

Mom's Moment: Please Don't Blacklist My Toddler

Written by Nadine Bubeck



Dear fellow moms,

See this pic of my son? Swoon-worthy, right?! He is the sweetest most lovable little man in the world. My best friend. My soul mate (don't tell my husband). My first born. He has the face of an angel (totally biased); that is, until he morphs into a hair-pulling, pushing, downright defiant devil.

I admit: my toddler pulls hair. He pushes. Sometimes he'll pinch. And just yesterday he bit his baby brother (a love bite, I assume). With that being said, I swear he isn't mean spirited. He's not evil. In fact, I consider him rather passive and even tempered. He's always smiling and very independent...and I'm not just saying that because I'm his mom. However, I just don't understand his rowdy intentions.

He really loves being social, but I'm forced to watch him like a hawk, fearing his attack on fellow friends. He'll play nice for a while and then snap, yanking a kid's hair or pushing someone down. I'm left bewildered, confused, embarrassed, and at a loss. I suppose that's the norm for a parent of a two-year old, right??! I really thought my kid wouldn't succumb to the terrible twos, but I suppose toddler craziness doesn't discriminate.

I've googled, I've asked our pediatrician, and I've tried my own form of discipline. (Saying "NO" in a stern voice, which only results in laughter from my toddler.) At a loss, I've turned to a trusted "expert" in child development. Dana Velas is the president of [Sunrise Preschools](#), with over 20 locations Valley-wide. In addition to being a mom, Dana has hung with young kids for many years, spearheading the Arizona childhood education centers. I asked her some questions Google has failed to adequately answer.

First, what makes the "twos" so terrible? Dana says toddlers are a fascinating combination of sweet kisses and loud screeches of frustration. They have so much cognitive and emotional development happening in these crucial years, giving our little guys and girls a whirlwind of thoughts, ideas, and plans inside their heads. With that being said, our beloved toddlers have an inadequate ability to articulate their feelings.

Next question (and what I have recently come to discover): For those embarking on the 2-year toddler mark, what should we expect?

Her answer: toddlers will learn how to take OFF their clothes (but not quite put them on), name body parts, show huge improvement in hand/eye coordination, and begin to speak more clearly including identifying family, friends, pets, and familiar places.

And now, regarding rowdy behavior (like hair pulling). I wanted to know: where is the "meanness" coming from?

According to Dana, many toddlers have experienced a true surge in cognitive development (leadership skills and the desire to have control over people, places, and things), but their language skills have yet to catch up. Because they know what they want but still lack the ability to ask or negotiate verbally, the simplest explanation is that getting a bit physical is a faster method of gratification. This is the same idea behind pushing, hitting, and biting.

Roger that.

However, help! What do I do???

Dana says that not all toddlers are ready for the concept of discipline. (Yep, my little guy doesn't seem to mind the occasional time out.) Therefore, the best possible discipline is PREVENTION. If you are hosting a play group, be sure to have duplicates and triplicates of popular toys to prevent sharing catastrophes. Plan cooperative play time when your child is well rested and not hungry. Have reasonable expectations...toddlers are still more likely to participate in parallel play than play that requires extended cooperation. Any activities should provide opportunities for both kinds of play. It's always best to anticipate any situations that might cause distress or frustration and pre-empt them.

Makes sense.

Finally, verbalizing is important--but Dana says, in a kind, positive way.

She thinks parents should help children verbalize their frustration; but favors redirection over discipline. Parents should refrain from harsh words and tones verbalizing what the child CANNOT do; instead: redirect. Little brains process things they CAN do better than things they CAN'T.

Example: "Johnny, you had the truck first and you hit Blake when he tried to take it from you. I know that you were mad, but we don't hurt our friends. We have 2 more dump trucks outside, let's go get them together and then everyone can play with a truck."

Ok, I'll give it a whirl.

In the meantime, fellow moms, please don't blacklist my child from play dates, play groups, and get togethers.

Sincerely,

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About Nadine

[Nadine Bubeck](#) is a mom, wife, [multi-media personality](#), host, author, [blogger](#), keynote speaker, and PR professional. She has been an anchor/reporter at TV stations in San Diego, California, and Phoenix, Arizona. She contributes to numerous [motherhood](#)-based publications and is often featured as a [parenting expert on television, among other media outlets](#). Nadine can often be found at [mommy](#)-and-me classes, playgrounds, and kid-friendly restaurants. She [lives](#) in Scottsdale, Arizona with her [husband](#) and sons, Nicholas and Zachary. She's a blessed boy mom and queen of the house. Her [book](#), [Expecting Perfect: My Bumpy Journey to Mommyhood](#), is available on [Amazon](#). For more: [www.allthingsmama.tv](#)

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