

RAISE HAPPY CHILDREN INTENSIVE – WEEK EIGHT

Transitional Twos: The Age of Willpower

WEEK EIGHT ACTIONS:

- You allow, encourage, help your two year old do what they want
- You redirect/guide them only when you must

Outline for this week's Session:

1. Transitional Twos: The Age of Willpower
2. Respectfully Living With A Two Year Old
3. Two Year Olds and Making Choices
4. The Legacy

Transitional Twos: The Age of Willpower

It's important to understand that human beings of this age are developing willpower, which, if properly developed, will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

Willpower has many important functions:

- It's the power behind wanting, wishing and desiring
- It's the power of determination, of commitment
- It's the power that motivates you to action
- It's the power to persevere, to carry through

Two year olds are constantly practicing, doing their best to create well-developed willpower which is then put at the service of their intelligence. Their intelligence, if not thwarted by adults, is at the service of their inner guidance. Then the will is used to want what best serves the developing human being, and to persevere on the chosen path.

A two year old can be very easy to live with when treated with respect. They need to make as many of their own decisions as they can. Whenever possible, follow their lead. If you want them to make a different choice, encourage them by pointing out what they might find interesting and challenging about your choice. If you don't want a major struggle, offer the alternative before they have become determined to pursue their choice.

Only a two year old who is frequently thwarted and prevented from making their own decisions might consistently, obstinately hold on to a choice no matter what other options are offered. If a two year old is very insistent that they must do something, then it is good, if at all possible, that they fulfill their needs.

What are the noble qualities of two year olds?

- They are eager for life, for experiences
- They forgive easily
- They love easily
- They are honest
- They are determined to follow their inner guidance
- They can experience joy
- They can experience wonder
- By their actions they can help guide you on the path of the heart

Respectfully, Happily Living With A Two Year Old

Interest is the key. Encourage your child to do the tasks that attract them as soon as they show interest. Their work may not be up to your expectations of perfection, but they can improve with practice. You can offer them jobs that are simple and specific, with clear, physical evidence of proper completion. For example:

- All their clean clothes put in their drawer
- All their toys picked up off the floor and put in their places on the shelf
- The hammer put back in the toolbox
- A small bag of groceries carried from the car to the kitchen

This enables them to judge for themselves whether they have completed the task satisfactorily.

Although an adult does activities for an outer purpose, a two year old child does them for an inner purpose, to coordinate their intelligence, their will and their movements in accordance with their inner motivation. This integrates them as human beings.

An adult wipes a table because the adult decides that the table needs wiping. The child wipes the table because they need to wipe the table. They may wipe it for half an hour until they are inwardly satisfied and they no longer need to wipe it...at least for now.

Do your best not to interrupt your child's activity cycles. If you must, you can prepare them by telling them your needs, and, if possible, giving them enough time to complete their cycle of activity. Only they can decide when they are done, but they happily accommodate your needs, when possible, if you are in the habit of accommodating theirs.

When you notice that your child is making a mistake that is not a harmful one, if possible, don't correct them right then. Wait until they are finished doing that activity and offer to show them how to do it in a "different way". For example, "I'd like to show you a way to fold those so that they all fit in the box." It is also important to use this process when they pronounce a word

incorrectly. Tell them the proper word later, without referring to their past mistake. For example, “This is a pineapple. Would you like to eat some pineapple?”

Often two year olds use quality names incorrectly, such as colors and numbers. They are showing that they are aware of color words and number words and how to use them, not that they know the correct name. Handle these “mistakes” using the procedure described above.

Notice what interests them, what they are eager to do. Provide opportunities for them to have as many of the desired experiences as possible. These may indicate talents to be developed or skills to be acquired for the optimum development of their potential.

Do your best not to interfere when your child is doing a loved activity or any activity that seems to involve them in deep concentration (when they are so intent on what they are doing that they are not really aware of what else is going on). These times of concentration, times of focus, when the whole person is engaged, are essential in the development of an integrated personality.

Do not do for your child what they wish to do for themselves, however difficult or beyond their abilities the task seems to be. It’s these challenges that bring about concentration and help your child integrate their personality, helping them become a person who knows what they need, how to manifest it and has the perseverance to carry through.

If you can avoid it, do not talk in front of your child as if they were not there. If you must discuss something about them, include them in the discussion, as you would if it were an adult friend.

When a two year old gets hurt, it helps them when you acknowledge that they are hurt. For example, “Oh, you hurt your finger. I’m very sorry you got hurt.” They just need to know that you understand what they are feeling. They don’t necessarily need you to make a big deal over it, but they can’t relate when someone tells them that they are not hurt, when they know that they are. That can turn a little hurt into a big one just to get the point across. If it is a minor hurt, your acknowledgement is often enough for them to let it go and carry on.

This is acknowledging their view of their experience.

Two Year Olds and Making Choices

1. Two year olds are very busy creating the components of strong and well-functioning will power:
 - a. The ability to want
 - b. The ability to be determined
 - c. The ability to persevere
 - d. Putting all these abilities at the service of their intelligence
 - e. It is almost impossible for them to do anything that is contrary to this
2. However, knowing this makes it easier to live with them.
3. You can help change the direction of a two year old’s will if you catch it early enough
 - a. Give them opportunities to cooperate with you

- b. Tell them how much you appreciate their help
 - c. Two year olds like to work and to be helpful, useful, needed
 - d. Be alert
 - e. Quickly offer them an alternative on which to practice 'willing' when what they first choose does not agree with you
4. Once they become fixed on something, then the other practices come into play, 'being determined' and 'persevering'
 - a. At this point your suggestion has to be really attractive to them for them to change
 - b. Otherwise, it's easier and more peaceful, if it's possible for you to do this, to go along with them, looking for the first opportunity to change their direction
 5. Remember, this period is very important in human development
 6. It doesn't last very long **if** they get to do it properly
 7. Though I know that it can seem eternal when you're right in the middle of it
 8. It is a great opportunity to develop and practice patience

The Legacy

As you move toward a more harmonious relationship with your children, it can help to remember that within you is the influence of your parents and their parenting, which includes their parents, and their parents' parents, back into the distant past. You probably were affected in significant ways by other adults, too.

As a parent, you must take into account the legacy of your past parenting. It can help to remember, at first, that much of your behavior and that of your children is affected by old stimuli. Many actions are just playing out previously established behavior patterns.

Your beliefs, which were formed in your past, still guide today's actions. You may be in the process of forming new beliefs, but it will take time and persistence to reform your belief system to the point where the new beliefs form your experiences. It takes time and dedicated effort to free yourself from undesired influences.

You are changing. That introduces a new element into the legacy. As you change, it is reflected in your experiences. As you become more respectful, that respect is reflected back to you from others.

To understand the kind of dedication and determination needed for this change, it can be helpful to think of a baby learning to walk: no matter how many times they fall down, they do not become discouraged and give up. They may take a break, but they return to their practice until they have mastered the art of walking.

Besides sticking with it, it can also be helpful to practice patience: patience with yourself and patience with others. Remember the power of forgiveness and do what you need to do to keep your self-esteem strong. Notice the changes:

- Cooperative children with good self-esteem
- Satisfaction in discovering win-win solutions to problems
- Stronger personal self-esteem
- More energy for adventures

May your efforts be successful and satisfying.