



SAY IT RIGHT:

BY RISHA SHEIKH

*Building Bonds Through Communication with Your
Toddler*





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Hi there,

I'm Risha Sheikh, a certified parent coach, inner child healing practitioner, toddler bonding specialist, and a mom to a wonderful little girl, Thanooja. My journey as a parent and coach has taught me the incredible power of communication in building trust and connection with toddlers.

I created this guide to share simple, effective strategies that have worked for me and many other parents. My hope is to make your parenting journey a little smoother and help you foster a deeper bond with your child.

Thank you for letting me be part of this journey with you!

Risha Sheikh

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING TODDLER BEHAVIOR

HOW TODDLERS COMMUNICATE



Toddlers communicate in lots of ways—using words, gestures, and behaviors—because they're still learning how to talk and handle emotions. They often rely on non-verbal cues like pointing, pulling, or making sounds to show what they need. When they can't express themselves clearly, it can lead to frustration, which is why tantrums happen so often.

Activity:

- **Reflection Exercise:** Think of a recent time your toddler expressed frustration. Write down how they communicated their feelings (e.g., crying, throwing an object, or pointing). Reflect on what they might have been trying to say.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS BEHIND BEHAVIORS



Toddlers' behaviors often come from unmet needs like hunger, tiredness, or feeling overwhelmed. They're usually looking for attention, independence, or a sense of connection with you. By understanding what's driving their behavior, it becomes easier to respond in a way that meets their needs and helps them feel understood.

Example Scenarios:

1.Scenario 1: A toddler throws a toy when told it's bedtime.

- Likely need: More connection before separation.
- Response: "I see you want to keep playing. Let's read a story together before bed."

2.Scenario 2: A toddler refuses food at lunch.

- Likely need: Control or autonomy.
- Response: "You can choose between the sandwich or the pasta. What do you feel like eating?"

Activity:

- Behavior Journal: Over the next 3 days, observe your toddler's challenging behaviors. Write down:
 - What they did.
 - What might have triggered the behavior.
 - How you responded and its outcome.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION



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CHAPTER 2: ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES



WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Active listening is about giving your full attention to your toddler and responding in a way that shows you truly understand them. This includes maintaining eye contact, acknowledging their feelings, and repeating or rephrasing what they say to confirm you're listening. By doing this, you help your toddler feel heard and supported, which strengthens the bond between you.

Quick Tip:

- When your toddler is trying to tell you something, get down to their eye level and say, “I’m listening. Tell me more.”

Activity:

- Practice Session: Spend 10 minutes fully focused on your toddler while they talk, even if it’s about something simple. Reflect on how they responded to your attention





VALIDATING YOUR TODDLER'S EMOTIONS

Validating your toddler's emotions means recognizing and acknowledging their feelings without judgment. Simple phrases like, "I see you're upset because your toy broke," help them feel understood and also teach them how to label their emotions. It's important to avoid dismissing their feelings with comments like, "It's not a big deal," as this can make them feel unheard or ignored.

Example Responses:

1. Toddler cries because their block tower falls.
 - Validation: "You worked so hard on that tower. It's frustrating when it falls."
2. Toddler screams because they want a snack before dinner.
 - Validation: "You're really hungry right now. It's hard to wait."

Activity:

- Emotion Acknowledgment Exercise: Over the next two days, make a conscious effort to validate your toddler's feelings during emotional moments. Write down how they reacted to your validation.





ENCOURAGING EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Encouraging expressive language involves helping your toddler put their feelings into words by modeling language for them. Using phrases like, “Are you feeling sad because you can’t find your toy?” teaches them to connect emotions with words. It’s important not to pressure them to talk but to create a safe and supportive space where they feel comfortable sharing at their own pace.

Quick Tip:

- Use simple questions like, “Can you show me what’s wrong?” or, “How are you feeling right now?”

Activity:

- **Word Practice:** During playtime, introduce simple emotion words like happy, sad, or mad. Use them in context to help your toddler understand their meanings





REPLACING "NO" WITH CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVES

Toddlers can become frustrated or tune out when they hear "no" too often. Instead of focusing on what they shouldn't do, guide them toward acceptable behavior. For example, rather than saying, "No running indoors," you can say, "Let's use our walking feet inside." This approach is more constructive and helps them understand what is expected. Reserve "no" for important safety concerns so it carries more weight when you need it.

Quick Tip:

- Save "no" for situations involving safety to make it more impactful.

Activity:

- Rephrasing Practice: Identify three situations where you frequently say "no" and brainstorm constructive alternatives to use instead.





SIMPLE AND CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS FOR BETTER RESULTS

Toddlers respond best when instructions are short, simple, and specific. Positive phrasing works well, like saying, “Put your shoes by the door,” instead of, “Don’t leave your shoes there.” Clear directions help them understand exactly what’s expected. It’s also important to give one instruction at a time to avoid overwhelming them. Pairing instructions with gestures or demonstrations can make it even easier for your toddler to follow through.

Quick Tip:

- Pair verbal instructions with gestures or demonstrations to make them easier for your toddler to understand

Activity:

- **Instruction Simplification:** Practice breaking down a common multi-step task (e.g., cleaning up toys) into simple, single-step directions. Reflect on how your toddler responds.





ENCOURAGING COOPERATION THROUGH CHOICES

Offering choices gives toddlers a sense of control, which makes them more likely to cooperate. Simple options like, “Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue shirt?” work well because they’re manageable and keep things clear. It’s important to only offer choices that you’re okay with, so either option works for you. If your toddler hesitates, gently repeat the options and give them time to decide.

Quick Tip:

- If your toddler resists, gently repeat the options and give them time to decide.

Activity:

- Choice Offering: Throughout the day, offer your toddler choices in routine tasks (e.g., meals, activities). Note any changes in their cooperation.



CHAPTER 4: MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS



UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Toddlers often act out because they're still learning to manage emotions and communicate their needs. Frustration, hunger, tiredness, or overstimulation are common triggers. Sometimes, they're testing boundaries to understand what's acceptable. Recognizing the reasons behind their behavior helps you respond with patience and empathy instead of frustration.

Quick Tip:

- Before addressing a behavior, pause and ask yourself, "What might my toddler be trying to tell me right now?"

Activity:

- Behavior Analysis: Observe a challenging behavior and note what happened right before and after. Reflect on possible triggers and how your response affected the outcome.



RESPONDING CALMLY AND EFFECTIVELY

Staying calm during a toddler's outburst can be challenging, but it's essential for teaching them self-regulation. Use a calm voice, get down to their level, and acknowledge their feelings. For example, say, "I see you're upset because you wanted to keep playing." Then, guide them toward a solution or alternative behavior. Consistency is key to helping them learn what's expected.

Quick Tip:

- Take deep breaths and count to three before responding to give yourself a moment to stay composed

Activity:

- Calm Response Practice: The next time your toddler has an outburst, focus on using a calm tone and validating their feelings. Reflect on how they respond.



PREVENTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Prevention is often the best way to handle challenging behaviors. Establishing predictable routines, giving plenty of transition warnings (e.g., “We’ll leave the park in 5 minutes”), and ensuring your toddler’s basic needs are met can reduce frustrations. Providing opportunities for independence, like letting them help with simple tasks, also helps them feel more in control.

Quick Tip:

- Use “first-then” statements to set expectations, such as, “First we clean up, then we can read a book.”

Activity:

- **Routine Check:** Review your daily routine and identify areas where your toddler might benefit from more structure, warnings, or choices. Test one change and observe its impact.

CHAPTER 5: BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF TRUST



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY AND TONE

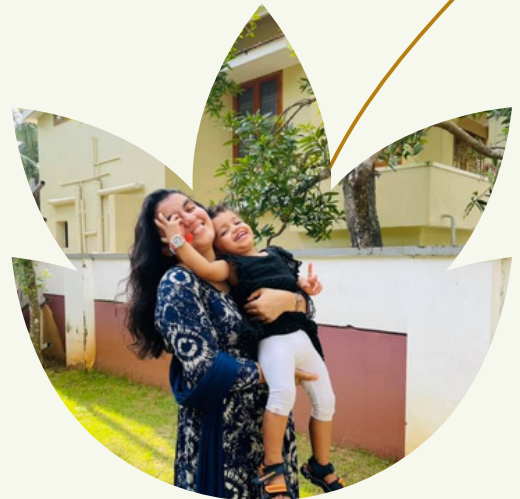
Toddlers thrive on consistency because it helps them predict their environment and feel secure. When your responses are steady—whether during play, discipline, or caregiving—they learn to trust that their needs will be met. Equally important is your tone of voice. A calm and warm tone reassures them, even in challenging moments. For example, saying, “I understand you’re upset; let’s work on this together,” can ease their worries and reinforce your bond.

Quick Tip:

- Be mindful of how your tone conveys your emotions. Even when setting boundaries, aim to sound firm yet kind.

Activity:

- **Tone Awareness Exercise:** Reflect on your tone during the day, especially when your toddler is upset. Note the impact it has on their behavior and responses.





CREATING COMMUNICATION RITUALS AND ROUTINES

Rituals and routines provide toddlers with a sense of stability, making them feel safe and understood. Simple practices, like a bedtime story or a morning check-in (“What do you want to do today?”), become opportunities for connection. These moments also teach toddlers that communication is a regular and valued part of your relationship. Over time, these rituals help build trust and encourage openness.

Quick Tip:

- Choose one daily routine to turn into a communication ritual, like a chat during snack time or sharing “highs and lows” of the day before bed.

Activity:

- **Ritual Building:** Identify a daily activity where you can incorporate consistent communication. Commit to practicing it for a week and observe how it affects your bond with your toddler.





STRENGTHENING BONDS THROUGH DAILY INTERACTIONS

Trust is built in the little moments, like making eye contact when your toddler speaks or kneeling to their level to show you're listening. Celebrate their successes, acknowledge their feelings, and engage in playful activities that they lead. These small yet meaningful gestures show your toddler they are valued and loved, reinforcing their trust in you as a caregiver.

Quick Tip:

- Prioritize presence over perfection—your attention and engagement matter more than getting everything “right.”

Activity:

- Connection Tracker: At the end of each day, jot down one interaction where you felt connected to your toddler. Reflect on how these moments strengthen your relationship





These practical instructions can be applied across all five chapters to simplify and improve your communication with your toddler.

Instructions for Easing Communication with Toddlers

1. Understanding Toddler Behavior

- Observe without judgment: Pay attention to your toddler's actions and emotions without labeling behaviors as "bad."
- Use empathy: When your toddler acts out, think, "What might they be trying to tell me?"
- Stay calm: Remember that tantrums are their way of expressing frustration due to limited communication skills.

2. Active Listening Techniques

- Pause and focus: Stop what you're doing and give your full attention to your toddler when they communicate.
- Reflect back: Repeat or rephrase what they're trying to say to show you understand.
 - Example: "You're upset because you can't find your toy."
- Be patient: Let them take their time to express themselves without interruptions or rushing.

3. Positive Language for Cooperation

- Frame instructions positively: Tell your toddler what they can do instead of what they can't.
 - Example: Instead of "Don't run," say, "Let's walk together."
- Offer choices: Give two simple options to empower them and reduce resistance.
 - Example: "Would you like to wear the red shirt or the blue shirt?"
- Keep it short and clear: Use simple language with one or two steps to avoid overwhelming them.

4. Managing Challenging Behaviors

- Acknowledge feelings: Start with phrases like, “I see you’re upset,” to help them feel understood.
- Stay consistent: Follow through with boundaries calmly and confidently to avoid confusion.
- Redirect their focus: Offer an alternative activity or behavior when they act out.
 - Example: “Instead of throwing the toy, let’s roll it to each other.”

5. Building a Foundation of Trust

- Be predictable: Maintain consistent routines and responses to help your toddler feel secure.
- Use a warm tone: Speak in a calm and reassuring voice, even during moments of discipline.
- Create connection rituals: Build daily habits that encourage communication, such as storytime or a morning chat.
- Celebrate small moments: Recognize and praise their efforts to communicate or follow instructions.





CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH TODDLERS

1. UNDERSTANDING TODDLER BEHAVIOR

- ☐ I PAY ATTENTION TO THEIR NON-VERBAL CUES (E.G., GESTURES, POINTING, OR SOUNDS).
- ☐ I REMAIN PATIENT DURING EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS AND TRY TO DECODE THEIR FRUSTRATION.

2. ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

- ☐ I GIVE MY FULL ATTENTION WHEN MY TODDLER COMMUNICATES, MAINTAINING EYE CONTACT AND MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS.
- ☐ I VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS BY ACKNOWLEDGING AND NAMING EMOTIONS (E.G., “YOU’RE FEELING SAD BECAUSE YOU DROPPED YOUR TOY.”).
- ☐ I ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES AT THEIR OWN PACE WITHOUT PRESSURE.

3. POSITIVE LANGUAGE FOR COOPERATION

- ☐ I USE CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO “NO” TO GUIDE THEIR BEHAVIOR (E.G., “LET’S WALK INSIDE” INSTEAD OF “NO RUNNING”).
- ☐ I GIVE SIMPLE, CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS THAT ARE EASY FOR MY TODDLER TO UNDERSTAND.
- ☐ I OFFER THEM CHOICES TO ENCOURAGE COOPERATION AND A SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE.

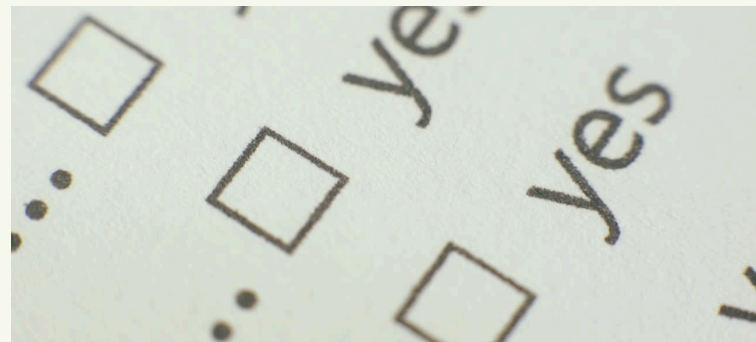
4. MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

- ☐ I PAUSE AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE TRIGGERS BEHIND CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS.
- ☐ I STAY CALM AND USE A GENTLE TONE WHEN ADDRESSING THEIR OUTBURSTS.
- ☐ I USE ROUTINES, TRANSITION WARNINGS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDEPENDENCE TO PREVENT BEHAVIOR ISSUES.

5. BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF TRUST

- ☐ I MAINTAIN CONSISTENT RESPONSES TO MY TODDLER’S NEEDS AND BEHAVIORS.
- ☐ I USE A CALM AND REASSURING TONE OF VOICE, EVEN DURING DIFFICULT MOMENTS.
- ☐ I CREATE COMMUNICATION RITUALS (E.G., BEDTIME STORIES OR SNACK-TIME CHATS) TO FOSTER CONNECTION.
- ☐ I PRIORITIZE MEANINGFUL DAILY INTERACTIONS, SUCH AS PLAYTIME OR ACTIVELY LISTENING TO THEIR STORIES.

USE THE CHECKLIST GIVEN TO REFLECT ON AND IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR TODDLER. TICK THE ITEMS YOU CONSISTENTLY PRACTICE, AND FOCUS ON AREAS WHERE YOU CAN IMPROVE.



Reflection Section:

At the end of each week, consider these questions:

1. Which areas am I excelling in?
2. Where can I improve?
3. What new strategies have worked well with my toddler?

By reviewing this checklist regularly, you can identify strengths and opportunities to strengthen your bond and improve communication with your toddler. Let me know if you'd like to refine this further!



You're Invited to a Free Breakthrough Session!

Are you ready to take your communication with your toddler to the next level? Join us for a personalized FREE Breakthrough Session designed to help you uncover and overcome the challenges you face in connecting with your little one.

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