

# Have a 'threenager'? Here's some science-backed parenting hacks to conquer toddlerhood

April 5 2023, by Rosanna Castro

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Credit: Florida International University

Toddlerhood can be a magical time full of wonderful milestones, but it comes with many challenges for parents and caregivers. There's a reason many have labeled this stage the "terrible two's" or you've perhaps heard toddlers referred to as "threenagers."

But it's important to remember toddlerhood is a normal developmental phase experienced by [young children](#), according to psychology Professor Daniel Bagner—an expert in early childhood behavior problems who recently published a study showing how telehealth parenting programs benefit [children](#) with developmental delays.

"At this age, their verbal, physical and emotional skills aren't well-developed, and it's natural for your child to test those skills and abilities," Bagner said.

To help parents and caretakers cope with toddlerhood and improve the relationship with your child, Bagner shared some science-backed parenting tips:

1. Check that their [basic needs](#) are met. Is your child hungry? Tired? Out of their routine? If you can aim for regular eating and sleeping times, it will reduce the chances of a tantrum.
2. Ignore minor annoying offenses. Don't sweat the small negative and annoying behaviors like whining or yelling. If you give attention to behaviors you don't want, they will happen more often.
3. Catch your child being "good." Instead of commenting on your

- child's negative behaviors, give attention, such as praise, to [positive behaviors](#) immediately when you see them.
4. Give specific praise. When praising your child, use specific praises for appropriate behavior, such as "Thank you for playing gently with your toys" or "Thank you for using your words." By using specific praises, you let your child know exactly what you liked, and your child will be more likely to display the desired [behavior](#) again in the future.
  5. Spend quality time with your child. Prioritizing time spent together with your child is critical and can be simple and efficient, such as eating meals together or playing a short game. These [opportunities](#), even if brief, can help provide children with the [attention](#) they need, and they may be less likely to seek it during other times.
  6. Follow your child's lead. Young children are frequently being told what to do. A great way to positively improve children's self-esteem is to let them take the lead in play. All you need is five minutes! You can do this by watching what your child is doing and joining in (without taking over) and talking about what they are doing without interrupting them or asking them to do something else.
  7. Don't cave in. If your child knows they have to scream at the top of their lungs and throw themselves on the floor to get what they want, they will use that strategy every single time. It's best to stay calm, take a deep breath, remove your child from the situation (if in public) and redirect when necessary.
  8. Be consistent. This is probably the most important tip of all! Consistency is key when implementing these strategies. None of it will work unless you're consistent.

"The good news is that [parents](#) are not alone and this phase doesn't last forever," added Bagner.

Provided by Florida International University

Citation: Have a 'threenager'? Here's some science-backed parenting hacks to conquer toddlerhood (2023, April 5) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-04-threenager-science-backed-parenting-hacks-conquer.html>

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