

Toddlers Must Learn Self-Control

A Yale study found that pre-schoolers were expelled 3 times more than K – 12th graders. They were expelled for behavior problems. Many experts believe that today's kids are ruder than ever.

Toddlers, by nature, are self-centered. They also lack self-control. However, toddlers who learned self-control had more success as adults than those who had low self-control as a child.

Why is this important? Teens with low self-control tend to engage in risky behaviors. The Yale study also showed that kids whose self-control improved over time saw more success as adults than those who continued to have low self-control.

Self-control is a learned behavior. At age 2, toddlers begin to understand right from wrong. It is a parent's job to teach them good behavior.

Help your toddler learn self-control.

- **Watch her when she plays with other children.** When problems arise, gently take her aside. Simply tell her what she did wrong. Then return her to play.
- **Distract your toddler instead of punishing.** Time outs are not very effective for toddlers. If he throws a toy at someone, tell him “*No throwing. Someone could get hurt.*” Then change to a quiet activity. Read a book. Color. Play with stickers.

- **Set limits.** Always enforce simple rules. If she hits someone, take her aside. Say, “*Hitting hurts. We do not hit*”. Never ignore bad behavior. Always calmly, but firmly, let her know that you will not allow bad behavior.
- **Teach him patience.** He needs to learn to wait for what he wants. If he wants a snack, tell him he can have one in 10 minutes. When the time is up, give him the snack.
- **Eat meals at a table.** Most 3 year olds can handle a 15-minute meal. She does not need to play or being entertained.
- **Teach him to not interrupt unless something is very wrong.** When you talk to your spouse, make your toddler wait for a few minutes until you finish. Then give him your full attention.

Know childhood developmental



milestones – the skills your toddler is able to do. Do not expect more. To review these skills, go to www.parenthelpline.org. Click onto our new *School Readiness* tab.

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