



TODDLER TANTRUMS

CHILDREN FORM a large percentage of our country's population, hence their overall health carries great significance. Since children with behavioural problems and delinquency have a discernible

pattern of abnormal behaviour in early years, the importance of early detection and appropriate management can't be ignored. A toddler is a child 1-3 year old, an age of great cognitive, emotional

and social development. Studies suggest a trend toward increased prevalence of behaviour problems with advancing age with 3.6-24% in children of age group 1-6 years.

All children are naughty, playful,



defiant and impulsive from time to time which is normal but sometimes, it becomes difficult and stressful to control their behaviour which is outside the norm for their age.

Common behavioural problems seen in toddlers are:

- Aggression, biting and fights, screaming and teasing
- Destructive behaviour
- Defiant behaviour
- Conduct disorder
- Severe mood swings, withdrawn
- Attention seeking, poor concentration

Kids Dealing with the Problem:

Untreated children with behavioural disorder grow up to be dysfunctional adults. Management of such problems are usually multifaceted and depends on disorder, factors contributing to it, its severity and its effect on family and society. Diagnosis and treatment of these problems need help of paediatrician, child psychiatrist, child psychologist, psychiatric nurse, mental health counsellor, behavioural therapist and social worker.

Most of the diagnosis is achieved by in-depth interviews of parents, child, and preschool teachers. Some need behavioural checklist or standardised questionnaires.

A diagnosis is made if child's behaviour meets the criteria for specific behaviour disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders from American Psychiatric Association.

Main domains of this includes:

Parent Education:

Regarding child psychology, nature of the problem and its management with appropriate communication with the child with calm behaviour.

Family Therapy:

All the family members are involved and helped to develop good communication and problem-solving skills including keeping a good family environment.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy:

With the help of a medical professional, parents help the child to control their inappropriate thoughts and behaviour.

Social Training:

A child is trained for social skills e.g. good conversation or playing co-operatively with peers.

Encouragement:

Praise for good qualities and not repeating bad behaviour helps to build self-esteem in children.

Medications:

Need only in few cases e.g. to control impulsive behaviour and iron supplements for its deficiency.

Parents have central role to play in managing their child's abnormal behaviour:

Pick Your Fights:

List few behaviours that really bothers you, your family or society and accordingly set clear, specific rules and logical consequences for behaviour. Always give a reminder of why it is not a good behaviour.

Keep Yourself Calm:

Don't lose your cool while facing a bad behaviour which you can't avoid. Yelling at him makes him more aggressive; rather use a quiet, unruffled tone of voice and words that are neutral and positive. Giving him suggestions will fetch more cooperation than with commands or criticism.

Use Time Out:

Take your child to a quiet place for self-soothing. Let him know that it is not a punishment but at the same time it will send the message that negative behaviour won't get your attention and any reward.

Let Your Child Know You Love Him:

Hug your child and let him know that you love him except the specific bad behaviour. Also remember to give rewards for good behaviour. Listen carefully as they feel better when you listen to them.

Explain Your Rules:

Explain with empathy that how his behaviour badly affects and hurts others so that he will learn to think about its consequences and will rectify it.

Offer Choices:

When all other measures have no impact and child refuses to do something, offer a limited set of choices which are specific and acceptable and won't amplify the conflict.

Hence by partnering with other childhood resources in the community, primary paediatric health care professionals can foster the health and well-being of the family and optimize the health and development of children across the life span.

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