

Learning to Manage My Feelings: 16-36 Months

Learning how to manage feelings helps your child:

- Cope with emotions before becoming overwhelmed
- Reduce temper tantrums
- Feel good, as a powerful and capable person

Ideas to try with your child:

- Offer choices between two things, such as “Do you want milk or water for snack?” or “Would you like to finish the game or go outside?”
- Set clear limits for your child. When those limits are tested, respond with calmness and understanding but don’t give in to tantrums. Guide his behavior but resist the urge to punish him for how he feels.
- When the child shows his emotions, name the feeling (anger, frustration, disappointment), and tell him what you want him to do. Example: “I’m sorry you are disappointed. We can eat ice cream after dinner.” or “It looks like the puzzle piece is stuck. That is frustrating. Would turning the puzzle piece make it fit?”
- Find a safe place for him to be when he is angry. This is not “time out,” but a safe area where he can express his feelings. Say, “I hear that you’re angry right now, let’s go to our special spot. I can help you when you’re not screaming.”

If your child is struggling:

- Ask your child to share with you. When holding a ball, ask “May I have the ball, please?” When he gives you the ball say, “Thank you for sharing.”
- Praise him for his patience when he has waited a turn, shared a toy, or sat quietly. These are valued skills for a toddler.
- Remember, he is learning to be independent and may be overwhelmed by difficulty. Giving encouragement and remaining calm are helpful as your child learns to manage his emotions.

Going further:

- Look for books about feelings: [When Sophie Gets Angry Really, Really Angry...](#) by Molly Bang, [When I Feel Angry](#) by Cornelia Maude Spelman, [Mama, Do You Love Me?](#) by Barbara M. Joose, or [Llama Llama Misses Mama](#) by Anna Dewdney.
- Practice with your child the steps you value in remaining calm. For example: Stop, Take a deep cleansing breath, and then ask for help.

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children’s best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children Ages 16 to 36 months** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: “Express strong emotions through tantrums” *About Me and My Family and Culture*, Ages-16-36 months, pg. 44