Beyond the Tantrum: Understanding and Navigating Children's Emotional Storms Transcript

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Understanding Tantrums as Development

Please understand, this is not about labeling. You know, parents are very scared. I don't want my child to be labeled. There's no such thing. We don' label, we define.

They go to a doctor and you're not gonna put a bandaid on the scratch on a thigh that is now there or the knee, right? If the scratches here, you gonna to put it here.

you are defining and zoning in on what is wrong. And I'm gonna give Benadryl for some kind of an infection and so on and support. It's kind of like that.

I say we're basically defining what is going on so we can treat it better. That's really what it is. This is Dr. Talks. Welcome back to the Raising Healthier Kids Summit.

I am here with the absolutely fantastic, amazing Dr. Sigi, one of my favorite practitioners out there. One of the best social media profiles that there is.

You know, when people ask me about toddlers and kids and behavior, usually I'm sending people over to you and your website and courses. So I really appreciate you being here and chatting today.

Thank you so much. I really, really appreciate everything that you do and how we collaborate from time to time. Yes. Thanks for being here. We're going to talk about tantrums today.

Most common things that I'm asked about in the office, I think it's one of the most competently searched things the parents are looking for because, you know, toddlers, they get frustrated and that's normal, but a lot of parents aren't sure what actually is normal.

When is it too much and what they can actually do about it. So maybe we can start very basically, what is a tantrum and, and is what normal versus abnormal behavior in a toddler.

Right. So tantrums are part of development and part, of developing the frontal lobe and the ability, right? To contain, not just to regulate the emotions, but literally to contain them.

And there aren't enough pathways at that point in their development for them to hold on to their emotions. It all basically spills out. I think their container is so tiny.

can't hold anything. So that's where you are seeing the display of their inability to hold onto their emotions. And this is how they're expressing. Obviously there's still also developmentally more like a primal, right?

It's pre-language. It's all very much fight or flight. It is all right there on the spot, immediacy. There's no ability to delay, to hold off, regulate and so on and support.

So that's what you are watching as a parent. This is your child going through what they're actually supposed to go through, which is what I often say.

You don't want to stop the tension. it's almost like you're stopping something midway. And so it doesn't get the ability to really fully get to that developmental milestone that it needs to, which is the able to contain more of what they're feeling and thinking.

So we do not intervene with toddlers' outbursts or tantrums as much as we may be later on. Think if your toddler is pre-language or their language is very limited.

They're still feeling, thinking, processing a lot of information that's coming at them, inability to hold onto it, definitely not to explain and express to you what is really going on.

They don't even always know. There's no awareness. We don't always know what we're feeling, let alone a toddler. All that is what you're seeing. What you want is to stay calm, to know nothing's wrong.

It's almost like your first instinct. All these questions require executive functioning.

How to Respond Calmly During a Tantrum

They don't have that right then. I mean, come on, answering a question means that you have knowledge and experience and also you are not so emotional, right?

And they're fighting for your life. So. Do not ask questions you can make very short clear statements you are having attention you even say that you want to match someone so don't just say the words are very young children extremely sensory they don just.

They almost like see the words, feel the word. So be animated and you are very upset. Yeah, I see. It's almost you're reflecting and mirroring to them what they're supposed to be feeling.

You definitely want to make sure they are safe. are really just very clear and again, simple. They cannot hurt you or the surrounding or themselves. So keeping them away from harm, and that means also self-harm and obviously harming anything, so no object to people.

You say something like, whoa, uh-uh, no banging on the door, No kicking me. so you're very about the physicality of how they're expressing right then and there what they are going through.

And other than that, stay calm. Stay confident. Again, you know what's going on, so don't look at them as if they know. And wait literally until the tantrum is over.

Now people are like, I'm a target and I am in the market and now it's time to go I understand. And people also feel like tantrums can last, you know, and I know anywhere between five minutes to 45 minutes where a toddler can literally just be screaming.

You can allow them, it's not about hit a pillow and so on and support. These are not necessarily, I mean, if the tantum's small you can say, stomp your feet, but they're throwing themselves on the floor.

Keep them safe from harm and stay not hovering over them as close as possible and literally just tell yourself, it's okay. Everything's. Okay. Nothing's wrong.

My toddler is having a tantrum. They're having hard time. It will be okay literally. I'm saying instead of trying to calm them down. Calm yourself down.

Your calm presence is what they really truly need right then and there to go through what the need to through. You're not in charge of stopping it. You're just present.

They are in charge of actually getting through it and eventually stopping it. You can offer at the very end, you know, if you see it's subsiding, some, would you like a hug?

You could say that, or you can say something when you're done. It can come for a hog. So even the small question is something you want to try and avoid.

Try not to offer too many things. Very simple. When they're ready, they will come for that hug or whatever that is. And you can do a little bit of reflective conversation.

So it's something, because that builds the awareness. You were having a very hard time. Yeah, there was a lot of screaming. I know, yeah, you were kicking the floor.

Yes, I was right here. What was I saying? I said, it is okay. You're having attention, you're literally basically sort of like watching the tape back and kind of critiquing it.

No shame, no guilt, not even major conclusions. So next time, nothing like that. You are building their knowledge and experience like a database right then and there by simply reflecting back.

while they're not in the midst of it. Do this on and on. You can at some point begin to anticipate these tensions, knowing when they happen, and I'm not saying excuse your child or they are tired, they But you can kind of know that it's going to happen because overload of sensory, it is the wrong time of the day for them to be able to hold on to their emotions and so on and forth.

Again, your job is not to necessarily stop it, but try to kind micromanage their life enough that you're not heading towards attention any moment of the day.

But remember still, this is who your child is. This is what they have to go through. And because of their personality, they go though it slightly differently.

Some kids are much more expressive, some are a little less, more introverted to begin with. You will see that differences as a parent. Once you have more than one child, you recognize that.

So just so you know, and eventually you can Help them use some words. You can say, oh man, I'm upset.

When Tantrums May Signal a Bigger Issue

I don't like it. Even that can be in that little reflection that you're doing. Maybe, you know, next time when you have a hard time, i'll remind you, You could say I am very upset, so basically what you are doing is teaching them that they can begin to express themselves with language.

not just with that physicality, like a wild animal. Yeah, no, that's, it's just a perfect explanation. I love that calm demeanor to which you kind of approach it.

It's the absolute correct, you know, methodology. That's why, when people ask me about this, I kindof echo what you just said because I learned it from you.

But I think it is very perfect. And so I kinda wanna, maybe you should steer a little bit and talk about the situation that I see very often in my office and the situations when I get asked about most.

and I thing it around the fear of parents that something is abnormal. Whether they're worried about autism, ADHD, early study, and it's hard sometimes to tell when they are like two or one and a half, but this is what is going through parents' minds these days when their reading.

Their kid is having tantrums that they feel are outside of the normal or biting or kicking or screaming or doing some of these behaviors, which are on the more extreme end of some other things that you said.

And the concern of parents is, you know, how do I know that it's abnormal? When should I go get checked? when should they go see somebody like you? Should I be worried about autism, ADHD?

And obviously, every situation is different. But I guess, what would be some of the things that you as somebody who'd be seeing the patient on the other end?

Because, again, it is like, we're on two ends of a coin, I'm seeing them, right? They're asking me and then they're saying, oh, should we go to the therapist?

So how did you have that conversation? the pediatrician and the parents are to be worried about the behaviors that we're seeing as not just your average tantrum anymore.

Right, very good question. And I can say this to begin with, whether or not eventually there will be something else, we still need to handle the tantum exactly the same way.

That's the thing, that you're not like, okay, my child has this, I'm supposed to handle the Tantrum this way, Not necessarily why, because before you get to see what else, you need to sort of like clean out a little bit the mess that's right here in front of you.

That's kind of what it is. So I would say whether or not your child has anything else and I understand the worry, the concern, and also looking for the right support and help is very important.

But before that, no matter what, start handling the tantrums exactly the same way. Allow your child to still, because no matter what they have, if they do, they still are building that, you know, those pathways that they need in order to move on to the next step or for us to be able to see what is missing from the step.

So you'll come, don't start looking for what's wrong, what wrong. Now, some of the signs, whether, and you can also help them language. So it doesn't mean that all two-year-olds need to be speaking and talking, but the development of language needs to show.

It's almost like to show up, to be presented. Whether it's slow, it still needs to there. So it is not necessarily the pace, how fast they're learning.

It is the fact that they are progressing. Words are not just mimicking and repetition of words, right? Saying what you say. Almost like they come up with stuff.

Pointing to an object, pointing to anything and trying to match the word to it. These are some of the things you want to be looking at. And if language isn't developing, that's when you not to, be concerned not worry them, but say something simple as let's do a speech assessment.

Typically, once again, speech therapist will be able to identify what to do right here, right now. to sort of like take the child to the next step if the childhood is able.

And if not, now we're really more right there observing and beginning to define what else is going on. So your cue or your clue is language right on the sort on like on transition from Pre-language, very limited language, more like sounds and physical language.

You know, they pull you, or they push you to, right? They grab you or drag you into the refrigerator and tell you. So that's like pre- language although it is still physical communication.

Words, we want to see language developing and progressing mainly. And what about, I feel like parents don't always or often have a they don't have a sense of exactly what is normal and they feel like their kid is so much worse than all the other kids.

Like, I got the devil child and I don' know how they're having a tantrum for half an hour and oh, they are four years old and still having tantrums. So I'm curious, you know, the range of what…

I mean, obviously, every kid it's different again. But what, what's the, range, of, normal? You kind of mentioned like 45 minutes, so if kids are having two-hour tantums, would that be something to be concerned about?

If kids have tantum at like seven years-old, is that something, to, be, concerned, about like what? What is the kind,

for what people can see, because it's more than, I think, what, people think.

Yes, absolutely. So around three, we are expecting them to speak pretty well, right? And so from three on, they're using that type of communication through language, and they are still having now outbursts.

Those are much more behavioral. It's not necessarily something's wrong with the child, but it could be something in the home dynamic. And so those are, you know, if your child is having outbursts at four, at five, seven, You want to look for a few things.

One, they shouldn't be at that point, actually. Now it's truly behavioral, manipulative even. And again, it doesn't mean that the child has the answers.

Why are you doing this? Stop. Look at you. People are watching like no shaming, no guilting. Your child is not able to really change that no matter how bad you make them feel.

It's for you to recognize that there are triggers and it could be the triggers are in the dynamic.

What Happens in a Behavioral Evaluation

You're first question is this. Is your child having the same kind of outbursts and you don't want to wait till seven, but it's three and four. anywhere else but home, and I don't mean like in public with you.

I mean, like at school. So if they're going to any type of daycare or school, are they having tantrums or outbursts there as well? If they are, now probably we want to look for someone to maybe do a preliminary observation, to kind of begin to discuss and sort out, is this about the dynamic?

Is this something about a child? alone or the triggers within the dynamic. So if it's organic, it doesn't matter what you'll do. We still have to weed out everything that's going on and really zone in on the child's maybe weaknesses, lack of development in one particular area or two.

If it is something about the dynamics, if is parenting and once you change you, the child will also change. So your first question is, is your child having those kind of tensions, like over the top, screaming, yelling, kicking the teacher?

Now you're like, okay. Now also school has to be involved. You cannot fix the child that goes to school outside of school. The school must be part of the system that is zoning in and understanding what's going on with the children and supporting.

So you can't just, I don't want to talk to the school and so on and support. and they are clueless because they're not. They're obviously dealing. So these are some of the steps along the way.

If the child's not doing any of it at school, the teacher's like, he's an angel. She's amazing. Now you're like okay, so it is the home dynamic. And again, it doesn't mean you are a bad parent.

Please, no. It means that somehow you and your child are triggering one another in such a way that is causing these sort of behaviors and the correction is 90% in you, not in the child.

And if a parent is considering going that next step and coming to somebody like you coming, to a therapist, I think, you know, For adults, we sometimes still think of therapy as like, oh, you're going to go sit on the chair and you can speak with your mind, which is not the case for kids.

I mean, I'm very supportive of sending patients over to practitioners or to yourself because I feel like it's great. You get strategies, You look at the dynamic, but I think it might be helpful for our parents to understand if they go that next step and they come to somebody like you, to a therapist, a behavioral practitioner, what are you going do?

Like what's going happen when you get there? What are looking for and how are going Then you mentioned a little bit, like, you know, looking at the dynamics, trying to figure things out, but it's a lot of going through and figuring out some strategies to help in that family dynamic, I think, from what I've seen.

But maybe you can speak to that for two minutes of just, nothing to be worried about, kids not coming to a couch and speaking there, speaking about Freud.

No, they're definitely not and you know, if they running around the room or they are being busy with any type of object, so they just sitting there and not even wanting to look and talk, it's perfectly fine.

We let the kids be kids. What I do is actually find out information from the parent about specifics. So different situations in which these outbursts are happening.

And I mainly want to know not just what is going on with the child, what's he doing? So what, you know, so why? And so on and so forth. What do you do?

What are you saying? My number one correction is how the parent is approaching the trial. what they're saying before, during and after and why they are corrected.

And again, sometimes if these outbursts, these types of behaviors do not happen at school, I know 100% This is not organic. We're not going to go a certain route to see what else is going on.

This will be just within the family dynamic. And a parent will basically receive an understanding. It's not just a set of instructions. There wouldn't be any conditioning or if you do this, you know, there won't any type of tricks.

it would be more of an, understanding like an insight for the parent to, go, that's what. Because what I actually do is literally interpret what the child is going through to the parents.

So they're reading it more correctly and therefore able to approach it better. There could be some times that I notice that it has maybe something to do again, the family dynamic, place in the families, parents, right?

There's two of them. Who else is involved? What else going on? what kind of messages the child is getting. And it's not about let's all do exactly the same.

That's necessarily the right approach either. But let not have maybe too many gaps and let fill in a lot of the blanks. I really look at it as basically the writing is becoming so much clearer.

So when we read it, We are better, we're better at understanding it, right? If it's fussy, words are missing, if they're misspelled and so on and, so forth.

You're like, wait, what is this? But if it so very clear. Most of the time, I know parents are educated and smart, and I see this time and time again, they go, oh, wow, that makes so much sense.

And that's when they're able to follow through. It's not like, wait, what did she say? What are we supposed to do? It comes much more organic. Now, once again we practice that and we see what happens.

If there are slight changes, we then fine tune it. If something else is appearing, we look at that. It's almost like walking into a situation, there's so much clutter, you don't even know where anything goes.

You basically have to start from the beginning to kind of like, let's just put some things in order. Now I see the space, now I say what's going on. In case school is, you know, children are having a lot of the same behaviors at school, we absolutely involve the school without it.

And I tell parents. Please understand, this is not about labeling. You know, parents are very scared.

Defining Behavior Without Labeling

I don't want my child to be labeled. There's no such thing. We don' label, we define, you know? They go to a doctor and you're not going to put a bandaid on the scratch on a side that is now there or the knee, right?

If the scratches here, are you going put it here? You are defining and zoning in on what is wrong. Benadryl for some kind of an infection and so on and it's kind like that.

I say we're basically defining what is going on so we can treat it better. That's really what it is. 90% of labels do not actually continue. They don't follow.

Parents need to know there isn't some file out there that follows your child that somebody's going to open. It doesn't exist. There's no such thing. We're here, we're now 90% of these, even the assessments, they're good for six months to a year max.

And then we revisit them. So they don't, you know, nobody's somewhere out there when your child's applying to college is going to go. So when you were three, I mean, yeah, no, it's not going happen.

Let's just understand we're here to help the child. This is full advocacy for who the childish, helping them get through and navigate the life that they're having and who they are with it.

much better. I love that. And I'd love to finish with actionable tips, things that people can do today to help. In this situation, I feel like maybe talking a little bit about prevention could be helpful for families in terms of some of the things they could think about, especially being an integrative practitioner.

There are things we talk about and I've already talked about it too. Making sure that they're not hungry, making sure they are not tired, you know, not having too much sugar, the foods that are eating the dyes, all of those things.

So maybe we can talk about that for a second. And of course, keeping in mind that no matter what you do, it's still normal and it still may happen, but there are certainly some things that we could be mindful of as parents that can potentially be big triggers for our kids that at least try to eliminate some of them as much as we, so that way they'll less likely have one.

Exactly. So as they get older, you know, and they're tired and there may be hungry and. They're upset because they didn't get what they wanted a target or you're buying a gift for someone else.

I mean, or they disappointed because the ice cream fell on the floor and so on and support. All of these are true. but something else needs to be integrated, the ability to contain some of these emotions as they get older.

So when you say, oh, he's tired, now you're like, okay, so if he is tired this is it, can't do anything about it. No. What we're looking at is now the beginning of building coping skills, resilience, containers, Language, trust even, right?

So what's a matter is, you know, the wrong kind of question. Why are you upset? Well, he's tired. Both of those are basically sort of like you kind going, there's nothing I can do.

It's not true. So you can obviously micromanage their life in such a way that maybe they're not tired or hungry or upset because you didn't get them what they wanted.

Yeah, that's not going to happen. You want to be mindful as much as you. Can you want be prepared and they will still be triggered and have their emotions.

When that happens, right? So you want to know that you are not stopping helping them grow and grow those abilities. So I can see you're tired. Yeah, I know you hungry.

It's okay. First of all, use your word. Second of, all you can, you know, You can wait a little bit. Yes, so you see, I'm

not like, okay, i'm, not panicking.

Prevention, Triggers, and Parent Self-Regulation

I am not immediately trying to feed in exactly every one of their needs because now i am over accommodating. I'm not allowing my child to actually grow and develop these mental muscles that they need because I am not really giving them opportunities to work these muscles.

So know that all these triggers are true, and as your child gets older, they will need to learn to face these challenges. So don't use them as excuses or as quick fixes each and every time.

Does that make sense? Yeah, it does. It is great advice to finish on. And yeah, I just want to say again that you have one of the best, if not the most toddler course that I've seen and I'm always sending parents over to that.

So maybe, you know, people want learn more about you, follow you online or dive a little bit deeper into the toddler stuff or any other courses. Maybe you can tell people a bit about that?

So yeah, so it's basically our social media, Dr. Sigi, or the website is DrSigi and lots of information. You can sign up for a newsletter. There's a lot of free information out there that I give.

And if you want, you can purchase the toddler course, there's lot sales here and there, right? That we do over the years. I mean, over throughout the year.

To begin with, it's probably not that expensive. You don't have to take the entire course. Even once you purchase it, you can go into exactly what it is that you need and just simply learn from that.

Everything is PDFs and everything is recorded. You hear my intonation, you follow the instructions, my scripts, and it can be for anything that you are struggling with your toddler or you think is an issue that would like to know more of.

Yeah, it's fantastic. I mean, I went through it, and I sent parents there, because I think it is a good, if you're worried about what's normal, or whether what your kid is doing is normal.

It's a place to start and give you some of those scripts. And I do think that it does help a lot of parents to calm down a little bit, which is always my biggest thing is that, you know, think is good if we can go and you can see that.

You're like, okay, well, this is all sounds just like my toddler. So I guess that's okay. But let me start doing some these things versus, oh, that is much worse than this.

Okay, so I should go get that evaluation. really, really good use of technology that we have and of videos, because nothing can replace working with a practitioner.

But sometimes you can get a feel for where you sit on the spectrum of the issue, I guess, that you're worried about. Yes, the challenges. Absolutely. Yeah.

And one of most important things is for parents to remember when you are sensible, you make better decisions anyway. So your actions reflect that. When you were panicky in and all stressed and worried yeah you probably are not thinking through what is really going on so just remember a lot has to do and i'm not saying you can just be sort of like nonchalant all day long parenting is extremely difficult it's triggering to you So be mindful of that.

I am the one that's triggered. So I first have to handle myself before I'm trying to like calm the child down so then I can be okay. No, first you be.

Okay. It's like that mask that, right? Like when they give us those instructions, it's, like, put it on yourself because if you're not able, you cannot do anything for anyone else.

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for everything that you do and all the millions of families at this finance you're helping and are following you.

So you are pretty famous, you know. I welcome you! Thank, Thank You so Much for Everything and we'll see you guys in the next one. Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks.

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