

THE "TERRIBLE TWOS"

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Your child needs to be shown your unconditional love, inspite of her disobedience as she is probably frightened by her own defiance.

It was Freud who said that one's basic personality organisation is largely determined during the first three years of life. Psychologists agree that this phase is of prime importance for the social and intellectual development of the individual. Of

particular importance is that critical stage which begins with the onset of the child's second birthday as it has a much greater effect in later life.

Some writers in childcare have referred to it as the "Terrible Twos" because parents will find their two-year-olds very

difficult to manage. However, they must understand what is happening, how best to handle it and not jeopardise the development process.

WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?

The two-year-old is becoming increasingly aware of what he can do in his environment. There is a change in his personality as he begins to test the limit of his independence. When he was a day old, his parents wondered whether he would survive and now that he is two, his parents wonder whether they will survive! Bath time, feeding and bedtime can be difficult because he will play all kinds of games. For example, at bedtime he will try to keep his parents with him by asking for something to drink, climbing out of bed or simply crying when the parent leaves. He tends to do this again and again.

He is still dependent and begins to realise who gives security (usually the mother). He gets upset when his parents leave him and although he makes no fuss when the parents are away, he will cling like a leech when the parents return. Bed-times are particularly difficult because he is expressing separation feelings, not



They are probably frightened over their own behaviour so parents must try to understand what is happening.



After a conflict, explain to her why you are unable to agree to her desire or need to punish.

problems.

He becomes more demanding and often defies his parents. He contradicts his parents and himself, because he has a difficult time making up his mind. This is the time when he is learning to speak and to say "no!" Lack of language is a barrier and a common source of extreme frustration because he is often misunderstood.

This is also the age of tremendous physical activity and parents often wonder where their children get all their energy, especially if they are poor eaters. Their manual dexterity is improving and parents will witness the first masterpieces in the form of handprints or crayon scrawls on their walls. At this age they are also always dropping, breaking, spilling or flushing things. They do go through temper tantrums, kicking, screaming, rolling on the floor or banging their heads against furniture or the walls.

They will also express their individuality with the presence of another child. They will not play with another child cooperatively although they may watch or play alongside. Still alien to the concept of sharing, they will not give up a toy for someone else and will grab whatever they want. The arrival of a newborn in the family will stir new emotions. Although some respond positively, others express jealousy in different forms such as being clingy, whiny or anxious. This is partly because they fear

separation or losing their parents.

A "TERRIBLE TWO" SITUATION

It is bedtime. Just as they reached the top of the stairs, Yasmin says she wants some milk. The moment Puan Aminah leaves, Yasmin begins to cry. Puan Aminah decides to keep her occupied by giving her a colouring book and crayons. Quickly she dashes to the kitchen downstairs and returns to find her daughter scrawling on the wall, again. She scolds her daughter, then offers the drink but to her dismay, Yasmin says "No". Sighing, Puan Aminah tries coaxing her and then decides to return the mug of milk. But the minute she steps out of the room, Yasmin screams for the milk. As she is about to drink the milk, the mug slips from her chubby hands and splatters all over the bedsheet. Seething with anger, Puan Aminah cleans the mess, changes the bedsheets and her daughter's nightie. Later, Yasmin whispers she still wants her drink but when given, she takes a sip and then refuses to finish it. Puan Aminah is by now both tired and angry and feels like pulling her own hair.

DEFIANCE

This is the beginning of the child's tireless behaviour of defying his parents.

To defy means to disobey after his parents have pointed out that a certain behaviour is wrong and should not be repeated. For example, Mei Ling is defying if she is found tinkering with an electrical outlet for the fourth time or Devan is defying if he continues to disturb his sleeping baby sister inspite of his mother's warnings. This is not to be confused with a first offence when the child is not aware whether a certain behaviour is appropriate or not.

IMPLICATION

At a time where permissive child rearing practices are still in vogue, it is no exaggeration to say that parents who do not handle defiance adequately may be grooming a potential delinquent. Many findings have traced similar patterns in the background of most juvenile delinquents, and lack of qualitative parent-child interactions seems to be a main determinant. Parents have to be prepared to shape their children at this very early stage so that they will lay a stable and strong foundation that will ensure a better adult life. They will probably be less inclined to the problems throughout development, namely academic difficulties, drug abuse or sexual promiscuity. Some parents give in too easily or too fast when their children defy them, for the sake of peace or because this is much