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**How To Discipline During The Terrible Twos**

**By Willie Reynolds**

You didn't think it would happen, but it did. The sweet little angel that you were raising has turned into a hell raiser almost overnight, a being who seems to defy you at every turn and who is bent on the wanton destruction of most of the items in your house. She refuses to listen or to go to bed, commits acts of violence against siblings, refuses to eat on occasion, and says hurtful things to you. The terrible twos are upon you, and you need to decide on the best course of action to ensure everyone's survival.

The key to discipline at any age, including the terrible twos, is to understand why your child's behavior has undergone a change. It is probable that your child will not experience the behavioral manifestations typically associated with the terrible twos upon turning that age. Many parents observe changes in their children's behavior well after and sometimes even before the age of two, and the fact is that these behaviors can continue for quite a while.

A child who is undergoing the behavioral transformations of the terrible twos is actually expressing a greater awareness of both himself and those around him than he may have realized existed previously. Combined with a lack of verbal communication skills, your child may become frustrated and begin to act out this frustration in acts of defiance that appear to be merely selfish behavior— in some cases, this may be true, as your child is also learning to stretch her boundaries and push their limits.

The key to discipline in the terrible twos is understanding. It will be very hard to remain calm when your child is outright defying you or throwing a screeching fit, but it is imperative that you focus on the issue and push aside your frustration and anger— punishing your child in anger may only serve to exacerbate the situation. This is the age at which you will want to begin incorporating discipline techniques such as time outs and the taking away of privileges, things that a child will understand.

In short, the best discipline tool you will possess at this developmental juncture will be your own self-discipline. Many parents will cling to the idea that physical punishment is necessary at this stage, but the fact is that when this is applied it can make the situation much worse. Too often physical punishment is a sign of the parent's own frustration. The key to the terrible twos is structure. You should set a schedule for your toddler, as difficult as this may be with your busy life. This is really the only stage in your child's development where a schedule needs to be adhered to, for the simple reason

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of maintaining the sanity of the entire family. Set strict limits, and do not stray from them when your child tries to stretch them. When it is needed, apply discipline in a consistent manner and pattern, so that the child does not receive a mixed message. Do not make threats that you will simply never back up— you can bet that your child will stop falling for these the instant she senses you are not going to carry through (ie "Well, I guess we will just leave you here in aisle four then!"). Finally, when you have to discipline the child, make sure you explain why you are doing so. Never give in to their tantrums.

Effective discipline during the terrible twos starts with the parent. In truth, it may start long before the terrible twos do. If you spend enough time with your child, developing their communication skills and abilities, the odds are that you will not experience some of the more terrible aspects that the terrible twos can bring.

Willie Reynolds is a parent, and maintains a website on parenting at:

<http://parentingstation.com>

### **Terrible Twos, Terrible Teens/Dr. Bill Gallagher, DC**

**By Joan Bramsch**

#### **Terrible Twos, Terrible Teens/Dr. Bill Gallagher, DC by Joan Bramsch**

Terrible Twos, Terrible Teens  
by Dr. Bill Gallagher, DC

Someone once told me that being a teenager is a second chance to learn what you missed when you were two. At first it sounded like a stretch but, after taking a closer look, it was right on target.

Growing up is a challenging process that does not end after passing those teen years. Hopefully, it will continue right on through adulthood and, for that matter, for as long as you live. For now let's take a closer look at that most difficult time of growth, both physically and emotionally.

This is a time when your body goes through a tremendous growth spurt. In a relatively short span of your life your body grows to almost twice the size of what it use to be. Arms and legs seem to have a mind of their own as you try to coordinate their movement. Muscle mass increases to help you run faster and jump higher. Everything changes so fast that when you pass a mirror you may not be sure who that is looking back at you.

It is a time of considerable learning. Information pours in at such a pace and on a daily basis that it is amazing anyone could process it all. Even so, you manage to catalog most of it somewhere in your brain for future use. Then, each time one of those stored bits of information shows up again, everyone else in the room can see your lights turning on. All that information will also be used to help you make decisions as to what is right and what is wrong. You learn more and more to avoid the things that hurt and go toward those that bring you pleasure. Hopefully, you also learn which are good choices.

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It is a time when communication is probably the biggest issue. Yes, you have a vocabulary that allows you to get what you need but, in order to function, you need to learn more words and how to use them more eloquently. Not being able to do so can lead to insurmountable frustration, where you don't know whether to be upset with yourself or your parents, who simply don't understand you.

It is a time when, for some unknown reason, you have a need to test the limits. When you are trying to convince your parents that you are old enough to do what you want to do and responsible enough to make your own decisions. When you are not always understood. When the words fail and you know you are not being heard, and the frustration leads you to simply have a fit.

Such is the plight of a two-year old, or was that a teenager? The only real differences are braces and acne.

Both have to learn how to maneuver in a body that is growing faster than they are. Both have so much to learn. At two, it is counting to ten; as a teen, it is algebra and calculus. For each, it is just as much of a challenge. Both need to explore their ever expanding world. At two, that is rarely out of a parent's sight; for a teen, the limits drop as the whole world is opened up. Decisions and responsibilities expand too, from learning hot and cold, to more complex issues of life and interpersonal relationships.

Then there is communication. At two, the vocabulary may be limited but it is quite sufficient to convey one's basic needs. With practice, single word commands expand into three word sentences that make it easier to deal with parents and others. Teens are no different. They have more words, but need to develop a greater command of the language in order to get their more complex ideas across to others.

Both go through the frustration of all these issues and of not being understood and, when that boils over, there is little difference between a tantrum on the living room floor and stomping off to your bedroom and slamming the door. The lessons are basically the same, only the scale changes.

Oddly enough, the lesson here is probably best given to the parents or those teens who will be parents:

The "Terrible Twos" are not really that terrible, especially once you get past them and, for that matter, neither are those teenage years. Just remember that both are growing and need to be understood.

You, no doubt, recall being a teenager yourself more than you do having been two. As a parent, you have the advantage of seeing both stages in your child.

The moral of this story is they are no different than a one-year old who learned how to walk. No matter how many times they fell they got back up and tried again because you were there to support them.

Dr Bill Gallagher is the director of Run Drugs Out of Town Run, Inc.

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<http://www.JoanBramsch.com> <mailto:hijoan@joanbramsch.com>



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