

## Even Babies Can Need Mental Health Care

By Kelly Stout

We tend to think of babies as lovable, cute little beings who need careful handling, clean diapers, lots of sleep and good nutrition. Less common is considering a little one's emotional health and the important role it plays in their overall development. Children as young as infants and up to 8 years of age, and their families, might require early childhood mental health services for a number of reasons. These include behavioral issues, difficulty adjusting to child care or preschool, parents' divorce, new siblings, losses of loved ones, adoption or trauma.

Children progress through a series of predictable developmental milestones, although not all children do so at the same rate. A child's doctor will monitor growth and learning stages to determine where a child fits on this spectrum. However, disruptions and stress in the home, or conflicts between parents and caregivers or other children, can have a significant impact on very small children — they just may not be able to verbalize it.

Some ways that a young child might act out include disturbances in sleep, changes in eating patterns or behavioral issues that are significant, such as biting, kicking or uncontrollable tantrums that don't go away with normal parenting strategies. Seeking mental health treatment can help the child and family learn to cope with difficult times and build resiliency for the future.

Early childhood mental health care might become necessary as a result of traumatic events such as car accidents, witnessing violence or experiences of abuse and neglect. These are called adverse childhood experiences, and some of the most useful data came from the large-scale Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study concluded that if these types of traumas are not addressed in children, even very young children, they can lead to greater risk for mental and physical health problems as a child ages, and on through adulthood.



Therapy with young children should always involve caregivers — parents, guardians, foster and adoptive adults — although it may also include some time in which the child (especially those age 3 and older) meets individually with the therapist. Family therapy, play therapy and parent-child interactional therapy are some of the approaches used with young children. A mental health professional can help determine what is developmentally appropriate for the child and suited to the needs of the family.



Early childhood mental health care for families and small children pays dividends for the future. It is just one of many dimensions necessary to raise healthy babies and communities.

## **Toddler Temper Tantrums: What are they? Why do they happen?**

It is a good question and it should be asked every time a child is throwing a tantrum. Knowing the reasons of child's behavior will help parent to address the problem much better and maybe avoid the tantrum all together.

First, lets look at it from the scientific side. One of the human brain parts is called prefrontal cortex (PFC) which regulates emotion and controls social behavior. It develops at age 4. So here is an explanation to tantrums.

Kids at that age are physically programmed to throw tantrums. You cannot stop them, but you can help to deal with them and maybe prevent some of them.

Also, the stress that toddlers and preschoolers have increases their cortisol level, which is the KING of the Tantrums.

Wondering what kind of stress toddler can have? Believe me, their world is very imaginary and full of magic (like old scary witch or a dragon who spits fire), which can be frightful to the little ones.

Notice how the face of your child changes when other kids take his toy or you hug the other sibling. The jealousy and not knowing how to share can raise their stress and accordingly increase the tantrums.

There are 4 kinds of tantrums. It is important to understand which tantrum is your child having to be able to respond properly.

**1. Power tantrums** happens when child hears "no" and he doesn't know how to respond to that. Simply give him a choice. If he wants to eat ice-cream before dinner, tell him that he can eat ice cream after dinner. Instead, give him a choice of 2 different vegetables to choose from.

**2. Attention tantrums** should be ignored. However, you still have to respond by explaining that you will talk when he is ready to speak nicely. The child will find out that throwing a tantrum will only make parent ignore him, the positive attitude will have parent more involved.

**3. Frustration tantrums** usually happen when a child cannot do things he wants. For example, my little one used to get frustrated when he couldn't fit a car under the couch. Simply, assure them that you understand why is he upset and try to show him how to do the task. Don't do it for them.

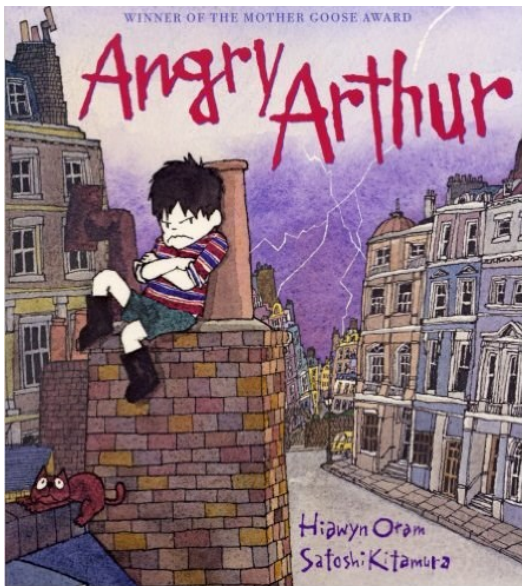
**4. Over-stimulation tantrums** occur when young children don't know how to deal with the feeling of hunger, fatigue or being overwhelmed. Feed him, put him to sleep and keep him in a calm place to avoid the tantrums. Excerpts taken from: <http://www.attachfromscratch.com/toddler-temper-tantrums.html>

### Why Reading Books is Important By Meredith Lord, Child Development Specialist

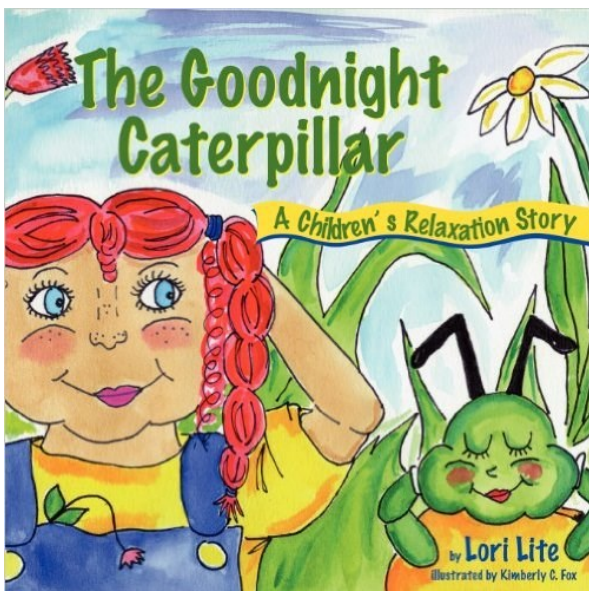
Why do Americans eat so much fast food? "I just don't have the time to cook dinner." Why don't we exercise more? "I just don't have the time to commit to an exercise program." Why is my living room so messy? "I don't have enough time to clean up."

One thing that we all **NEED** to find time for is **reading to our children for 20 minutes each day**. According to the leading experts on this topic, here are the reasons why:

- **Children who read: succeed.** The most significant part of a child's mental growth between the ages of three and seven is the ability to imagine. Books boost imagination. Our popular television culture degrades imagination.
- TV and video are now our national babysitters. But a young child's growing mind needs active play and live conversation. Television puts a child into what neurologists call the passive Alpha state. A child cannot learn from screens because programs are meant to sell products not to teach.
- Much like the first news about tobacco and cholesterol, early studies now link overdoses of TV, video games and pop music with learning disabilities, attention deficiency, speech defects and aggressive behavior.
- Screen watching makes a child a follower and a consumer. Books exist because of the power of human ideas. Readers are leaders and producers.
- After a tiring day nothing is more restful than reading with a child on your lap. Reading aloud offers a world of privacy, dignity, and love to both of you.



Once there was a boy called Arthur, who wanted to stay up and watch TV, but his mother wouldn't let him. 'I'll get angry,' said Arthur, and he did. Very, very angry...



z z z...



Children love to unwind and relax with this easy, gentle exercise known as progressive muscular relaxation. This effective research-based, stress management technique is widely accepted and used by both traditional and holistic communities. The technique focuses awareness on various muscle groups to create a complete resting of the mind and body. Muscular relaxation can have a positive impact on your child's health and immune system. It can lower stress and anxiety levels. It can be used to decrease pain and anger. This encouraging story quiets the mind and relaxes the body so your child can fall asleep peacefully. Sweet dreams!



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### Learning Websites For Kids

[www.learninggamesforkids.com](http://www.learninggamesforkids.com)

[www.sesamestreet.org](http://www.sesamestreet.org)

[starfall.com](http://starfall.com)

[funbrain.com](http://funbrain.com)

[thekidzpage.com](http://thekidzpage.com)

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>

## Pudding Cones Recipe

### Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups cold milk
  - 1 package (3.4 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix
  - 3 envelopes whipped topping mix (Dream Whip)
  - 8 cake ice cream cones (about 3 inches)
- Chopped nuts, sprinkles, fruit *or* topping of your choice

### Directions

In a large bowl, beat milk and pudding mix on low speed for 2 minutes. Fold in whipped topping mix; cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Spoon 1/4 cup into each cone; sprinkle with toppings. Yield: 8 servings



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