

Start New this Spring

Spring is a time of renewal, a time of rebirth and fresh starts. The flowers are starting to bloom and the trees are budding. The days are getting warmer, the sun is shining. What a beautiful time of the year!

Let's start our spring by decluttering our mind. You know the saying, "Cluttered house, cluttered mind." Let's start by taking it room by room. During your quest to tidy and organize the various rooms in your house, take a critical look at everything and ask yourself: "Do I really need that?" Depending on the item, you can either throw it away or donate.

Reflect, Forgive and Focus on the Future. Reflect on your relationships. Keep those that empower you and don't waste time with the others. Don't let toxic people bring you down. Forgiveness is an intentional decision to let go of resentment and anger. Forgiveness does not mean you erase the past, or forget what has happened. It doesn't even mean the other person will change his behavior — you cannot control that. All it means is that you are letting go of the anger and pain, and moving on to a better place. Focus on what you want your future relationships to look like and do not accept anything less. You are worthy of peace, love and happiness!

Let's clear our mind a little more by walking. The weather is getting warmer, so taking a walk will help clear your mind and improve your health. Family walks are great time to talk and explore with your children.

Surround yourself with positive, happy and driven people. Let go of the past and start new this spring.

**"You are never too old to start over. Every day is a chance to make changes to create the life we want."
— Karon Waddell**



Happy

Why Does My Toddler Try to Hit Me When She Doesn't Get Her Way?

Q: How do I respond to my 17-month-old who has started to swing at me with her hands when she doesn't get her way? —Concerned Parent

A: It isn't easy being 17 months. You have really strong feelings but lack the ability to use words to clearly let others know what's on your mind. How frustrating is that?

The fact is that learning to express thoughts and feelings begins in the early years by using actions. Some are totally appropriate, like the 12-month-old who raises her arms up to show mom or dad that she wants to be picked up. Others can be distressing, like hitting, kicking, and biting. But they are all efforts on the part of the child to communicate. In this case, we can guess that your child is mad that she is not getting something she wants. She cannot say, *Mom, I am so mad that you won't let me have that fourth cookie!*

The fact is that learning to express oneself begins in the early years by using actions.

The best way to respond to her swinging is to firmly—not roughly—hold on to her arm and say something like, *No hitting. Hitting hurts. I know you are mad that (fill in the blank). You don't like it when... But you cannot hit. Hitting hurts.* It is important to be clear and firm in your tone but not angry. Your child is not purposefully misbehaving. This is about teaching rules and limits, not about punishment. These moments are also important opportunities to teach your child about feelings. You need to show her that angry feelings are not the problem, it's what she does with these feelings that can be problematic. Your job is to let your child know what is and isn't acceptable and then to teach her what she can do with her feelings. Putting her feelings into words is important. It shows empathy and provides a good model for how to cope with feelings as she grows.

After you have stopped her behavior and validated her feelings, you can show your daughter other ways of expressing herself. While most parents agree that hitting is not an acceptable way to express anger, they vary in their beliefs about what is acceptable. Some suggest children shout in the air as loud as they can or make growling noises to get their feelings out. Others suggest stomping feet, scribbling with a crayon, ripping newspaper, or hitting an object that is safe and can't be hurt—such as a pillow. It is up to you to decide what is okay. The bottom line is that you acknowledge your child's feelings and help her learn healthy, non-destructive ways to express them.

After you have stopped her behavior and validated her feelings, you can show your daughter alternative ways of expressing herself.

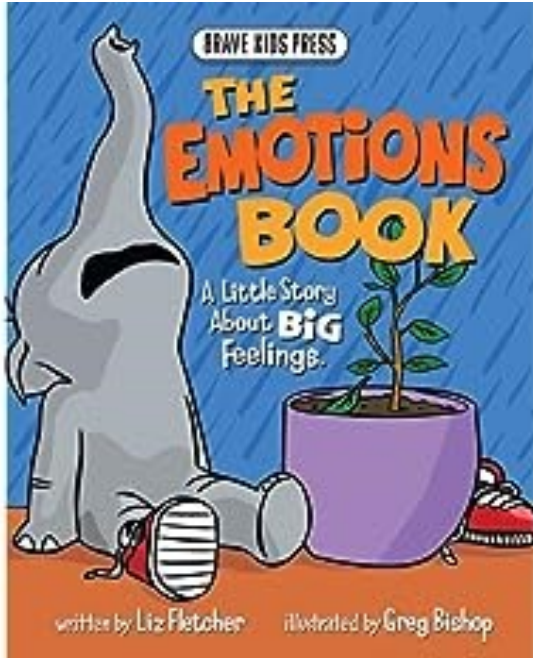
Keep in mind that learning self-control is a process. Your toddler will not be able to stop her impulses and understand the consequences of her actions until she gets closer to 3. In fact, she'll keep working on these skills through the teen years. So, your daughter will need your consistent, patient support for a while yet. Being able to manage and cope with strong feelings is a critical skill for lifelong success, so don't fear these moments. Instead, see them as great opportunities for teaching your child an essential life skill.

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Respect people's feelings. Even if it does not mean anything to you, it could mean everything to them.



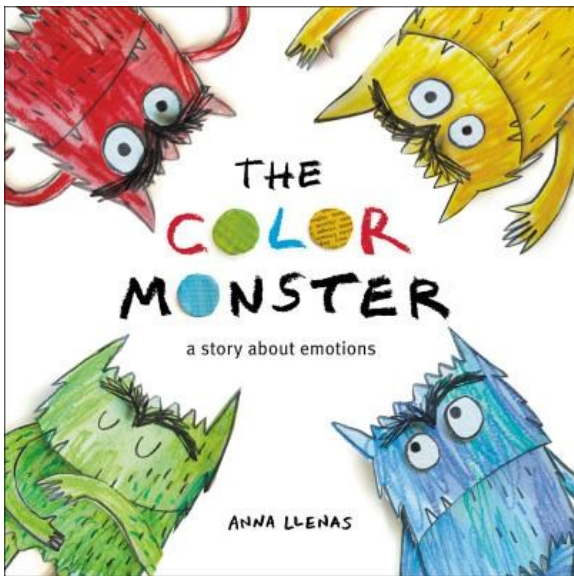
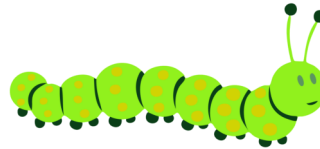


The Emotions Book: A Little Story About BIG Feelings by Liz Fletcher

Help your child self-regulate their emotions. **The Emotions Books: A Little Story About BIG Feelings** teaches emotional control and how to act effectively when faced with overwhelming feelings or challenging circumstances.

Throughout this vibrant story, Louie, a brave little elephant, teaches children that when they experience big feelings, their body and mind are simply telling them something; perhaps a hug is needed, or they need to take a break and breath.

Focusing on four primary emotions: **anger, sadness, frustration, and happiness** - children will learn to welcome their feelings and listen to them instead of impulsively reacting. Managing big emotions can help children act effectively and solve conflicts independently while working their way back to a calm, happy state.



The Color Monster: A Story About Emotions by Anna Lenas

This is a great book about feelings for toddlers who are just beginning to understand that they have big emotions. A sweet monster wakes up one day, and his feelings are all jumbled up. With the help of a little kid, he sorts out what his feelings mean by using colors.



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