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mum's the word

with **Antonia Kidman**, New Idea's parenting expert and mum of four



Terrible twos

Set boundaries early so you'll both survive the tricky toddler years

Big blue eyes, soft hair, a round face and flawless skin – I know I'm biased but my daughter Sybella's charming. She's strong-willed, independent, talkative, loving and at 18 months she's not shy about expressing herself. She's a toddler!

It's a beautiful age. Her mind is developing at such a rapid pace she is consumed by the desire to discover and explore the world. She's so busy touching, tasting, looking at and listening to all around her.

The intake of information is enormous. She imitates me and her siblings, dances to music, laughs at silly games and wants to be the centre of attention most of the time. She loves feeding herself, pushing her pram, walking up and down stairs and looking at picture books.

But she gets so frustrated if things don't go her way. She gets tired by a busy morning, hates to be strapped into her car seat, and gets annoyed if I'm on the phone or she's in her pram too long. Her discontent manifests itself in several ways – she'll shake her head, arch, scream and wail and sometimes have a full-blown tantrum. For a toddler, that's normal behaviour. Every parent knows the toddler years are

'Screaming, wailing, a full-blown tantrum.

For a toddler, that's normal behaviour'

delightful and enchanting. Walking with Sybella is a refreshing experience as she takes in all the flowers, birds and leaves.

The flip side? A beautiful moment can very quickly become trying and exhausting. So while the good times can be great, the bad times can drain your last reserves of patience and leave you feeling shattered.

Toddlers can be stubborn, negative and demanding but remember this is all part of the developmental process. As toddlers gain



Toddlerhood's the best and worst of times for a parent.

tip of the week
An active toddler needs a strict routine filled with positive ways to expend energy – long walks, climbing or simply playing inside.

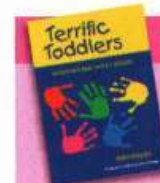
independence they will constantly test the boundaries. When they can't do what they want there'll be a passionate outburst.

Most experts advocate routine and consistency. Rachel Waddilove, a maternity nurse and author of *The Toddler Book*, says: 'Toddlers aren't born with a code of behaviour, and in these early years children watch how you respond to their different actions.'

She recommends consistency with

they learn to listen and comply. Distraction can also be an effective tantrum-managing technique. A game, story or object that will capture their attention can defuse a tantrum.

And as Robin Barker, midwife and author of *The Mighty Toddler*, jokes: 'I don't think you're a full-evolved adult until you have dealt with a toddler's tantrum in the supermarket!'



KEEP IT SIMPLE

Mel Hayde is a mum of three and the author of *Terrific Toddlers*. She offers some simple yet refreshing advice:

- Try whispering when you're really angry – it can calm the situation.
- Don't be a grumpy mummy. Take care of your nutrition, exercise and sleep.
- Respond with proper instruction the first time your toddler whines, rather than the tenth, so you retain your control.
- Reduce the amount of clutter and volume of noise in your home. A calm and orderly environment will help an active toddler manage your instructions and complete tasks.

boundaries – toddlers need to know the rules. 'It's never too early to start laying boundaries down,' Rachel says.

Programs such as parenting group Karitane's 'play therapy' promote positive attention as a way to manage behaviour. Notice the positive behaviour; ignore the negative. Most children want to please their parents so praising good behaviour encourages and affirms.

Non-compliant behaviour should be dealt with via consequences. Kids respond to limits,