# Approaching Toddlerhood

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





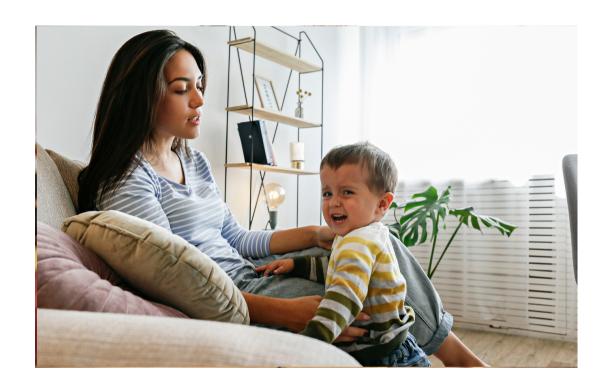
Stephanie Seidler, Director of We Skoolhouse

### What We're Covering . . .





 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 word 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":
  - Overwhelmed, Overtired, Overstimulated

### 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.
  - o 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, uploading 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!







