

# TODAY'S FUTURE



Aug 23-Sept 2  
Grand Island

For more information  
check out  
<http://statefair.org/fair/>

## Toddlers & Challenging Behavior: Why They Do It & How

The year between age 2 and age 3 is an exciting one. Toddlers are realizing that they are separate individuals from their parents and caregivers. This means that they are driven to assert themselves, to communicate their likes and dislikes, and to act independently (as much as they can!). Toddlers are also developing the language skills that help them express their ideas, wants, and needs.

At the same time, toddlers do not understand logic and still have a hard time with waiting and self-control. In a nutshell: Two-year-olds want what they want when they want it. This is why you may be hearing things like “no” and “me do it” and “no diaper change!” more than ever before.

### Learning to Handle Strong Feelings

As a parent, your job is to help your young toddler navigate the tide of strong emotions she is experiencing this year. This is no small task, since the emotional lives of 2-year-olds are complex. This year they are beginning to experience feelings like pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment for the first time.

Older toddlers are a lot like teenagers. Their feelings may swing wildly from moment to moment. They may be joyful when getting a popsicle and then despair when it drips on their hands. So toddlers really need your loving guidance to figure out how to cope with emotions.

### Practicing Self-Control

When you see challenging behavior, it usually means your child can't figure out how to express her feelings in an acceptable way or doesn't know how to get a need met. To help your child learn, use a response that shows a different, more constructive way to handle these feelings.

Learning to cope with strong feelings usually happens naturally as children develop better language skills in their third year and have more experience with peers, handling disappointment, and following rules. While children won't completely master self-control until they are school-age (and practice it all their lives!), here are some ideas for helping your toddler begin to learn this important skill:

- ✘ Talk about feelings and how to cope.
- ✘ Offer your child ideas for how to manage strong emotions.
- ✘ Empathize with your child.
- ✘ Give your child a visual aid to make waiting easier.

Timers are also great tools for helping children learn to share. Give them each a few minutes - using the timer - to play with a toy they both want, like the shiny new tricycle parked out back. It's also helpful to state the obvious: It's hard to wait sometimes, isn't it?

**Let your child make choices appropriate to her age.** Try acting out a story. Pretend play offers chances to wait, take turns, and negotiate as children decide how the story will unfold. Another idea is to play “sharing music”. Each of you chooses an instrument to play. Set a self-timer for 1 minute. When the timer goes off, switch instruments and set the timer again.