you can finish that job and mommy would love to help too!" Praise their efforts as well, "Wow that looks great", etc. When expressing expectations, I paint a clear picture of what they are, especially for boys, who are very visual. Also kids love a race. "Let's see who can get their shoes on and be to the back door first on your mark, get set, go." And then scurry around. They think that's fun. Their ears just like your ears become immune to yelling. It

does not work! Once you have their attention, try lowering your voice. Then in order to hear what you say, they really have to tune in. Most importantly, be a student of your children. Just because something worked well with first child doesn't always work with #2. The goal is obedience and that expectation should never change because we are training them and this is a very important opportunity God has entrusted each of us with.

- A Agree. We should not set our kids up to fail by offering them choices they are not mature enough to make. That is not loving leadership. The key in these situations is to ONLY offer choices that you find acceptable. It's not negotiable whether the child gets in bed for a nap, but he can choose if we race to the bed or hop like bunnies. The child will wear shoes but can choose between two pairs that are appropriate for the activity/weather, etc. "You can brush your teeth by yourself or I will help you." Either way, it is getting done. The parent controls the options and should not offer something they are not willing to give. "Should we leave the park now?" is only a question if you truly have nowhere else to be and are curious if your child is ready to go. If you must leave you can say, "We are leaving in two minutes. Do you want to go down the slide one more time or cross the monkey bars again?" There is certainty in that the parental aim (nap, shoes, tooth brushing, park-leaving) will happen. The parent proves trustworthy by following through and making it happen.

SHARING

Q I need wisdom! I have an almost 3 year old boy and a 9 month old girl. Asher has been the sweetest big brother to her, but now she's crawling. She is into all his toys and his business. He's also started bossing her around quite a bit, "Tatum use a quiet voice. No ma'am, Tatum!!" I keep trying to explain that he can tell her kindly how he feels, but not what to do. But, he's struggling. Then with the sharing issue, **I know he has to share everything, but I also want him to be able to set boundaries and such with her. How have y'all approached this?** Is it a discipline issue? I know he is adjusting and I feel like I'm getting on to him constantly.

- A (Millye Hale) It does present new challenges once another child enters the play zone, but I really want you mommas to take two steps back and consider WISE PARENTING from a panoramic view - ADD 10 YEARS!!! SHARING is a big part of how your family will function and how they will interact with others outside the home with school friends and playmates. I believe- SHARING IS A BIG DEAL AND must be a family rule no matter what ages your children are. So here is my 2 cents for what it is worth. The goal in parenting and siblings is for your children to FIGHT FOR EACH OTHER AND NOT AGAINST EACH OTHER. I would suggest you sitting down and playing with the kids and when you notice the older sibling clearly wants what the baby has, then speak clearly and directly to the older child, "BE PATIENT. We are a family that shares and it is the baby's turn." Then after a minute or so say to the baby, "It is John's turn", and hand the baby another toy. Say to John, "Thank you for being patient with the baby. She is so lucky to have you as a big brother, and you have a great opportunity to teach her how to share. I understand why God made you the big brother!"

'Rooting and grounding' says it again at dinner at high-low you might say, "My high today was how John shared with the baby and is teaching her how to share." When you tuck him in you might again confirm, "Thank you today with how well you shared with your sweet sister. She is lucky to have you as her big brother." On the flip side, if he does not do a good job sharing, then at dinner that might be your low, "John did not want to share with his sister today and that made me sad. John, how could you do a better job tomorrow of teaching your sister to share?" Ask questions and revisit that when you tuck him in, "Remember what you said at dinner how you are going to teach your sister to share tomorrow?"

One thing I must add is that SHARING starts with moms. We have many opportunities during the day to teach sharing! I see many times moms at Chick-Fil-A saying to their kids while drinking Diet Coke, "No that's Mommy's drink. You cannot have a sip." What an opportunity to say, "Sure here have a sip - Mommy loves to share with you!" When they want a bite of your cookie (most Mommies today don't eat cookies) but I would say, "I love to share. Mommy is a share bear!" I always made my kids share drinks after school, and have a story I shared at the NEST recently about sharing.

Our family had a zero tolerance for NOT sharing and an 'everybody plays' rule, especially when they were young. I longed for my children to be close and to love and respect each other, and by God's Grace they do at 2/19/16! Not sharing is disrespectful and will spill over to playgrounds and school rooms, resulting in teacher notes and calls as well as missing out on the blessing of play dates, because other kids do not want to play with them. Of course that is the extreme, but it happens.

Consider this: If we are already teaching our older children that once they have ripped a toy that they want out of the baby's hand, as long as they give the younger child a different toy to appease them, then it is okay, what are we teaching the older child? We all know the younger child will not care as long as they have a toy. When you think about it, this is teaching the older child the art of manipulation. What you will observe most likely is that no matter what toy the baby grabs, then suddenly the older child wants "that toy" whatever it may be. This gives him a sense of power and control over that younger sibling, and trust me he will exercise it. The biggest problem too is the relationship this builds among these siblings. Another reality is that the younger child is going to get older and these rules will no longer apply. Then, you've got a mess and two children that will bicker and fight over toys, among other things. Moms, fight for your kids to love and respect each other. This is the time when the ground is the most fertile and we have the opportunity to teach and train. I promise the harvest is plentiful!

TEMPER TANTRUMS

Q Our 3.5 yr old boy has been a dream since birth. But for the last month, he seems like a different child. **Any time we resist on anything, he has a melt down and throws a fit.** For a couple of weeks, we really leaned in hard to spanking for every offense. But then we felt

like it wasn't working, and like the punishment wasn't fitting the crime. But now I'm lost and I'm "adding 10 years" and panicking. Maybe this is "normal", but I'm a rookie mom and feel lost. Any insight from moms who have been here??

- A 3.5 is very often a super tough age! It is developmentally typical for them to have big emotions they don't handle well, to lack impulse control, etc. That doesn't mean we ignore the challenging behavior! But, it can help to know what is normal and expected in various ages. At least it helps me to approach things with a level head and less anxiety.
- A My understanding is the "add 10 years" rule is not intended to make you feel panicked that your 13 year old will definitely be a delinquent if your 3 year old is crazy. To me (in my experience as a mom of four), it means if the behavior plus 10 years isn't cute, then it shouldn't be considered cute now. For example, back talk we might want to chuckle at in a preschooler, but would be abhorrent in a teen needs to be addressed. It does not mean you have to "fix" everything NOW OR ELSE! Rather, it is a reminder we need to do the hard work of consistently and patiently training our children now, while the time is ripe. A child who is flipping out has, what seems to them, a very legitimate concern. Slowing down enough to hear them and teach them better tools for dealing with those frustrations is challenging (sometimes exhausting), but worth it in the long run.
- A (Milly Hale) Understanding 2-3 year old behavior is really understanding God's truth, when the Lord tells us that folly or foolishness IS bound up in the heart of a child. 'IS' is the key word - no child escapes without some evidence of folly venting itself. We must understand acting out and meltdowns are the folly God is preparing us for. God is calling and reminding us that they need training and he chose you, the parents, for that awesome opportunity. If they arrived out of the womb exhibiting this behavior, we would probably not cut the tags off when we brought them home from the hospital. I'm just saying. We might be tempted to exercise the return policy. Seriously, that's why having a plan in place is so important in this season when your little peeps act out. Don't let it frustrate you - that's like saying every time I get in my car and put the key in the ignition my car starts. I'm so frustrated! This is normal; be empowered by the opportunity. When you determine disrespect and disobedience occurring, add 10 years if it's not dealt with. A 3 year old shaking his or her finger at you is disrespectful (a heart issue) and needs to be addressed. That does not look good at 13.
- A My 2.5 year old has time outs in his room with the door closed. Sometimes he is so upset that he bangs on his room door pretty hard. I haven't gone into the room to tell him to stop banging on the door, because I think he does it as an attention getter. Should I go in and ask him not to bang on the door and then discipline if he continues to do it (willful disobedience)? Or just not go in to address that at all, so as to not show him that he can use that to draw me back in? Up until now, I've treated the door banging as I would the whining . . . "I've got new ears," like Millye Hale said.
- A I have a boy like that. Search under sensory tools and calm down box. The "calm down box" varies on what's in it. Let me know if you can't find ideas via Google or Pinterest. I wonder if having him sit in a big bean bag for time outs would calm him - proprioception

input calms. I would also role play and practice calming down when he's in a good mood. Another thing to think through is triggers. HALT: is he hungry, angry, lonely, or tired? Try to meet his need before addressing the correction, and include a do-over when he's calm. If he's acting angry, consider anger a secondary emotion and think through what primary emotion is going on. For example, my pre-teen acted sassy and rude after church. He refused to obey, but the Lord led us to see it went deeper. He felt left out at church and came home feeling sad, but it came out as anger. Also, with our time outs when I had a door banger/wall hitter, I defined what time outs looked like ahead of time: he got 10 min to calm down in designated spot, then we talked again. If he was willing to pray with me and ask God for help, we did that first and not time out. If he continued to resist peacemaking or calming, he was in time out longer, and we repeated the above steps until he had heart change. When he hit things, I drew a limit and didn't allow.

Q How do you handle situations where your 2.5-year-old throws a fit/melts down in public places, when it's time to leave (the park, the grocery store, a friend's house, after church, you name it . . .)? Even if you buffer the trip with an explanation about expectations, give a 10-minute warning prior to leaving, and the kid still has a tantrum?

A I've done the tantrum thing four times. They will learn and adapt, although it feels like it will be a life-long experience. I'm so sorry it's been hard, but you have been given the great gift of training! Here is an article that I think has some great activities for teaching self-control in the calmer moments that will give you some support in the harder ones. <http://meaningfulmama.com/2015/02/teaching-kids-self-control.html>

I also love taking my kids places for the express purpose of training them (my secret). It's amazing how well they can do, when we take time to teach them with repetition. Proverbs 25:28: A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls. My boys memorized this early.

WHINING

Q I have an almost 2 and a half year old daughter that has always been a happy, easy going little girl. In the last few months, she has **become a huge whiner/crier**. The second something does not go her way, she breaks down into tears and throws herself to the floor. She also has begun to use her "whiney" voice as her normal speaking tone! She is my oldest, so I have never dealt with any of these behaviors before. I have tried correcting, reasoning (which I know is pointless), and ignoring. My husband and I have even tried to set limits before a meltdown occurs, in hopes to avoid one later. None of it seems to be helping and I'm just wondering if anyone has any suggestions, or anyone has read any great books on parenting toddlers? I want to show her the same grace and love Jesus shows me, but I am running out of patience! Thanks!

A You are doing great, and it sounds like she's healthy and growing through her 2's and 3's! With ours, I usually said WITHOUT MAKING EYE CONTACT, "I hear you but can't understand you. When you talk in a big girl voice, and use words, I can understand."

Often, that worked well as our first step, but if it didn't, we took it a step further. We practiced voices and role played in non whiny moments. We also talked about the heart of whiny voices: self control, accepting our answer, etc. Our favorite parenting books: *Give them Grace, Don't Make Me Count to Three*, and the series by National Center for Biblical Parenting that covers different seasons of development (babies, toddlers, preschoolers, grade school, teens). Praying this is another step towards her understanding Jesus' love, and towards her learning a life of obedience and trust with her Heavenly Father. Praying her whiny voice becomes a voice of worship and prayer to Him.

- A My daughter, almost 3, can be whiney. I feel like she goes through cycles (2 weeks whining a lot and 2 weeks hardly ever whining). I notice that it gets worse if she is hungry or tired. I am still trying to figure out what works best. If my daughter starts to get overly upset about something, I will take her to her room and tell her that when she is done, she can come out. I have only used this technique twice, but it seemed effective. When she younger I had her whine into my pocket, which lightened the mood. Occasionally, I would open my pocket and her whines would "escape."

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Tedd Tripp
- *Don't Make Me Count to Three*, by Ginger Plowman
- *Give Them Grace*, by Elyse M. Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson
- *Parenting by the Book*, by John Rosemond
- *Making the Terrible Twos Terrific*, by John Rosemond
- *Good and Angry: Exchanging Frustration for Character*, by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN
- *Parenting Shifts series from The National Center of Biblical Parenting*
- <https://www.biblicalparenting.org>