

How to Deal With TANTRUMS in TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS | Best Things to Do & Say | Ask Dr. Jaz

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SUMMARY

Amelia, a mother of three, struggles with her five-year-old daughter's resistance to gentle parenting and discussing feelings. Dr. Jazz addresses the challenges of connecting with children during emotional moments and emphasizes the importance of understanding their emotional processes.

- Children may resist discussing feelings because it feels too vulnerable and overwhelming.*
- Parents often label emotions to gain control or resolve situations quickly, which can hinder genuine connection.*
- Nonverbal communication and the energy parents bring are more impactful than the words spoken during tantrums.*
- It's essential to create a safe space for children to express emotions without feeling pressured to articulate them immediately.*
- Connection can also occur outside of emotional moments through discussions and symbolic play.*
- Using conditional yeses can help manage expectations and maintain a positive atmosphere.*
- Less talking during tantrums is often more effective; focus on grounding and emotional presence instead.*
- Parents should practice self-compassion and recognize that navigating these situations is challenging.*

Hi there, this is Amelia. I've got three kiddos. I have a five-year-old daughter and then we have three-year-old twins, boy-girl twins. And I'm really struggling with my oldest who's five. She is really resistant to you know gentle parenting. I explain to her, "Hey, I know how you're feeling. You know, you're feeling frustrated or you're angry." And she'll come back and say, "I don't feel those things." Or "I don't care." And so I'm just really struggling on how to connect with her and hopefully that that is a question that you can address. And I've also trying to do this with my three-year-old and nobody seems to be interested in talking about their feelings.

So any help you can give would be wonderful. Thank you. Bye. I love this mom's question for me. Which by the way, if you have a question that you would like to submit, then go to 916-581-0177. I will be starting a new series called Ask Dr. Jazz where I take your questions and I do an episode on them and I just share candidly like I'm talking to a friend what I think and what I would do in that situation and what I recommend. Let's dive into this episode cuz I really think this is going to help a lot of you guys. So why the big question is why is my child resistant to talking about feelings? And I love how this mom asked you know how do I connect with my child when they're having these intense feelings? I'm trying to do it with my words. I'm trying to do it by showing them that I get where they're coming from and that I understand and I'm okay with their big feelings. But somehow there's a disconnect there and I really do want to connect. So I just I love where this mom is coming

from. It's from coming from such a genuine and good place.

And so let's talk about it. So the number one reason why your child is resistant to talking about feelings is because it's too vulnerable. It feels too vulnerable in that moment for whatever reason. And I want you guys to think about you know how your own feelings, right? Think about a time recently where you had some intense feelings. Maybe it was anxiety or sadness or grief. Whatever it was, right? Where you had some intense feelings anger, right?

And did you run and go talk to somebody immediately in that moment in that emotional storm? Probably not. You probably wanted some time to yourself. You probably wanted some time to process it and make sense of it. And a lot of the times for our kids it's the same idea, right? Jumping in to talk about those feelings right away can feel really vulnerable, right? Like I'm still trying to make sense of what's going on for me. I'm not really ready there yet.

I'm not ready for you to see me yet. And a lot of the times too when we're activated with really high emotions, the part of our brain called the amygdala, especially those intense emotions like anger, fear, anxiety, right? The amygdala part of our brain which is our stress response system is activated. And so what's not always activated is the part of our brain that registers language, right? That registers communication and can talk talk it out, right? And so it's often too soon to talk about those feelings in the moment. It's just too soon from a cognitive level and also from an emotional level, right? There it's just too vulnerable and too soon. And they're they're highly emotional and they're not ready to connect and process their feelings. That's often where this is coming from. Of course, I don't know your child specifically. So always take the stuff with a grain of grain of salt, right? That I'm just sharing my ideas and my thoughts, but of course you know your child the best.

So that's often what it is. And often, you know, we label feelings and I you know if the shoe fits, it fits. If it doesn't, it doesn't. If it doesn't resonate. But just see if this resonates for you. Often times, and I'm guilty of this too, we will label emotions and try to do some of this work in an effort to get them to stop crying. Right? Where we're like, "Okay, I know that you're frustrated. I know that you're angry and we need to get this done, right? And I need you to do this, right? And we need to get this together, right? Because we are feeling overwhelmed. We're feeling anxious.

We're trying to get out the door. We're trying to do whatever we it is we need to do. We're trying to attend to our other children. It's a lot. It's a lot. Intense feelings are a lot. But kind of you know, have a moment to yourself and just see if this resonates, right? Am I labeling my child's emotions because I really want to see them and be in this moment with them and see it for what it is and empathize or am I labeling their emotions because I'm feeling overwhelmed and I need this to stop, right? I need to get I need some kind of resolution to happen in this moment and I'm trying to take some control back, right? I'm feeling out of control. This is overwhelming. This is making me anxious.

This is making me have my own intense feelings. I need you to get it together, right? So yes, I see that you're upset, right? Yes, blah blah blah, right? But we're kind of going through the motions of positive parenting or

gentle parenting if you will, but we're not really in it emotionally ourselves. And again, no judgment. I'm guilty of this too, right? Life is life and these moments happen so fast, right? And sometimes we're not even aware in the moment like oh I see what kind of energy I was bringing. I probably wasn't bringing my calm energy. I was kind of trying to fix the situation. So try not to judge yourself for this, right? Try not to criticize yourself for this if you this resonates, but get curious about it.

And get curious about how do you feel when your child is having intense emotions? Because here's the thing, they can sense when we're trying to control their feelings. When we're trying to fix their feelings. When we're trying to dare I say manipulate, which I kind of hate that word in this context because it's not conscious a lot of the times. The manipulation kind of sounds like oh, you know, I'm trying to just whatever control you. But there is a level of let's say manipulation for the sake of this example where we're trying to change their feelings so that it benefits us, so that it's not as inconvenient. And they can sense this, right? And they will resist this because essentially what we're doing is we're trying to control their process and they know deep in their heart that this is a process that only they can control.

And they will not be ready to process and label and talk and speak calmly until they are ready, right? Not when we tell them to be ready. So just you know, if the shoe fits, it fits. If it doesn't resonate, it doesn't resonate. But just be mindful of that more and more, right? Am I using these positive parenting techniques because I want to control my child or am I trying to sit with these feelings and connect with them on a deeper level and truly let them know I'm I'm in this moment with them. Of course, it does not mean at all that we're not establishing boundaries for unsafe or aggressive behaviors.

It just means being conscious and mindful of the energy that we're bringing into these already intense emotions. Okay. Another reminder about tantrums. This is one is huge. Is that it is less about what we say in these moments of intense feelings. Let's call them tantrums. And more about the energy that we bring and how we approach these situations. And a lot of that comes down to our nonverbal communication. It is less about labeling our child's emotions during these times.

It is less about what we say and more about the energy that we bring, which ties well into what I just already said. So always always always keep that in mind. If you are going blank in the moment, if you're like, "Oh my god, what was I supposed to say when when the tantrum happens, right? What was that tip I just learned?" No no no no no. Breathe. Stay present in the moment and be mindful of the energy that you're bringing in that moment. That will help ground you and help guide you through how to best show up more than any tip, trick, hack, right? Script out there. So always remember that. Don't focus on what you're saying. Focus on your energy.

One quick let's say hack that I use is that I will tell my daughters, "Let it out. Let it out." Now this is something that I am saying, but really this is something that I'm saying for myself so that I can remind myself all feelings are okay and I don't need to control this process. It is healthy that they are letting their emotions out and expressing them with me. And if I can create a safe space for them to express their emotions, it's just going to enhance our relationship and it's going to make it more likely that they're able to actually process what's going

on for them, right? Because if our child feels like we are trying to control them, we're unhappy with the way that they're expressing themselves in that moment, it's going to add more stress to their plate. Now they have to deal with not only whatever set them off in the first place, but now oh my gosh, my parent is disapproving of me.

So just keep that in mind, right? It is more about the energy that you bring to these situations. You might have a mantra that you say to yourself or that you say out loud to help remind you of that basic essence. But again, the best thing that you can do is regulate yourself. Now, I will speak to this mom's specific scenario where she's trying to label an emotion and the child is like, "No, that's not how I feel."

Then, what you say is, "That's not how you feel. Thanks for letting me know. When you're ready, I'd love to know how you feel. When you're ready, I'd love to know." Okay? Not, "Well, how do you feel?" That's too much pressure, right? She might not be a ready in that moment to process her and verbalize her feelings, right? It might feel too vulnerable. So, lead with when you're ready. When you're ready, I'm here. I'm here to help you. I'm right here.

Let it out. And when you're ready, I'd love to know how you feel. And we'll get through this together, okay? Again, this is a I'm I'm speaking more to the energy more than the words that you say, but you can always let your child know, "I'm right here and when you're ready, I'm I'm ready to talk about it, okay?" So, again, just because we feel ready to talk about feelings does not mean that our child is ready and they will let you know, right? And kids are extremely candid and I love that for them, right?

Um and they're going to let you know candidly, "Look, I'm not ready, right? No, that's not right, right? Leave me alone." And that's when you follow their cues. Ah, you want to be left alone. Totally fine. I will give you space and I'm right here. Okay? That doesn't mean you walk away. And a lot of the times, even if our child is resisting us re- resisting us um it doesn't mean that they want us to leave the room per se, right? And just leave them. It just means that they need some emotional space. They need some silence and they just need to be able to trust us in that moment that we're just holding space for them, which is a fanta- You hear that word all the time, right?

Therapists say we we love to say that, hold space, hold space, right? What that basically means is you're coming from an energy of I'm here and I'm ready to talk when you're ready. Um but I'm not going to leave. I'm not upset. I'm not forcing you um to talk about this before you're ready. I'm not trying to fix your feelings. I know that this is your process and I'm going to hold space for that, right? I'm going to hold space and I'm going to follow your lead, right?

I'm going to follow your lead because this is your process. See where I'm going with this? Now, for heading out the door, that doesn't mean that we don't try to um help them, you know, do the things that they need to get done. Um you know, every situation is a little bit different and I'm happy to do another episode about intense feelings while we're trying to head out the door. Cuz that's a topic for another day, but it doesn't mean that I don't draw boundaries around the situation and help in ways that I can. It just means I'm not going to try to fix you. I'm not going to try to fix your feelings and make you feel calm before you are ready.

Okay. Very hard, right? This process is very hard. It's a lot easier said than done, especially when we are already so to our max. We are already so burnt out, aka crispy, okay? Crispy AF, right? It doesn't mean that this When I'm saying this, I'm not like, "Oh, this is just so easy, right? Just do this. Just hold space, right?" This is hard. So, give yourself grace. Give yourself empathy, right? Um it's harder for us to give our child empathy and grace if we don't give that to ourselves, okay? So, when I'm saying all of this, please, please, please give yourself so much grace and so much empathy for the times that you missed the mark, for the times that you do try to fix their feelings, right? For the times that you do feel resentful for your child for throwing a tantrum in the middle of the store or at the park or wherever, right? Like, these things are hard and we're not always going to get them right. So, I can't say that enough, right? So, give yourself lots of grace in these moments. And I just want to just say, you know, if you're coming from the place of and this mom's question is so beautiful because she's asking, "How do I connect?" "How do I connect with my child?" And I love that, right? I love when we can start with those questions. Those are the right questions to ask, right? And so, a big part of this too, her child is on the older side. I think she said five or six.

Your child has verbal capacity and the cognitive capacity to think about these things after and outside of the moment. And so, you know, connection looks like having a really hard time emotionally and then circling back to that at the end of the day. Wow, we had a hard time uh at dinner. Do you remember that? Do you notice that? Did you feel that? I felt like we weren't connected, right? Um I felt like we were on two separate pages and I want to connect with you. I want to be there for you in those moments. I know how difficult these moments are for you and whatever triggered that, right? Talk about that. And con- that's how you connect, right? You connect outside of the moments, too. So, connection don't think about connection just in the moment. Think about ways that you can connect and circle back outside of the moment. For little ones, it more likely will look like symbolic play that you could that you reconnect and bring those things back. Could be one idea. But, connection also is the conversations that we have at bedtime or whenever when everybody's calm and we just debrief, right? Um and in that moment, connection looks like providing space.

Remember, it's not always about what we're saying, right? Of course, you want to label feelings. That's im- uh so powerful in terms of creating not creating raising emotionally intelligent children, right? That is so important. We first must be able to label and put a kind of put a label on what we're feeling so that we can understand it and we can look at it more objectively. But, start with labeling your emotions, okay? Start with labeling um the characters in the books and that you are reading together and the shows that you're watching together. Label those emotions. Uh label the uh characters while you're playing, right? And each one of them. A lot of the times it is so much easier and and for us as adults, too, when we can label other people's emotions. It feel there's some distance there. There's some psychological distance and that creates safety.

Okay? So, just because they can't label their emotions in the moment or they're resisting you in that moment, doesn't mean they're not learning the skill, right? Um and so, if you're sensing that they're resisting whatever you're doing in that moment, back off. Doesn't mean leave the room. It just means, "Ah, okay. I need to step away a little bit. I need to create some space. I need to create some more safety and connection. Um something's amiss here. She's She or he or she is giving me a sign. They're giving me some feedback. So, I'm going to take that in, but I don't need to fix it right away. I don't need to find a solution right away. This is not an emergency, right? Very few parenting situations are actual emergencies. So, give yourself permission to step back a little bit,

create some space, create some silence, breathe through it so that you can follow your intuition, right?

You can look at these signs and go with the flow a little bit more, okay? Uh I hope that was helpful. Let me go back to my notes and see what else I am um what else I wanted to say about tan- tantrums. So, the way we connect is through empathy, seeing the situation from their eyes, sympathizing sympathizing with their emotions, right? And again, a lot of this process is nonverbal. The other thing, you know, is trying to say yes more than no. And when you can't say yes, giving more of a conditional yes, which I talk extensively about in my discipline course, Positive Discipline Academy.

But, for let me give you a quick example. Just the other day, we're driving in the car and my 3-year-old says, "Hey, Mommy, can we take a bath when we get home?" Now, of course, when we get home, I had different plans, right? We had planned to have lunch and then it was going to be nap time. So, what I said was, "Yes, baby, we can take a bath after nap time." So, see what I did there? I said yes and I'd let and I set a plan, right? Yes, this is when we can meet your request. We can make a plan to do that after nap time. And she said, "Okay."

So, when you can't say yes in that moment, always try your best. Of course, some things we just can't do. Um and then you'll approach it in a different angle. But, for those situations where there there is some room for that, it's just not right now, but then you make a plan, okay? When can you meet that request? Like, "That's a great idea. Let's make a plan to do that after dinner or after whatever, right? When we get home."

Et cetera, et cetera. So, try to give more yeses than you do nos cuz nobody likes to hear no. Um and the last thing I'll say, um less is more during tantrums, okay? Less is more. Less talking is more, okay? So, again, don't focus on what you're saying. Focus on your energy. Focus on staying grounded. That is going to help you and your child far more than trying to remember any tip or script. Um and again, just always being mindful of the energy that you are bringing. I hope that this episode was helpful. I hope that it gave you some things to think about and consider for your child's next tantrum cuz, you know, it'll happen. They happen, right? Um and it's overwhelming and don't forget to give yourself so much grace during these moments, okay? Especially during these times. Now, if you have a question for me that you would like me to answer during a next another podcast episode, you can call 916-581-0177.

Thank you so much for listening and I will see you guys in the next one. Bye.