

Voices Are Not for Yelling

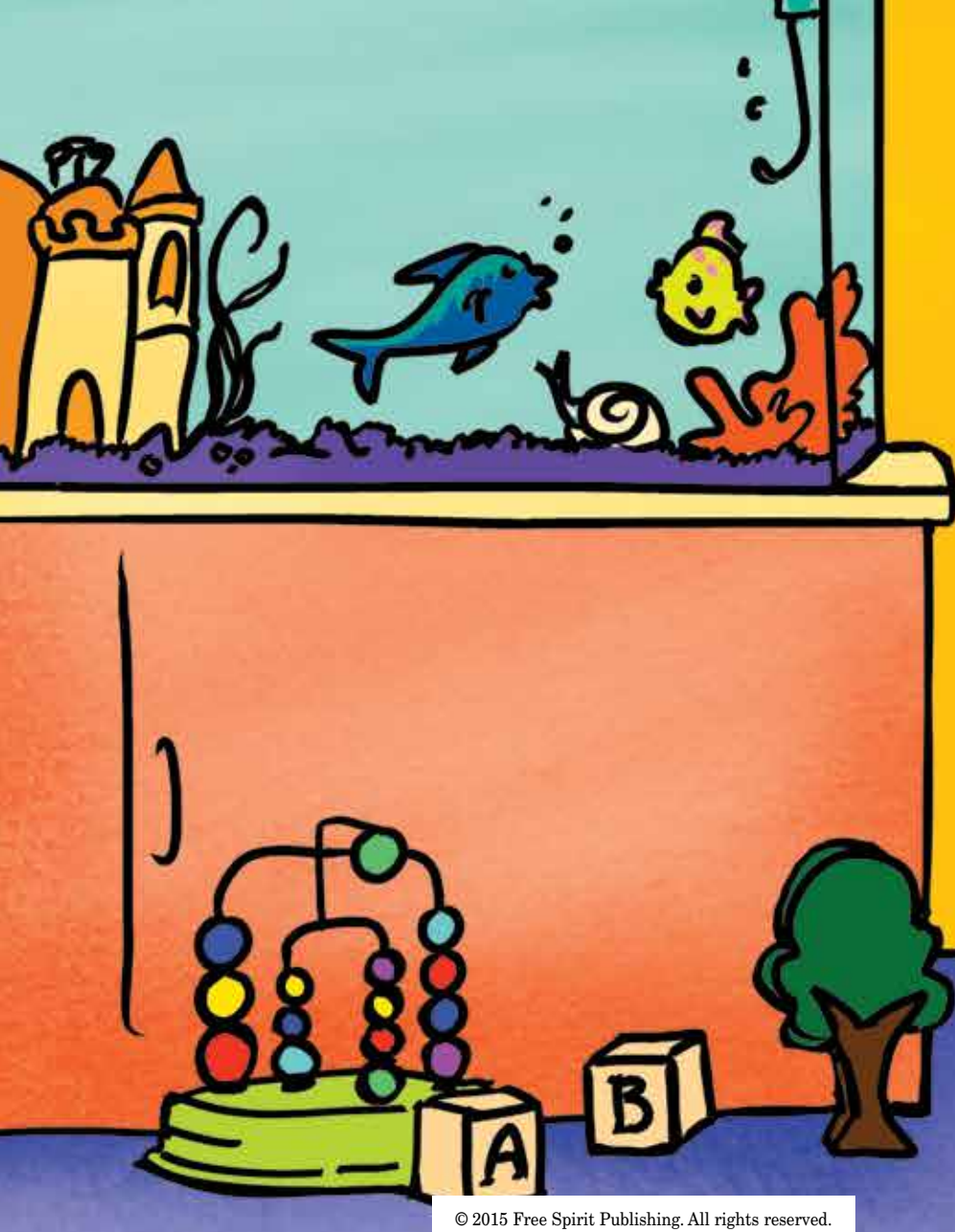


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You have an indoor voice.
It's quiet.



You have an
outdoor voice.
It's LOUD!



Tips for Parents and Caregivers

The toddler years are full of growth and smiles and sweetness—but also tantrums. Bouts of screaming, yelling, wailing, and flailing are a normal part of life with little ones. The reasons are many: Toddlers often feel frustrated because they want to be more independent but need a lot of help. They don't yet have the words to express strong feelings, and they're still learning social skills. When things don't go their way, young children can quickly lose their cool. But that doesn't mean *you* can. Staying calm when young children are melting down is the best way to cope—and to help.

Stick to routines. A child who's hungry, thirsty, tired, or wet is more likely to get cranky or upset. Create dependable routines around meals, snacks, and naps. Make sure your child gets enough sleep each night. Watch for signs of frustration (sighs, tears, a frown, a raised voice) and step in as soon as you can.

Give children choices. Toddlers feel empowered when they get to choose: “Do you want to eat an apple or a banana?” “Do you want to use markers or paint?” To keep things simple, offer a choice of two things rather than ask a broader question such as “What do you want to wear today?”

Be a good role model. At times, adults yell, shout, and act out just like children do. But if you frequently lose your temper, your child's stress level rises, and so does the likelihood that your toddler will copy you. Show your child how you handle strong feelings in positive ways: by breathing deeply, taking a break, exercising, and talking about what's bothering you.



Find ways to say yes. Toddlers hear a lot of *no*. We want to keep them safe and healthy, but in the process, we may say “No,” “Stop,” and “Don't” too often. Whenever possible, say yes! Let your toddler safely explore, touch, and try new things. Learn to phrase your rules positively: instead of “No running,” you could say, “Walk, please,” and instead of “Stop screaming,” you can say, “Voices are not for yelling.”

Stay busy and active. Young children need plenty of time outdoors in the fresh air, as well as lots of active indoor play. Children who feel cooped up and bored may act out by yelling or crying. Physical activity helps them blow off steam.

Teach calm-down skills. Show your child how to breathe deeply in and out to calm down. Demonstrate during a quiet time and give your child opportunities for practice. Then, when tempers flare, your child will already know what to do. Be calm and empathetic when little ones are shouting, fighting, or acting out. Pull out that trusty phrase, “Use your words.” You can use the hand signal for quiet (index finger on the lips); this way, you're not yelling to be heard yourself.

Get down to the child's level.

When you're speaking with young children, kneel or bend so you can look them in the eye. Keep your facial expression and tone of voice soft and gentle. This helps a child feel seen and heard.