

# HELPFUL PHRASES

**How to Gain Cooperation From Toddlers  
and Preschoolers Without Lectures**



**by Rachel Norman & Lauren Tamm**



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*How to Gain Cooperation  
From Toddlers and  
Preschoolers Without  
Lectures*

*By Rachel Normal and Lauren Tamm*

*Plus 10+ Free Printables  
With Phrases to Get You  
Started!*

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*We cannot guarantee that these phrases will work well for your child. This is our experience and our opinion. You should draw your own conclusions about the information we share with you. We have used information from other books, websites, and personal experience to aid us in writing this book.*

*For our kids who make each day a unique  
parenting adventure.*

*For our spouses who support us each and  
every day.*

*For all the parents and caregivers who  
are looking to simplify parenting. You are  
among friends!*

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# Introduction

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*Have the toddler and preschool years caught you by surprise?*

We all come into motherhood unsure of what to expect. How will it feel to have a baby? How will I learn all the things I don't know? Soon, we find our footing with our bundles of joy. Feeding, cuddling, and changing diapers becomes part of our home landscape.

Babies are helpless and completely dependent upon us, and it's a beautiful season. Then the babies grow into pre-toddlers. These pre-toddlers begin crawling and communicating with grunts, sounds, and motions. They learn what areas in the home are off limits, and they begin to develop their own personalities.

*Then they become toddlers...*

They want to assert their own independence. They know exactly what they want: treats for breakfast, bedtime at 11:00 pm, and a mom who will immediately understand what they want at all times. They are fiery, exhilarating, precious, and at times, trying.

At this point we realize that having a peaceful home with toddlers isn't necessarily a given. We can be domineering, which can cause our toddlers to lash out further. We can give them whatever they want, which will create pint-sized tyrants. Or we can choose a better way: We can empower our children by creating healthy boundaries and routines that breed cooperation, predictability, and trust.

This is where *Helpful Phrases* comes in...

We wrote *Helpful Phrases* to give mothers a tool – one of many – to help parents communicate in a more effective way with their toddlers and preschoolers. While our little ones are like sponges, they are still limited in their ability to understand our messages.

Especially if we're long-winded...

This book will help you get to the heart of the matter and teach you how to communicate clearly with your toddlers and preschoolers. Not only will they feel security in knowing what you expect, you'll feel less frustrated as you throw off some previous forms of communication that haven't worked for you.

We hope you'll find great success as we have with using these helpful phrases to foster independence, cooperation, and a positive environment in your home.

Rachel, *A Mother Far from Home*

*“The way we talk to our  
children becomes their  
inner voice.”*

*Peggy O’Mara*

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## Why Short Phrases?

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My toddler was “in the zone.” In that moment, I felt like a nuclear bomb could go off right next to us, and he wouldn’t even notice. We were preparing to leave the house for my daughter’s doctor appointment. My toddler came along because it never seems worth the money to pay a babysitter for a quick appointment.

After spending exactly 8.67 minutes in a serious debate over shoes, my toddler finally agreed to put on his crocs, and we left the house. The baby screamed the whole way to the appointment. It was only 9:36 am and already my head throbbed with each passing second. Deep breath. We pulled into the parking lot with exactly three minutes to spare.

We were going to make it! Right until my toddler lost his matchbox car. It dropped between the seats into an abyss of crumbs, broken toys, and spare change.

I told him, “It’s okay. We’ll get the car later. Right now we have to go inside.”

He didn’t listen to one word I said. My toddler was on a mission to find a matchbox car, and he wasn’t going to

give up until he found it. Like I said, a nuclear bomb could go off right next to us, and in that moment, he wouldn't even notice.

Now you might be thinking, Okay lady, take the bull by the horns here. Tell your toddler to forget about the stupid car, get a move on, and take him into the doctor's office already. I understand exactly where you are coming from—a place of logic. But let me explain why I didn't take that approach.

## **A Look Inside the Toddler and Preschooler Brain**

I could spend hours rambling about the brain of toddlers and preschoolers and all the fancy science behind it. We could talk synapses, myelination, frontal cortex, neuron, cortical and subcortical structures, but truthfully, who has time for that?

Let's keep it simple. You need a basic understanding of how your child processes information. This is the key to unlocking better listening, cooperation, fewer power struggles, and more peaceful days. Knowing how your child's brain works empowers you to shift your approach to one that is more effective. Let's work smarter, not harder, right?

## Important Structure #1: Prefrontal Cortex

This is your child's thinking brain, and it's located in the front of the brain, right behind the forehead. It handles logic, empathy, compassion, creativity, self-regulation, self-awareness, predicting, planning, problem-solving, and attention.

While the prefrontal cortex regulates behavior and impulsivity, it does not fully mature until we reach our mid-twenties. While an adult's prefrontal cortex is fully mature and operates at an extremely high level, it is the most immature part of your child's brain.

So when you are thinking, "Geeze, we really need to hurry and get to this appointment."

Your child is thinking, "Geeze, I love that matchbox car so much. If I could find it, that would make me happy and life would be grand."

This doesn't mean small children completely lack the ability to control impulsivity and to process logic, but their ability is limited. The thinking brain grows as your child grows, but when you struggle with behavior and listening, it's important to understand your child's limited development.

Now that we know about the immature prefrontal cortex (i.e. the logical brain), it is easier to understand why getting your child to put on his shoes or stop looking for a

99 cent matchbox car hurts your brain more than a college calculus test.

## **Important Structure #2: Limbic System**

This is your child's emotional brain. It processes memory, stress responses, nurturing, caring, separation anxiety, fear, rage, social bonding, and hormone control. During the early years, the limbic system is the front seat driver of the brain, and it doesn't care what anyone in the backseat has to say about it.

Toddlers and preschoolers react to the world in the form of feelings (sometimes gigantic ones), stemming from the limbic system in the front seat. Meanwhile, the prefrontal sits in the backseat (figuratively, not literally) trying to talk some sense into it, but the limbic system is in overdrive.

Let's say you're outside with your child, and he tries to drink the rainwater from a puddle on the ground. Using your prefrontal cortex (the logical part of your brain), you're thinking about him ingesting E.coli and a heinous GI virus. Then you think about him being up at 3 a.m. while he empties his dinner into the toilet. Logically, you'd rather avoid the consequences of your child ingesting E.coli, so you tell him to stop.

### **Except He Doesn't**

He's thinking about how fun it is to drink water off the ground. He's thinking about how it makes him feel happy.

When you tell him to stop, he doesn't think, "Oh yeah, this grimy puddle is gross, and it could make me sick."

Right now, he isn't using the logical part of his brain. Instead, he thinks, "My mom doesn't want me to be happy. Rainwater makes me happy. Why won't she let me have what makes me happy?"

That's the difference between adults and small children. You are operating from the prefrontal cortex, which is fully developed and logical. Your child is operating from the limbic system, which is illogical and driven purely by emotion.

## **Important Structure #3: Synapses**

Synapses are the connections inside your child's brain, and this is how the brain communicates. Think of them as a huge pile of tangled string all in one ball. Each string represents a communication pathway in your child's brain.

This is the most interesting part about synapses: when your child is born, his brain has nearly all the neurons (or string) it will ever have. Then between birth and age three, your child experiences the most dramatic brain growth spurt of his entire life.

Your child's brain is building connections, learning and growing, all in an effort to determine what is important information and what is not. By the time your child is three years old, his brain will reach 80 percent of its adult volume after building all these synapse connections.

After the age of three, the synapses that go unused start to fizzle. The ones that are used grow stronger. By the time your child reaches adulthood, 50 percent of the synapses will fizzle out. This is all part of normal brain development.

The important relationship between synapses and how we communicate with kids is this:

When you are struggling with listening, communication or power struggles, remember synapses. Remember that your child's brain is experiencing the greatest growth spurt of its life. It's building and growing connections at a faster rate than he will experience at any other time in his life.

Repeated use strengthens a synapse. This is why consistent approaches to listening and behavior are so important. The groundwork you lay during the early years sets the foundation for the years to come. When you use the consistent approaches of short phrases, you will see those synapses strengthen and grow. Eventually, those synapses become so strong they'll guide your child towards better listening, and behavior gets easier and easier.

## **Why Short Phrases?**

Your child's brain craves clear communication. You may find yourself in a situation when your child is melting down or determined to carry out a power struggle. You may ask your child a series of questions and he responds "No!" to everything you say.

Do you want to go to the bathroom? No!

Do you want to eat dinner? No!

Do you want to read a book? No!

Do you want to play with blocks? No!

As a parent or caregiver, this is a very frustrating situation, but kids do this for a reason. Starting at about 18 months, your child begins to understand that he is a separate person from you and others. He also understands that his own thoughts and feelings are separate from yours. And he understands that you may not share the same viewpoint.

This is where the boundary testing begins. These are intense moments between a young child and a parent.

## **Enter Helpful Phrases**

Using quick, clear bursts of communication with your child is more important than ever. Your child is desperate to feel understood, desperate to feel comfortable with his place in the world, and desperate to understand what you are truly asking of him.

Many times, your kids may not even understand what you are instructing them to do. So what do they do? They guess. Or they ignore you completely. When they guess wrong or ignore you, you get crabby, tired, and irritable. Power struggles become the norm, and your day-to-day

life with kids feels more like circling the drain rather than thriving and enjoying your days.

Throughout this book, we will show you how to use short, simple phrases to gain cooperation, encourage better listening, and minimize power struggles.

## **The Best Part?**

We are going to empower you with phrases that will help you respond to your child when you are faced with a variety of challenging parenting scenarios. When your child won't listen you, when your child refuses to participate in age-appropriate chores, when your child is picky at the dinner table, or when your child fights bedtime. These are just a few examples of the powerful ways phrases can shape your parenting into easier, more relaxing days.

You are at a window of opportunity. Positive and effective techniques discussed in the coming chapters will empower you as a parent or caregiver to teach your child to listen, comprehend, and if you play your phrases right, put on his shoes and help you get to appointments on time.

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## **Get Started with Helpful Phrases**

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**To get started with Helpful  
Phrases, visit our information  
page:**

**[http://anotherfarfromhome.com/  
helpful-phrases-book](http://anotherfarfromhome.com/helpful-phrases-book)**