



How Toddlers Thrive: What Parents Can Do Today for Children Ages 2-5 to Plant the Seeds of Lifelong Success

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What makes a child succeed...or wander into an unfulfilled adulthood? New research indicates that the seeds for adult success are often planted in the toddler years, ages 2-5. Dr. Tovah Klein runs the Barnard College Center for Toddler Development, the laboratory at the forefront of understanding toddler behavior and development.

In *How Toddlers Thrive*, Dr. Klein cracks the code on how to help your toddler grow into a happy and successful child and adult, while helping you and your toddler live more happily together, every day. Her key research and firsthand work with thousands of toddlers explains why the toddler brain is best suited to laying the foundation for success-drivers such as resilience, self-reliance, self-regulation, and empathy. And why it's up to you to instill these key skills in your toddler during this crucial time...or risk them falling behind when they enter school at age 5.

How Toddlers Thrive explains why the toddler years are different than any other period during childhood, what is happening in children's brains and bodies at this age that makes their behavior so turbulent, and why your reaction to their behavior—the way you speak to, speak about, and act towards your toddler—hold the key to making your life together smoother today, as well as to setting your child up for success in the future. Dr. Klein offers all the advice and information she's provided to parents, including celebrities like Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick, at the internationally renowned Barnard Center for Toddler Development and helps us all understand why small things really do become the seeds of success and happiness for a lifetime.

How Toddlers Thrive: What Parents Can Do Today for Children Ages 2-5 to Plant the Seeds of Lifelong Success Details

Date : Published February 18th 2014 by Touchstone

ISBN :

Author : Tovah P. Klein

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Parenting, Nonfiction, Education



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Brooke says

This book.....ugh I cannot explain to anyone on this planet how important this book is for us parents. I cannot... I repeat cannot express how crucial this manual is, in order to understand why our toddlers/kids act the way the act....If anyone is ever questioning why toddlers pull away from us, yet come back to love us, throw tantrums, don't want to share, act out of aggression,etc. THIS is the book for you.

This book was seriously a break through in parenting, it helped me understand why my daughter acts dependent one moment and then needs me the next. It explains the brain functions to why she has tantrums and why it is so important to be there for her. It also goes in depth on why routine is vital in their day to day life, no only because it sets them on a good path but mainly they have no understanding of time...another thing I didn't know. It explains why its important to help them get through the hard times in their little lives, (after a tantrum, after having a fight, after they get hurt or if they get frustrated with something and just need someone to tell them they can try again some other time) There are so many important points in this book explaining to us parents why we aren't responsible for their happiness but for the way they cope with things. We guide them, and steer them in the right/healthy direction when it comes to coping or dealing with something.

I absolutely loved her writing style because Tovah doesn't belittle us as parents in which I believe a lot of parenting books are like that. But in fact she helps us understand why they are the way they are, and with soooo many parenting book out there these days telling you to "parent this way an another" she puts down into scientific facts and research, with proof to back it up.

Very, VERY insightful, I couldn't be more thankful for this book. <3

Kurtbg says

This is a good book for parents or soon-to-be parents to understand a little about child development and how to learn what to expect, interact, and manage toddler. I've heard thoughts on parenting all across the spectrum from "it just comes naturally" to embracing the latest in attachment parenting. This book provides some nice insights into the POV of toddlers, development, and how to communicate, manage, and support version 2 of your child.

After all, a child (or human) is like a computer program that has multiple releases: baby, toddler, pre-teen, teen, pre-adult, adult, etc. Every perception and action is based on genetics and environment. You, as the parent get to provide the genetics, and define the environment to a point. The trick is that there's no way to tell when the next release is available. You were so happy you finally nailed Human 1.0 (baby), but then at some point human 2.0 (toddler) crept in and all the shortcuts and tricks don't work quite the same.

I liked a number of passages in the book. Especially passages on sharing, POV of a toddler, discussions at mealtime, praise, and the concept of parents are not there to provide a child with happiness. Instead, parenting is like accepting to be a guide spirit for a human on it's journey for life. Happiness comes natural, but it's the dealing with the problems and negatives of life where guidance is really needed. This means providing a safe, supporting, and nurturing environment that allows the human to develop into its own potential.

I did think the structure and approach could have been written in a better way to convey the importance of what parenting really is, but I understand the audience is more for the undefined general masses.

For a quick steeping, jump to Chapter 9 and check out a quick recap of the book concepts broken down into 15 topics and flip back to the associated chapter for more detail.

Strangely, I wonder how contemporary and geographically contained the concepts are. Would this have worked 50, 100, 200 years ago in the United States? Japan? China or Egypt 5000 years ago? What is the potential for a human and how defined and limited is it to the time in which one lives?

Benjamin Sigrist says

There are six key elements parents can provide for their toddler.

1. Mirror back a sense of safety and relative order
2. Listen to children instead of always talking at and directing them.
3. Give children freedom to play and explore on their own
4. Allow children the space and opportunity to struggle and fail
5. Work to understand who each individual child is and what he needs at a given age
6. Provide children with limits, boundaries, and guidance.

(P. 54)

Cribs provide your child with a safe and cozy place where they can unwind and be cozied in on all sides in a small space. ... Before the age of three, most children feel the safety of the crib as a comfort and relief. Taking them out too early sets them up to. Have to manage a great deal of freedom before they may be ready. (P. 122)

Laura says

Tovah Klein fills a critical need in parenting literature with her title "How Toddlers Thrive." Klein never berates parents or takes a condescending tone, realizing that all parents desire the best for their children. She successfully shows the reader why it is imperative for parents to see the world from the toddler's perspective by providing numerous examples and neurological background for how the brain develops. Yet, we are reminded of the importance of setting limits. At the end, she provides 15 points to remember that summarize the book. Overall a delightful and practical read.

Jill DeLong says

Most of this book really made sense to me. It really focuses on understanding and empathizing with toddlers, getting on their level, and seeing how the world looks for them at their current stage in mental and emotional development. I liked this a lot.

Mythili says

A woman in my mom's group, a teacher, told me that the author's teenage son was one of the most thoughtful, well-adjusted, all around great student she'd had in fifteen years. Fifteen years! That made me want to read this book. The secret sauce, it turns out, is patience, humor, and serious respect for the fully-formed little people toddlers are. This is a very gentle, level-headed parenting guide that emphasizes the ways parents can provide empathy and comfort/stability to their toddlers without coddling or stifling or spoiling them. A useful, anxiety-reducing book.

Rachel - Chocolate and Chapters says

How Toddlers Thrive explains why the toddler years are different from any other period during childhood, what is happening in children's brains and bodies at this age that makes their behavior so turbulent, and why your reaction to their behavior—the way you speak to, speak about, and act toward your toddler— holds the key to a successful tomorrow and a happier today. (From the Goodreads summary)

I am very aware that this book will only interest a limited audience. But as a mother of a squishy toddler, I thought I'd throw my opinion in the ring anyway.

This parenting book is different than all the other ones I've tried. It's low-key and provides detail into how toddlers' brains are developing and how that affects their behavior. She gives plenty of every-day, relatable examples.

The overall message is this: **Try to understand the world through your toddler's eyes and let them figure it out for themselves.** If you do so, you'll significantly cut down on the fights you have with your child. Toddlers have expectations and want to achieve them in a certain way because they are learning how to control themselves and their lives. As parents, if we allow toddlers to feel in control, we can help them grow in confidence. You're basically there to comfort them and help them deal with their negative emotions.

There aren't a lot to parenting "tools" in here because most of this book consists of: **Imagine what your toddler wants. Can you find a way to help them achieve it?** How can you compromise in a way that gets you what you want as a parent, but also meets your toddler's expectation?

It also talks a lot about routines and how we "shame" our children.

It all made sense to me.

As a parent, I'd say I teeter from authoritative and permissive. **This book largely encourages a permissive style**, while still keeping limitations in place?? I'm questioning this because it counsels you to keep limitations for your child, but it never goes into detail about *how to do that*.

Like, what if you ask your toddler to do something and they turn to you with lots of attitude and yell, "No!" ...because I still don't know, even after reading this book.

However, this book really helped me be more conscious of understanding my toddler and what she expects from different situations. But for me, **there wasn't a lot of new information here**. I found that I do a lot of these things already.

With that said, if you find that you are fighting with your toddler constantly, then this book would be good for you to read. It will help you recognize how to mellow out, grow your child's confidence, and stop the constant battles.

Find reviews and other bookish talk at **Chocolate and Chapters**

Kristen Northrup says

Despite the 'Lifelong Success' part of the title, this is a pretty mellow guidebook. Parents are repeatedly urged to just let their toddlers play rather than structured educational activities. (Bonus: Play is basically free.) If you already have (or had) a toddler, there will be a mix of things you're doing right and things you're doing wrong, but again, it's all pretty mellow and no long-term harm done. (Our big sin is a lack of routine, but she's not unusual or controversial there.)

There's an extended discussion on (not) shaming your child that is treated pretty seriously and is one of the more out-there elements of the book. An awful lot of basic correction falls under that term, which is not clearly defined. (But this was not a final edit edition.) Apparently you also shouldn't try to make them share before the age of 4, which is also a little permissive for most of today's parents. That part is more clearly explained, at least.

I did like the message that your job is not to make your child happy. Pretty much everything makes them happy. Mud puddles, for example. Your job is to teach them to cope with unhappiness. Also there were a few good reminders about recognizing when you're applying baggage from your own childhood, like scolding your child for something you really don't care about, simply because it did bother your own mother.

Elizabeth says

Oh my gosh this book is amazing! There is SO MUCH good information that we've started implementing and we're already seeing a difference! I need to follow up with daycare about eating though she's been coming home HANGRY. I can't recommend this book enough. I read it and we're going to get the audio too and I'm going to re-read it by listening to it in case I missed anything the first go through-- because there is a lot of information.

Erica says

it gave me a lot of skills for thinking about my toddler's perspective and the reasons behind the behavior. I'm not a very empathetic person and it makes me stop and think about what the kid is experiencing rather than how his behavior is affecting me. It also made me realize that my kid is normal and that all parents go through the same things which made me feel better!

Ioana Johansson says

I already knew/figured out most things the author presents in this book. I hope she is slightly wrong about the shaming because, from her description, almost anything and everything might be shaming.

One important thing, worth reading the book for, was the idea that parents are not supposed to make their children happy but help them learn to manage the unhappy moments since they are happy pretty much by default. I hadn't thought of that, at least not quite like this, and I think it is correct.

Scott Rankin says

I'm on a bit of a parenting book binge. These books are never as satisfying or enlightening as you want them to be. Often they contain good bits of advice here or there but largely they just repeat what you probably already know if you're trying to be a conscientious parent. I really do need to take my friend Meredith's advice and just avoid these books entirely. That said, there are a few reasons that make this book worthwhile. She talks a lot about the need to be to see things from the toddler's perspective. Definitely a good reminder. There's also an important chapter on shame and its devastating effects. In our culture, we're probably only aware of the tip of the iceberg in terms of the damage shame wreaks. Just ask Brene Brown. After reading what this author has to say, I'm thinking it's more important to spend your money on quality day care before you even begin to think about spending \$ on private school v public school.

Erika RS says

Most books about toddlers end up getting a review from me that's along the lines of "The author was condescending. The model of how toddlers work not based in what I know of developmental psychology. At least it has some useful tips." It's refreshing to read a book for which I can give a much more positive review.

In some sense, this book is terribly basic. Klein does not offer clever acronyms or multi-step systems or even anything that feels surprising or revolutionary. If you just read through the book, what she has to say sounds like common sense. Then you start to think about it and think about how that "common" sense goes against so much of what social expectations and common parenting advice tell us about how to raise children through the toddler years (defined as 2-5 in this book).

The key insight of this book is that toddlers have brains that are developing at a rapid pace and that development means that we cannot view them either as babies or as older more consistently rational humans. They are in the midst of building the habits and scaffolding for lifelong success. Our goal as parents is not to make them happy or successful. It is to help them go through that development process.

Klein recommends that the best way to support this growth is to try to understand the toddler's perspective. As she notes throughout, this does not mean always giving toddlers their way. It does mean trying to understand their motivation rather than imposing a motivation from an adult perspective.

The core tension which drives toddlers is that they are both trying to become more independent and are still very young. They want to push their caretakers away and pull them close, often in the same moment. Taking the toddler point of view requires understanding this tension and the way it manifests in behavior. For example, a sudden shift from a happy child playing independently to one in a meltdown over some minor (to an adult) imperfection of the world is easier to understand if you see the independence as something that was

at the edge of their current capacity for being alone and the imperfection as something which pushed the independence just a little too far. A tantrum where they are yelling at you to go away but then get even more upset when you do demonstrates their desire for independence conflicting with their need to have rely on their caretakers as a secure base from which to explore. When we understand how our toddlers understand the world, we can help them to move on.

This relates to another key point of the book. The purpose of taking the toddler's perspective is not to prevent conflict -- an impossibility anyway at this age. The purpose is to help figure out the most effective way to repair conflict and, over time, help the child build up the mental tools to do this repair on their own. This resilience is one of the most important skills a child needs to learn. Focusing on conflict resolution also helps the parent. Instead of conflict becoming about who "wins", it becomes about how to meet everyone's needs: How do we make sure that bedtime is timely while still acknowledging that it's a big scary situation? How do we acknowledge the child's desire to have been the one to flush while still dealing with the reality that the pee ain't comin' back?

Much of the book is applying this framework of viewpoint taking and conflict resolution to specific situations. Once you understand the basic principles, those chapters are fairly straight forward but seeing the principles in action is still useful.

All in all, a very good read and one I've already been getting benefits from.

Sarah Street says

Wow, this book blew my mind! First, I love that Tovah Klein is the director of a toddler center in NYC and has been conducting research on toddler development for 20 years. Her parenting advice, therefore, comes from firsthand experience and actual developmental psychology & neuroscience research (not just some random parenting method that worked for her kids that will magically work for you, too!).

Her whole focus is for us as parents to shift our point of view and see & feel the world through our child's eyes & experiences. Shift to the toddler point of view! This may make me seem stupid, but this "shift" was so helpful for me. I have a tendency to just want kids to be tiny adults, but for me to really learn and accept that this is not only silly but it is developmentally impossible for a toddler really helped me to chill out.

Further, this book has an entire chapter devoted to toddler shame. SHAME! How intense. I mean I haven't even learned enough about this as an adult, to think this is a point of focus for a 2-year-old!

This book is also refreshing in the hyper-controlling hyper-sensitive hyper-perfectionistic hyper-worrying world that parenting seems to be rooted in right now. Tovah Klein approaches parents with grace and without judgment and provides a child-focused hands-off approach (not to be confused with a laissez-faire approach--she certainly roots her approach in limits and boundaries) Basically, by "hands off" I mean stop micromanaging your kid's every move, stop worrying about every single bite of food they eat or don't eat, and for the love stop intervening in their play! News flash: you can't control your kids.

This isn't a parenting boos with a "one-sized all" approach or a book that will fix all your problems and make your kids happy. Tovah Klein really does a good job of making room for you as the parent to develop how to parent based on the information she presents.

Overall I found this book to be empowering and refreshing, and (best of all) helped me to better understand toddler development.

Nina says

This book is basically how I knew I wanted to parent, but wasn't sure how to do exactly... does that make sense? I'm like a wellspring of empathy but I wasn't sure how to translate that to parenting because it's not how I was raised. So, this really gave me some backup so that what feels intuitively right to me is actually good... or something... yeah.
