Beyond The Tantrum: Understanding And Navigating Children's Emotional Storms Transcript

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Introduction and expert background

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I am here with the absolutely fantastic, amazing doctor Siggy. 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 your courses. So I really appreciate you being here and chatting today.

Thank you so much. I really, really, really appreciate everything that you do and how we collaborate from time to time. Yes. Thank thanks for being here.

We're going to we're going to talk about tantrums today. It's one of the most common things that I'm asked about in the office. I think it's one of the most commonly searched things that parents are looking for because, you know, toddlers, they get frustrated.

And that's in a normal. But a lot of parents are not sure what actually is normal, when's it too much and what they can actually do about it. So maybe we can start very basically, you know, what is a tantrum and what is normal versus abnormal behavior in a toddler.

Right. So tantrums are part of development and part of developing the frontal lobe and the ability 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. So it all basically spills out into almost I think they were a container is so tiny, can't hold anything.

So that's where you are seeing the display of their inability to hold on to their emotions. And this is how they're expressing. Obviously there's still also developmental lean more like a primal right.

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

What tantrums are and how to respond

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 are stopping something midway. And so it doesn't have it doesn't get the ability to really fully get to that developmental milestone that it needs to, which is the ability to contain more of what they're feeling and thinking.

So we do not intervene with toddlers, outbursts or tantrums as much as we do, maybe later on. So think if your toddler is pre language or their language is very limited, there is still feeling, thinking, processing a lot of information that's coming at them, inability to hold on to it.

Definitely not to explain and express to you what is really going on. They don't even always know, right? There's no awareness. We don't always know what we're feeling, let alone a toddler.

So all of 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 what's wrong? What's going on? What's a matter? What do you want?

All these questions require executive functioning. 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 and they're fighting for your life. So do not ask questions. You can make very short, clear statements. You are having a tantrum. You can even say that whoa, you want to match somewhat.

So don't just say the words. Toddlers are very, young children, extremely sensory. They don't just hear the words, they almost like, see the words, feel the words.

So be animated. And you are very upset. Yeah, I see, it's almost like you're reflecting and mirroring to them what they're supposed to be feeling. You definitely want to make sure they're safe.

So your boundaries 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, no banging on the door, no kicking me.

So you were very clear about the physicality of how they were expressing, right? And in there what they're 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 what's going on and wait literally until the tension is over. And I know now people are like, I mean, I'm a target and I'm in the market and I'm a grandmother and I'm.

Yeah, and now it's time to go. I understand, and people also feel like tantrums can last, you know, and I know anywhere between 5 minutes to 45 minutes where a toddler can literally just be screaming.

You can allow them, you know, it's not about hit a pillow and so on and so forth. These are not necessarily I mean, if the tantrums more, 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 telling yourself, it's okay, everything's okay. Nothing's wrong. My toddler is having a tantrum. They're having a 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 then to go through what they need to go through.

You're not in charge of stopping it. You 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 subsiding some.

Would you like a hug? You can say that, or you can say something when you're done. You can come for hug. So even the small question is something you want to try and avoid.

Try not to offer too many things. Very simple. When they are 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. So you were having a very hard time. Yeah. There was a lot of screaming I know. Yeah. You were kicking the floor.

Yeah I was right here. What was I saying? I said, it's okay, you're having a tantrum. You literally basically, you know, sort of like watching the tape back and kind of like critiquing it.

No shame, no guilt, no even major conclusion. So next time, nothing like that. You're building. No knowledge and experience that could database right then in 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're tired, they're hungry.

It's true. But you can kind of know that it's going to happen because overload of sensory, it's the wrong time of the day for them to be able to hold on to their emotions and so on and so forth.

Again, your job is not to necessarily stop it, but try to kind of micromanage their life enough that you're not, heading towards a tantrum 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 through it slightly differently.

Some kids are much more expressive. Some are a little less more introverted to begin with. And you will see their differences, you know, as a parent, once you have more than one child, you recognize that.

So just so you know, then eventually you can help them use some words. You can say, man, I'm upset. I don't like it. Even that can be that little reflection that you're doing.

Maybe, you know, next time when you have a hard time, I'll remind you, you can say, very upset. So basically, what you're doing is teaching them that they can begin to express themselves with language, not just with that physicality.

Like a wild animal. You know, that's it's just a perfect explanation. I mean, I love the calm demeanor to which you, you kind of approach it. I think it's the absolute correct, you know, methodology.

That's why, you know, when people ask me about this, I kind of echo what you just said because I learned it from you. But but I think it's very perfect.

When tantrums may signal a concern

And so I kind of want to maybe scare a little bit and talk about the situation that I see very often in my office, in the situation when I get asked about most.

And I think it's around the fear of parents that something is abnormal, whether they're worried about autism, ADHD, you know, early to me and it's hard, you know, sometimes to tell when they're like 2 or 1 and a half, but but this is what is going through parents mind these days when they're reading, you know, their their kid is having tantrums that they feel are outside of the normal or biting or kicking or screaming or doing, you know, some of these behaviors which which are, the, you know, more extreme end of some of the 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 I go see somebody like you? Should I be worry about autism, ADHD? And obviously every situation is different, but I guess what?

What would be some of the things that you as, as, as somebody who would be seeing the patient on the other end because, you know, again, it's like we're we're on two ends of the coin. I'm seeing them right.

And then they're, they're asking me and then they're saying, oh, should we go to the therapist? So how do you have that conversation? And when should the the pediatrician and the parents ought 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 tantrum exactly the same way.

And that's the thing that you're not like, okay, if 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 primary 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 next step. So you'll come don't start looking for what's wrong.

What's wrong now some of the signs were there, you know, 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 present and whether it's slow, it still needs to be there. So it's not necessarily the pace, how fast they're learning, it's the fact that they are progressing.

So words are, you know, 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 know to be concerned not to worry them, but say something simple is let's do a speech assessment.

And 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 child is able.

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

You know, they pull you, they push you to right, they grab you to drag you to 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 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't know how they're having a tantrum for half an hour and oh, they're four years old and they're still having tantrums.

I'm curious, you know, the range of what I mean. Obviously every kid is different again, but what is the range of of norm like you kind of mentioned like 45 minutes of kids are having two hour tantrums.

Would that be something to be concerned about if kids are having tantrums at like seven years old, is that something to be concerned about? Like what?

What is the kind of normal range for what 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're still having now outbursts. The 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 it's 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 them 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. Your 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 3 a.m., 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 the 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 or lack of, development in one particular area or two.

If it is something about the dynamic, it is parenting, and once you change, you, the child will also change. So your first question is, is your child having those kind of tantrums 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 has to be part of the system.

That is zoning in and understanding what's going on with the child and supporting.

What happens in a behavioral evaluation

So you can just I don't want to talk to the school and so on and so forth. You have to you can't send your child somewhere and they are clueless because they're not they're obviously dealing.

So these are some of the steps along the way. The child's not doing any of the the school, the teachers. Like he's an angel. She's like amazing. Now you're like, okay, so it is the home dynamic.

And again, it doesn't mean you're 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 know, 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're going to speak the mind, which is not the case for kids.

I mean, I'm very supportive of sending patients over to practitioners that you yourself, because I feel like it's great. You get strategies. You look at the dynamics.

But I think it might be helpful for a parent to understand if if they go that next step and they come to somebody like you, to a therapist, to a behavioral behavioral practitioner, what what are you going to do?

Like what's going to happen when you get there? What are you looking for and how are you going to kind of help them? 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 bringing 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, you know, not nothing to be

worry about kids not coming to a couch and speaking.

They're speaking about Freud. No, they're they're definitely not. And, you know, if they're running around the room or they're being busy with any type of objects or they're 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's, what's he doing. So what, you know, so why and so on and so forth. What do you do? What do you say?

My number one correction is how the parent is approaching the child. What they're saying before, during and after. And right there they're corrected. And again some times if they these outbursts, these type 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 the parent will basically receive, an understanding.

And it's not just a set of instructions. There wouldn't be any conditioning. Or if you do this, you know, there wouldn't be any type of tweaks. It would be more of an understanding, like an insight for the parent to go, oh, that's what?

Because what I actually do is literally interpret what the child is going through to the parent. So they're reading it more correctly and therefore able to approach it better.

There could be some times that I noticed that it has maybe something to do within the family dynamic place in the family. Parents. Right. There's two of them.

Who else is involved? What else is going on? What kind of messages the child is getting? And it's not about let's all do exactly the same. That's not necessarily the right approach either, but let's not have maybe too many gaps.

And let's fill in a lot of the blanks and really look at it is basically the writing is becoming so much clearer. So when we read it, we are better. We were better at understanding it, right?

If it's fussy from words are missing, if there are misspelled, and so on and so forth, you're like, wait, what is this? But if it's all very clear most of the time, I know parents are educated and smart.

They 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? Like, it comes much more organic. Now it 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 and 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. Oh, now I see the space, now I see what's going on.

It's kind of like that in case school, isn't it? 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 good. I don't want my child to be labeled. There's no such thing.

We don't label. We define. You know, they go to a doctor and you're not going to put a bandaid on there, the scratch on a side that is not there, or the knee.

Right. If the scratch is here, you're going to put it here. You are defining and then zoning in on what is wrong. You're not going to give them, you know, Benadryl for it's some kind of an infection and so on and so forth.

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. 90% of labels do not actually continue.

They don't follow parents need to know there isn't some kind of a file out there that follows your child that somebody is going to open. It doesn't exist.

There's no such thing. We're here. We're now 90% of these. Even the assessments the good for six months to a year max. And then we revisit them. Make sense 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 to happen. So let's just understand we're here to help the child. This is full advocacy for who the child is, helping them get through and navigate the life that they're having and who they are with it much better.

I love that and and I'd love to finish with, actionable tips, things that people can do today to help. So far 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 that they could think about, especially being an integrative practitioner.

You know, there are things that that we talk about, and I I've heard you talk about it too, like making sure that they're they're not hungry, making sure they're not tired, you know, not having too much sugar in the foods that they're eating, the diet, all of those things.

So maybe we can we can talk about that for a second. And of course, keeping in mind that no matter what you do, still normal.

Prevention, triggers, and practical parenting tips

And it still may happen, but there are certainly some things that we can be mindful of us as parents that can potentially be big, big triggers for our kids that we can at least at least try to eliminate some of those as much as we can.

So that way they're less likely have one. Exactly. So as they get older, you know, in their tired in there may be hungry in 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're disappointed because the ice cream fell on the floor and so on and so forth. 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's 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.

Steven. Right. So what's a matter is you know the wrong kind of question. Why are you upset? What? Oh he's tired. Both of those are basically sort of like you kind of 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 to be prepared, and they will still be triggered and have their emotions when that happens.

Right. So you want to know that you're not stopping helping them grow and grow those abilities. So I can see you're tired. Yeah I know you're hungry. So okay, first of all use your words.

Second of all, you can, you know, you can wait a little bit. What? Yes you can. So you see, I'm not like, okay, I'm not panicking. I'm not immediately trying to fit in exactly every one of their needs.

Because now I'm over accommodating, not allowing my child to actually grow and develop these mental muscles that they need because I'm not really giving them opportunities to work these muscles.

And so know that these all these triggers are true. And as your child gets older, they 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 is great. It by definition. And yeah, I just want to say again that that you, you have one of the best, if not the best toddler course that I've seen.

And I'm always sending parents over to that. So maybe, you know, if people want to learn more about you or you online or, you know, dive a little bit deeper into the the toddler stuff for other courses, maybe you can tell people a little bit about that.

So yeah, so it's basically our social media doctor Siggy. Or the website is doctor. So again, 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 title. Of course, there's a lot of, sales here and there, right, that we do over the years. I mean, over the, 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.

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

Yeah. And that's it's fantastic. I mean I, I went through it and I said parents because I think it's a good if you're worried about what's normal or whether what your kid is doing is normal, I think it's a good place to start and gives you some of those scripts.

And I think it does help a lot of parents to calm down a little bit, which is always more, you know, biggest thing is, is that, you know, I think it's a good if you can go and you can see that and you're like, okay, well, this is all sounds just just like my toddler.

Resources and closing remarks

So I guess that's okay. But let me start doing some of these things versus, oh, it's so much worse than this. Okay. I should go get that evaluation. I'm thinking, should I get so I. Can't.

Really, really. Yes. Good. A good use of, of technology that we have in a videos because nothing can replace working with the practitioner. But sometimes you can get a feel for where you where you sit on the, the spectrum of, the issue I guess, that you're worried about.

So yes. The challenges. Absolutely. Yeah. And one of the most important things is for parents to remember when you are sensible, you make better decisions anyway.

And so your actions reflect that. And when you are panicky in, in 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 and 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. You know? First you be okay.

It's like that mask that. Right? Like when they give us those instruction and it's like, put it on yourself. Because if you're not able, you cannot do anything for anyone else.

So. Absolutely. Well yeah. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you for everything that you do and all the the millions of families at this point that you're helping.

And I are following you. So you're pretty famous here. I know I'm well, thank you. Thank thank you so much for everything. And we'll see you guys. And thank you so much. Thank you. But.