

Approaching Toddlerhood

What to Expect & How to Support Your
Child's Development Along the Way



Stephanie Seidler, Director of We Skoolhouse

What We're Covering . . .



Motor – On the GO!

- Significant increase with running, climbing, pulling, throwing objects, **hitting, biting/mouthing, pushing**



Challenging Behaviors

- Nonverbal communication (signing, **hitting, biting, & pushing**)
- **Welcome tantrums & meltdowns**



"Yes" Space at Home

- Suggestions for the **physical space and the materials** within the home
- Embracing **learning schemas**





Motor – On the GO!

Embrace the motions, falls, bangs, & bumps!

Proprioceptive & Vestibular Input

- The **proprioceptive system** (perception of body in space & self regulation skills) and **vestibular system** (hand-eye coordination, balance, and muscle tone) are responsible for how we perceive and understand our bodies and it's relationship to the world around us.
 - **Falling down & bumping into things offers great sensory input** (pressure from impact, spatial awareness, and proximity to the ground)!

Improves Self Perception & Emotional Wellbeing

- The more children can take developmentally appropriate risks, the greater their **autonomy, independence, decision-making, confidence, resilience, & risk-management skills develop.**
 - Our perception of "risky play" can vary from person-to-person, but it may take into account:
 - Heights children climb & balance their bodies, speed of motion, rough & tumble play, exploration with/around natural elements, etc.



Tips to Support Motor Development

- Encourage your toddler to explore different movements, environments, terrains, & equipment.
- **Instead of saying "be careful," bring attention to the risk (e.g. the floor is wet up ahead. How can you move around it?).**
 - The overuse of this broad phrase can actually **inhibit healthy & necessary risk-taking, induce anxiety, & damper confidence.**
 - Quickly review the surroundings and ask yourself: **"is there real danger?"**
- When children take off running or climbing, we should let them do just that (if the area is safe, of course). Remember, **It's okay for children to fall down – they need to in order to learn how to get back up again!**
- **Be safe as necessary, not safe as possible!**





Challenging Behaviors

A Form of Communication

- Toddlers have significantly greater receptive language skills, meaning **they understand far more than they can say.**
 - This leads to toddlers favoring **nonverbal communication** (reaching, waving, pointing, signing, hitting, etc.) as it is easier and more time efficient – though you may begin hearing this little word "no!" more often.
 - The lack of more robust and intelligible, expressive language, paired with impulsivity and underdeveloped decision-making skills often **results in toddlers biting, hitting, & pushing others.**

Tantrums & Meltdowns

- While challenging to navigate through, **tantrums and meltdowns are healthy, developmental, biological states of dysregulation.**
 - **The ability to self-regulate is a developmental skill that takes time.**
 - Tantrums do not mean your child is "bad" or manipulating you, nor does it mean you are a parent that doesn't know what they're doing.
- Tantrums may result from many things, including hunger and the "triple O":
 - **O**verwhelmed, **O**vertired, **O**verstimulated



Tips to Support Challenging Behaviors

- **Strengthen Expressive Language:**

- Read books, sing songs, and highlight your observations throughout the day
- Avoid quizzing or testing your child, and avoid saying "say _____!"
 - Reduces the likelihood of spontaneous speech, while becoming reliant on prompts
 - **Alternative:** Instead of saying "say water!" you may lead with "**you're reaching for your water cup. You must be thirsty. Here's your water cup!**"

- **Managing Tantrums:**

- Be cognizant of potential triggers (hungry and the "triple o").
- Tantrums are **not a time for rationalizing, directing, shaming, or reasoning.**
- Instead, validate their feelings and reassure them you are not going anywhere. "You're feeling upset about _____" or "you're disappointed that _____." "I love you. I am here for you."
 - After a tantrum is the time to provide your child with some tools, e.g. "I know you were feeling upset before." I feel upset when _____. Sometimes when I feel this way I take big, deep breaths like this... Want to try it with me?"





"Yes" Space at Home

Inspiring Independence

- A "yes" space is an enclosed area within the home in which children can **explore without limitations, but are still playing within a boundary.**
 - This can be a small area in the living room or the child's bedroom.
 - Ensure the space is safe (no access to cords, outlets, unbolted and/or fragile furniture, choking hazards, etc.)
- **Supports & encourages curiosity, independence, decision-making, autonomy, & initiative.**

Fuel their Unique Approaches to Learning

- Children engage with the world in their own unique way. Some approaches may fall into identifiable **learning schemas** (repeated behaviors of play):
 - Trajectory, enclosing, enveloping, transporting, connecting, rotation, positioning, and orientation.
- Incorporate items that resonate with an observable learning schema/interest (when applicable) to generate and sustain engagement.



Tips to Create a "Yes" Space at Home

- **Less is More!**

- The ("yes") play space does not have to be a big space, but rather, a "free" space.
- Children don't need as much "stuff" as we think.
 - More materials and toys actually **equates to a lower attention span**
 - But keep in mind, toddlers already have short attention spans as is
 - **Few open-ended materials > more closed-ended ones.**
 - The more a toy does, the less the child does
 - Simple provocations – e.g. exploring paper in different ways

- **Inclusive Invitations In and Around the House**

- Invite your toddler to **help you with developmentally appropriate tasks & jobs** (inspires confidence, independence, & cooperation):
 - Mixing ingredients, watering the plants, unloading the dishwasher/laundry machine
- Apply the **concept of a "yes" space to outdoor play** when applicable by giving children as much free range of their environment as possible.





Questions?

Let's Hear Them!



weskoolhouse.com



info@weskoolhouse.com



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