

My Kids Are Out of Control, What Should I Do?

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SUMMARY

The podcast episode features Dr. Becky discussing effective parenting strategies, particularly for managing tantrums and difficult behaviors in children. She emphasizes the importance of understanding children's emotions, setting boundaries, and maintaining a calm presence during challenging moments. The episode also addresses the complexities of navigating differing parenting styles with family members.

- Parents often struggle to find reliable answers to parenting questions, leading to the creation of the Good Inside membership platform.*
- Dr. Becky believes that children express their feelings through their behavior, especially during tantrums.*
- It's crucial for parents to differentiate between a child's behavior and their feelings to help them regulate emotions.*
- Strategies for managing tantrums include using playful language and creating a "shut up room" for expressing frustrations safely.*
- Parents should remain calm and present during meltdowns, conveying to children that their feelings are manageable.*
- When dealing with family members who have different parenting approaches, it's important to establish boundaries and communicate openly.*
- Parents should remind themselves that they are the "pilots" of their family's approach to parenting, focusing on their own values and strategies.*
- Acknowledging the difficulty of parenting and giving oneself credit for being a cycle breaker is essential for mental well-being.*

why is it so hard to find reliable answers to parenting questions how is it in 2022 parents still search on google for answers from strangers well now there's a better way introducing the good inside membership an expert guided community-powered platform redefining modern parenting in our library you'll find hundreds of bite-sized videos articles scripts and workshops tackling the trickiest parenting topics and it doesn't stop

here we've created a private community guided by me dr becky and coaches trained in the good inside parenting method here you can ask questions connect with other parents or attend a live event on a topic that matters to you this is the parenting handbook that doesn't exist this is parenting advice at your fingertips where you need it when you need it the most this is good inside membership hi i'm dr becky and this is good inside

i'm a clinical psychologist and mom of three on a mission to rethink the way we raise our children [Music] i love translating deep thoughts about parenting into practical actionable strategies that you can use in your home right away one of my core beliefs is that we are all doing the best we can with the resources we have available to

us in that moment so even as we struggle and even as we are having a hard time on

the outside we remain good inside in this episode we'll be talking about out of control moments let me start this episode by saying i am not any of the three callers and yet every single thing they say has happened in my house with my own kids yes

my kids have yelled shut up they've said get away from me when they need me the most and we have had plenty of experiences that have felt totally out of control for all of us while we are in really inconvenient locations we've all been there we're all in this together so with that in mind let's jump in [Music]

our first caller is danielle hi dr becky i am dealing with a situation with my three-year-old son drew he seems to just have a lot of tantrums and when he does tantrums you know i've used a lot of your advice but he tends to use bad words so he's saying shut up shut up shut up it's typically aimed at myself my husband or his siblings none of this behavior is happening in

school he is in school monday through thursday 9-12 and he's gotten nothing but great reports back from his teachers he's interacting well he seems to socialize well and share well however you know i'm finding this behavior is happening pretty frequently at home and it seems to happen mostly when he's not getting his way if he really wants something and his brother may have it at the moment and he's gotta wait his turn to share you know he'll completely

lose it and get really frustrated and start using those words or if he's being really rough then i ask him to stop and then tell him you know you can't be hitting anymore i'm not going to allow that to happen i'm going to remove you we're going to go sit over here he he tends to use those words um but it's happening every day so just wanted to hear your advice on how i can calm that behavior or what i can do

to help him regulate i know you know he's not regulated when he's having these moments um but i'm just not seeing any improvements with what i'm doing so i'm hoping you can help you you always seem to have the best wisdom and advice hi danielle thank you so much for sharing this and the first thing i want to say is you are not alone when kids are dysregulated they do all types of things they kick they scream

they say i hate you and they can say bad words so first step i would say is to see what true is doing from the lens of the pain and total chaos inside his body right i think a big idea that i always think about with tantrums is we act how we feel right and so if his actions and his words seem totally out of control that means he's feeling totally out of control

so a couple things i would think about number one is drew really needs you to differentiate between his behavior and his feelings and we need to help him do this in the moment and we also need to build the language to help him do this outside of the moment so let's start with in the moment you say to him oh sorry sweetie dessert time is over right i know in my house it's you know i've already given

five cookies and that's just the line right and the sixth cookie seems to set my child off and that's where i'm holding my boundary right at this point drew might he might get really upset at this moment he might say shut up shut up shut up right first of all for you he's acting how he's feeling let me set a boundary but also see the struggle he's having a boundary might sound like this wow those are big words

right is that a boundary it actually is i'm kind of labeling what's happening and maybe i'd even add wow those are big words i won't let you use words like that in this family now a lot of us get caught up what do you mean i won't let them use words they already are we're still setting a boundary to differentiate between the behavior which we're kind of saying isn't okay and now i'm gonna help you kind of find words to

speak to what's going on inside of drew where i would say i won't let you use those words and oh it is so hard not to get the things we want what am i doing there um showing my child that i can differentiate between how he's struggling and how that struggle comes out in the behavior in the moment this is really all we do and then we survive through it i'd focus on using a regulation skill for yourself right

because at the end of the day through a tantrum our child is absorbing how well we can or cannot be regulated ourselves so i'd say for you danielle to say to yourself i'm gonna get through this or nothing's wrong with my child nothing's wrong with me i can cope with this that's my personal favorite mantra and then after you've survived this moment to me one of the things that's really powerful to think about in our children's repeated difficult behavior

is okay what can i do in the moment but really what can i do outside of the moment so this is what i would start practicing with drew i'd find a moment when things were calm and connected and say to him something like this you know what's so hard when we don't get something we want isn't that so hard and here's a little secret some of us feel like saying bad words it's so hard sometimes we feel like that

i think you feel like that i feel like that sometimes oh it's so hard and i get that because it feels so bad but here's the thing we're gonna practice finding a word that feels a little bad but still is along the lines of the values we have in this family which is always speaking respectfully even when we're upset so what word could that be the next time i say no what word can you say to me

that seems a little out there but also is something me and you agree is kind of okay and then pause danielle you don't have to come up with this kids are amazing problem solvers when we involve them instead of control them so i would see what he came up with if not what would i do in my family truthfully i'd probably say something like this if my child was struggling i'd probably say how about we say the word ugly bugly

dougly oh my goodness that would be so so weird wouldn't it ugly bugly dougly and then i would model it so maybe the next time my child says to me oh mom i don't want to clean my room yet i'd say ugly bugly dougly oh that feels so good to get something out of my body okay let's figure this out so much is happening here we're turning a moment that feels really bad into a moment that

feels silly and connected we're planning in advance and i'm giving my child the option to do something that fulfills some of his desire to get a big word and sound out but shifting it to something a little more desirable or a little less kind of aggressive now change takes time so practice that model it yourself and when the moment inevitably comes where he still says those words tell him going back to that survival strategy i won't

let you use those words and then you can use the ugly bugley dougly words and survive the moment and continue to practice when things are calm [Music] all right danielle i have one more thought one more strategy that i think would be really helpful to keep in your back pocket so one of the things that goes on for kids using bad words in general is they feel it's a way to assert themselves and feel independent and feel in control and

feel like their own person all things we want them to embody we just don't want that to only come out with bad words so here's a way to totally change the narrative find a room in your house i often use a small bathroom and that becomes the shut up room and preempt the moment by early in the day before any of these tantrums have happened say something like this to drew drew you know what i feel some words coming up in my body

even not a good word i hear the word shut up i do i hear i'm gonna go into a room that's gonna become the shut up room why don't you come with me bring him in he will be shocked and say to him okay i'm gonna get them out of my body do you have any do you have any in there at all let's get them out together and i'd say this in the room shut up shut up

shut up shut up shut up shut up shut up yep i think i'm done oh i think they're all out all right you finished getting them out of your body meet me in the kitchen we'll have a snack and walk out play it cool totally nonchalantly what's going on here you're taking something and you're changing it you're adding playfulness you're adding connection we want drew to find other ways to feel independent and it will become less

desirable to use that word after you kind of start engaging in this playful way [Music] let's listen to our next caller kelly hi dr becky my name is kelly i have two children my son is pete he's almost seven my daughter is lyla she's four and a half my issue is with tate he is my deeply feeling child i've done your workshop um learned a lot from you but i still struggle because he still tends to have very very big

meltdowns it's usually my fault i feel like because i haven't been clear or it's because he's very rigid with expectations and so for example trying to change kind of our household rules about snacks and so he was expecting to be able to have more snacks and i said no because it was almost dinner time and he just lost it and he loses it in a very big way he will scream bloody murder kick you know flail he's not hurting anyone

but his screaming is very intense so i usually try to stay calm i'll take him to his room when he's yelling you know get out i hate you leave me alone get out of my room but then when i leave he'll come back that whole saga so i try to stay calm and be present with him but i feel like his screaming at me is not appropriate and i'm wondering if i can tell him you know you can be mad but you can't

scream at me like that or if that's not helpful in the situation because it's been going on for a long time and i feel like i've been using the right approach for a while and it hasn't been getting better so that's kind of my my tricky spot with him kelly i really really feel for you here i i have a bomb of three and i have a child just like this so i think that's important to start with

because i have been there for the screaming for the nasty words for the loud tone and even of course for that self-doubt spiral of am i am i doing the right thing here this keeps happening so a couple things to go over and some strategies for you so first there are some kids who feel things more deeply more intensely and those feelings last longer than other kids kids are all different and those kids take a lot longer to

absorb emotion regulation skills and it doesn't mean they don't get there but it does mean that we can't use their current behavior as an indication of what they will be like down the road i think it's one of the number one kind of parenting errors we all make as we see something in our kid today we have a fear that they'll be like that forever and then we respond today based on that fear instead of responding to

what our child needs from us in that moment so what's going on in that moment for tate tate feels totally totally out of control tate actually is feeling some intense feeling in his body that terrifies him it's as if he's being attacked by his own feeling and he needs to get it out of his body and that's why it looks so violent and so flailing now i'm gonna go over what i think is your role here

but please kelly know that having lived through this myself i can only do this some of the time and the times that i can't i repair and i find my child after so take of this what works and know that nobody can do this all the time first thing is when a kid like this has a massive meltdown even if it's not violent i truly truly believe that they have to be taken to their room key with

you this is not a time out this is not a punishment why if you think about what's going on in a child's body a set of feelings feel so explosive and then it ends up feeling so expansive it's as if this feeling that feels awful is then taking up so much space and moving a child with you into a smaller room is a deep message to their body that their feelings can be contained that's what we

need to do for these kids we don't extinguish the fire we want to contain it and bringing our child into a smaller room with us acts as a message of containment before we do anything else now to be clear your child will not like this they will not say thank you mother for your sturdy leadership no they will protest and say no no don't do that i'm fine i'm fine don't take the bait and here are some

words my number one job is to keep you safe and right now that means me and you going into your room where it's smaller and there's less around us that tone and that pace is really important you can hear in me there's no wiggle room it's also not mean it's not scary it's just clear that i am taking on the role of sturdy leader because my child is out of control this is not a negotiation and it's not a punishment

then i get into the room and i close the door and i sit with my child and this is when tate says like my kids do too get out of my room get out don't take the bait these kids are out of control and what kids who are out of control need more than anything else when kids are in that i am actually scared of my own feelings state they need a parent who can disconfirm that those feelings

actually are so awful and how do we disconfirm that how do we give our child the message that these feelings are survivable basically one thing and one thing only our presence and nothing fancier than that there's a few more things i'll share but your presence and staying in the room says to your kid these feelings that feel like they're attacking you and that fly out of your body and feel so terrifying are manageable they feel awful to you

and the only way you'll learn to regulate them is if you slowly absorb what i'm showing you that we can get through this and here's more language and you'll hear the same line my number one job is to keep you safe and right now safety means me sitting in your room with you why because i love you and you're a good kid and you're having a hard time you don't have to like having me here i am staying

here it's what these kids need they need to know that they're not terrifying you if they are then they only escalate more in the moment and they escalate more the next time because they feel their feelings have actually scared away their sturdy leaders now let me come back to the realistic part you won't be able to do this sometimes and you won't be able to stay in the room and you can always say i won't let you scream at me like that

because my ears are ringing and that means i'm going to step into the bathroom for a minute and take a deep breath but then i'm coming back there you've kind of taken care of what your own body needs right if you can stay there you're not colluding you're not reinforcing you're giving your child a very very deep very important message that they are a good kid having a hard time not a bad kid doing bad things

here's one more thought about how we can manage those moments when our kids say get out i know i generally am a big proponent of staying in the room right and asserting that we need to be there and we love our child there are some moments when we as parents say oh my goodness maybe my child doesn't need us right there here's the general idea we want to infuse our presence to show our child they are a good

lovable kid in the moments they are totally dysregulated if being in the room doesn't feel right to you sure step out but stay by the door whisper to your child say i'm right here maybe open the door and pop in your head and say i love you i'm right outside the idea is that our kids need our presence but of course you're the expert in your family and do a version of that that feels right to

you [Music] our final caller is olivia hi my question is about how to interact with other adult family members who are you know grandparents for example who do not approach things in the same way as you right so like let's say my toddler's throwing a tantrum whereas i you know i'm practicing i see that you're upset you really want to

have the piece of chocolate we're not having that right now whereas a grandparent might you know we don't see them throwing in the tangerine oh my god what is this what's going on you know there's no reason to be upset or or just kind of like all of the things that we grew up with as kids when they were our parents that we are trying to not repeat with our own children now how do you work with that because you know i don't

want to make them feel wrong they're only doing what they know but i also don't want to tell them what to do because i'm sure that maybe you can discuss how to self-reflect on that but how do you talk to them about doing things differently especially when they just really do not understand what it is that we're trying to do olivia this is such an amazing question and something that comes up over and over and over because

so many of us we're cycle breakers in that we are kind of the pivot point intergenerationally things were handled in a certain way and we're the ones saying i don't know about that or i'm going to do something differently and as a result there's friction with the people that came before us so the word that comes up for me in your question is boundaries how do we handle boundaries with our family of origin and how do we talk about things

that feel tricky in a way that hopefully can still be respectful and also still gets our needs met it is okay to talk to family members about how you would like them to approach your kids if they're approaching them in a way that feels wrong or damaging to you right so i think that the tricky thing is figuring out is this someone who wants to learn and they're open to being curious and wanting to know more

about why we do the things the way we do or is this someone who's really not so curious and has pretty strong ideas and is not open-minded and i think we handle those two scenarios differently and i'll walk through how so here's how i would start we always want to start assuming we're on the same team right that's actually the only way we ever get anything to change with someone so here's what i would say let's say it's

to your mother your mother-in-law i'd say hey you know what i'm thinking about i know you're watching uh let's say your son is rafa i know you're watching rafa have a hard time sometime and he has we'll call it a tantrum and i have a feeling for you the way i'm handling it feels really different from how you would handle it and actually i i think i just want to substantiate it it is i'm not shutting it down i'm not sending him

to his room i'm not saying pull it together and then you can join the family and there's kind of two things around that number one i have reasons why i'm doing that and number two i guess the thing i'd like to hear from you is whether you're curious to hear more about that are you actually curious i could show you a video i could show you this article i'm following this person on instagram you could follow her

too and see you know what you think and then we could talk about it are you curious to learn more about why we're doing things the way we are or are you just kind of watching me thinking oh she's really got it wrong and if that's the case i'm still gonna do what i'm doing but i'm probably just gonna ask you not to comment so things can be consistent for rafa right so what am i doing there

like in a very respectful way i'm just trying to figure out is this someone who wants to learn or is this someone who's pretty judgmental in which case i'm not going to ask them to engage but i am going to ask them to respect the way i do things for all the parents listening i find it very empowering to say to myself i am the pilot of my family's plane i am the pilot i used to

be a passenger i used to be a passenger on my family's plane not anymore i am the pilot and in that model my family of origin is kind of on my plane they're part of my passengers right now and it's really important to embody that authority and i think in the way i modeled it that doesn't have to come off as rude or aggressive but i would say the first step is kind of aligning on this

difference the second step is really assessing do you want to learn more are you actually curious not from a place of proving me wrong but a place of being open and if you're not then i'm going to ask you to keep your ideas to yourself the final thing i'll say about this is that remember you don't have to get your parents approval to parent the way you want and when we realize we don't need their approval

but we actually just need their cooperation with the way we're doing things we have so much more freedom in our interactions because we can tolerate the disagreement or the difference of opinion [Music] olivia i also think it would be really helpful for you to kind of take a deep breath and just give yourself some credit being a cycle breaker is so hard and it is so exhausting you're kind of pivoting the

direction for future generations so give yourself some credit right remind yourself of how strong and brave you are to be doing things differently and actually that reminds me of just getting through tantrums in general it is exhausting to get through a tantrum me with my own kids i don't find those moments enjoyable i don't feel energetic after i feel exhausted this all feels hard because it is hard and that's really important to remember when it comes to tantrums

let's tie it all together with three takeaways one there are so many strategies out there for dealing with tantrums and yet what's more important than any script or trick is how to talk to yourself so you can hopefully stay as calm as possible during your child's tantrum remind yourself over and over nothing is wrong with me nothing is wrong with my child i can cope with this two

whenever we're in the mode of thinking how do i get my kid to stop doing blank we can shift to my kid is doing blank what's going on for my child that they would keep doing this and how can i take a different approach so it's me and my child against a problem instead of seeing my child as the problem three there's actually something similar between dealing with our kids difficult

moments and dealing with family members judgment of our parenting approach in both situations we need to really hone in on what we believe and remind ourselves that the only person's approval we need is our own it's okay if your kids disagree with the decision you're making and it's okay if your parents disagree with your parenting approach remind yourself in both situations that you're the pilot of your family's plane and you know what you're doing

you may have noticed that our second caller kelly took my deeply feeling kids workshop this is by far my most popular workshop to date i outline strategies for helping kids who don't seem to respond so well to so many of the strategies that are often put out there they hate talking about their feelings they say go away when you know they need you the most they escalate quickly and have a really hard

time calming down there's nothing wrong with these kids they just need a different approach that workshop and many others can be found at learning.goodlearning.goodinside.com thanks for listening to good inside let's stay connected at goodinside.com you can sign up for workshops and subscribe to good insider my weekly email with scripts and strategies

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hearts and reminding ourselves even as i struggle and even as i have a hard time on the outside i remain good inside

you