

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



07_Children do not have a defiant age; they just become more independent

That's a bold statement. Family therapist Jesper Juul explains what happens when children become rebels at the age of two - and how parents should react to it. He says: "Children don't have defiant ages. It is a natural progression that the two- to three-year-old child moves from complete dependence on parents towards being a partially independent individual. This development is repeated during puberty. If parents try to prevent, interfere with, or dictate this development in the child, the child will resist."

At this age, children need parents to value and guide them.

It's hard for some parents to see their child throw a tantrum when things aren't going its way. It's important to know children don't get angry to provoke or manipulate their parents. It is their expression of sheer desperation. What happens is this: The child has a wish and either cannot fulfil it alone or the adults say no. This creates anger and frustration. Depending on the child's temperament, it throws a tantrum, but this passes again. The child must first learn to deal with these feelings of frustration. The more relaxed the parents remain and understand the anger, the easier it is for the child to cope with this phase, for example with the words: "I can understand that this is making you very angry now."

Leave the child alone during the tantrum or it will only get worse. It can't hear you right now anyway, but stay close. A little later you can ask: "What made you so angry?" This makes the child feel seen and valued and know that there is nothing wrong with being angry.

How to prevent tantrums?

You can't. And that's okay. Adults get angry too. The less parents try to interfere with their children's efforts at independence, the fewer fights there will be. Make sure the child finds an environment where not everything is forbidden or dangerous. Better put away expensive crystal vases or heirlooms for a while, as this relaxes the whole family.

Children now want to do a lot on their own, they are just discovering themselves and their abilities. Parents can say: "Ah, you want to put your jacket on by yourself. That makes me happy. If you need help, come to me."

This phase is crucial for the child to develop new skills, confidence and self-esteem. See your child's growing independence as a gift - not a problem.

When children say no

If small children regularly say "no" in stressful situations, such as in the morning and do not want to do as you wish, it may be that they are reacting to a stressful atmosphere. Try to plan more time and bring more calm into the situation.

Then, when you really run out of time, turn to your child and make sure you have its attention. Then you say: "Today I'm in a hurry. I need your help now Today I'm going to help you put on your shoes and jacket because we have to be out of the house in 10 minutes. It will be more unhurried tomorrow."

The more the child gets the feeling that its efforts at independence are being taken seriously, the easier it will be for the whole family.

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