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# 3 Things Parents of Strong Willed Toddlers Should Know



I stood in the elevator looking down at my **strong-willed toddler** on the floor. He sat up, swung his head

backwards and let out another ginormous

"WAAAAAAAAA."



When the elevator stopped on the third floor my heart skipped 3 beats before sinking into the abyss of anxiety in my stomach. The doors opened to another family needing to ride the elevator. As they stepped on, the look on their faces said it all.





# **3 Secrets of Parenting a Strong-Willed Toddler**

Their jaws opened wide enough to fit a softball.

For a split second, I imagined gently placing my hands under their jaws to help close their mouths. This was—after all—a toddler crying in an elevator, not an elephant walking a tight rope.

But this is a moment as a parent to employ a sliver of leadership and self-control, not to act like a child myself. I knelt down to my toddler, waited until our eyes locked, and said a few calm but firm words to help get us through floors 4 through 8.

"You're upset about the matchbox cars. You didn't want to come inside. It feels better to cry."

As the elevator reached the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, I picked my son up off the floor, kindly nodded to the gawking onlookers, and walked to my apartment door.

## **What parents of strong-willed toddlers should know**

Parenting a strong-willed toddler is tough work. You feel like there is nothing you can do to turn your defiant or spirited child into a cheerfully obedient little person. You feel embarrassed by the onlookers. You are exhausted, and **maybe even an angry mom**, because each day is an ordeal.



You've **read all the parenting books** and tried all. the. methods. Simply put, they aren't working.

Some days you want to grab a glass of wine, a bag of miniature Reese's and hide under the queen-sized comforter in your master bedroom. You know....to create a little mom tent slash oasis that is free from screaming children, gawkers, and advice.

You would sit under the comforter with headphones to

block out the children, who were banging on the door wondering why it was locked.

This is your happy place and your twenty-one-year-old-self has **no idea** who you are anymore.

**But I know you.**

I know you because I am just like you. And, my friend, there are three things that you must absolutely, without a doubt, know about parenting a strong-willed toddler.

**You are raising a natural born leader.**

Strong-willed kids are the leaders of our future generation. They are the kids who go against the grain and pave the way. They are the ones who will become business owners and emergency room charge nurses and school principals and police commissioners.

Raising a leader requires **extraordinary parenting**. Your child doesn't just need a normal amount of patience and guidance from you. He needs extraordinary patience and guidance.



Inside, he has all these powerful feelings, thoughts and ideas swirling around like a vegetable medley, and he has no idea how to turn the heat down from a boil to a simmer.

Raising a natural born leader means your child ***needs*** you. Yes, it's trying and exhausting. But the work you are doing is laying the foundation to help your child craft those leadership skills and put them to good use one day.

**You don't have to apologize.**

Unless your child is harming another person in some way, you don't have to look at people and apologize for your kid's **big feelings or temper tantrum**.

When your kid is laying on the floor of Target crying because he wants a toy and you're not going to buy it, there is no need to apologize to gawking people who need to put a softball in their mouth.

You don't need to apologize for making another patron's shopping experience uncomfortable. That's their issue because **they haven't gotten the memo**: The best moms are the moms with the screaming kids.

You're the mom doing the hard work. You're the parent not giving in. You're the one teaching all of the life lessons.



This is not an easy job and there will be tears. Carry on, mama. Don't apologize for being a good mom and doing the hard work.

## **“Strength” training is your friend.**

It's easy to—by default—to get stuck in the negative cycle of trying to **make your child listen** and having them fight tooth and nail every step of the way.

One way to get out of this cycle is to name the positive part about what the child did right in each and every situation. No matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

This is what I like to call **“strength” training in parenting**. And it goes something like this...

Instead of...“You are such a picky eater. I don't know why I even bother to make meals for you.”

Try...“You didn't like any of the food on your plate at dinner tonight, but you tried at least one bite of everything. You found a way to try it even though you didn't want to.”



Instead of..."Why aren't you sharing? All these toys don't belong to you, you know! Give your sister something and quit being so selfish."

Try..."You didn't want to share your toys with your sister. But you found a toy that she would like to play with and you gave it to her. That shows that you care even though sharing is hard for you."

Instead of..."I'm so tired of fighting you at bedtime every night. You need to go to bed and quit your whining all the time."

Try..."You didn't want to go to bed. You wanted to stay up with mom and dad. You got all your frustrations out and then you were calm. You found a way to calm yourself even though you were really angry."

## Strong-willed kids are amazing.

When you're in the elevator and your kids are on the floor crying and you think you've failed, **remember this**: defiant kids are actually the best thing ever.

Your child is the one who will turn down the little blue pill at a high school party. Your child is the one who will stop a friend from drinking and driving. Your child is the one who will start a small business and grow it into a billion-dollar company. Your child is the one who will parent with patience and guidance even when she wants to hide under a tent in the master bedroom with a Reese's.

Your strong-willed toddler is filled with greatness. You just have to find it, draw it out, and allow it to shine.

# Print this free printable

This post comes with a free printable to help you remember how to use “strength” training with your toddler. It contains 4 examples of “strength” training to get your wheels turning and help you bring out greatness in your individual child.

Here's a sneak preview...



## Download Your Free Printable

1. **Download the checklist.** You'll get the printable, plus join my weekly parenting newsletter! [Just Click Here to Download and Subscribe](#)
2. **Print.** Any paper will do the trick, but card stock would be ideal.
3. **Place it on your refrigerator.** Use it as a quick reference to keep parenting simple!

## Want more on parenting?

- ⚓ What No One Tells You About Parenting Toddler Boys
- ⚓ How to Make Kids Listen: 30 Genius Resources
- ⚓ 15 Awesome Listening Activities for Kids
- ⚓ The Tantrum Taming Tip Most Parents Don't Know About



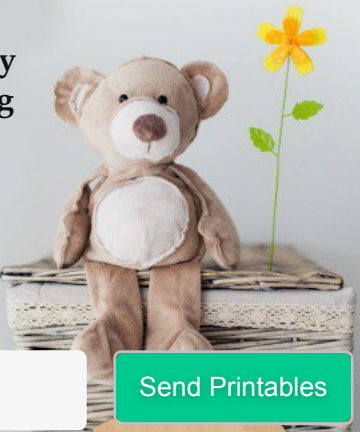
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A small brown teddy bear is sitting on a stack of several books. To the right of the bear is a single yellow flower with green leaves. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.





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#### ABOUT LAUREN TAMM

I'm Lauren and I write about my crazy parenting adventures, discovering happiness in motherhood and navigating the ups and downs of military life. I spend my days drinking coffee while chasing a toddler around the house. Hang around for a bit and join the fun!

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## Comments



*Amelia says*

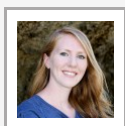
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JUNE 8, 2016 AT 2:13 PM



Thank you sooooo much for this article! I have an extremely strong-willed 3 yr old. And frankly though I was failing as a mother because I couldn't figure out how to handle his tantrums. I will definitely be trying these helpful tips.

Reply

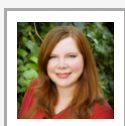


***Lauren Tamm*** says

JUNE 15, 2016 AT 6:11 AM

Amelia, you are so welcome! Thanks for leaving such an encouraging comment!

Reply



***Amanda*** says

JUNE 11, 2016 AT 6:58 PM

You mean I'm not the only one who stands in the Elevator while my child is on the floor :)...I have one of those strong willed toddlers,

luckily shes generally happy, but when she wants (or doesn't want to) something that is it. Great tips!

Reply



***Lauren Tamm*** says

JUNE 15, 2016 AT 6:11 AM

Haha. No, no Amanda, you are definitely not the only one! There's a whole community of us. Apparently, strong-willed toddlers are very prevalent 😊

Reply



***Octavia*** says

JUNE 12, 2016 AT 12:42 PM

I love this!

Reply



***Lauren Tamm** says*

JUNE 15, 2016 AT 6:09 AM

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I'm so glad! Thank you!

[Reply](#)



***Colleen** says*

JUNE 15, 2016 AT 10:17 AM

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This is just what I needed today. Thank you  
thank you thank you! I need to remind myself  
that she's strong and that that's an amazing  
quality.

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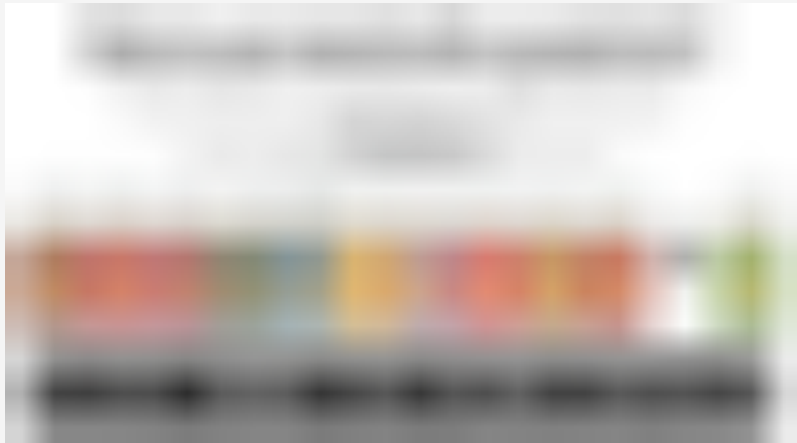
## WELCOME, FRIEND!

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I'm Lauren, a nurse turned stay-at-home mom! Around here I write about practical parenting, enjoying motherhood, and navigating the ups and downs of military life. Thanks so much for visiting!

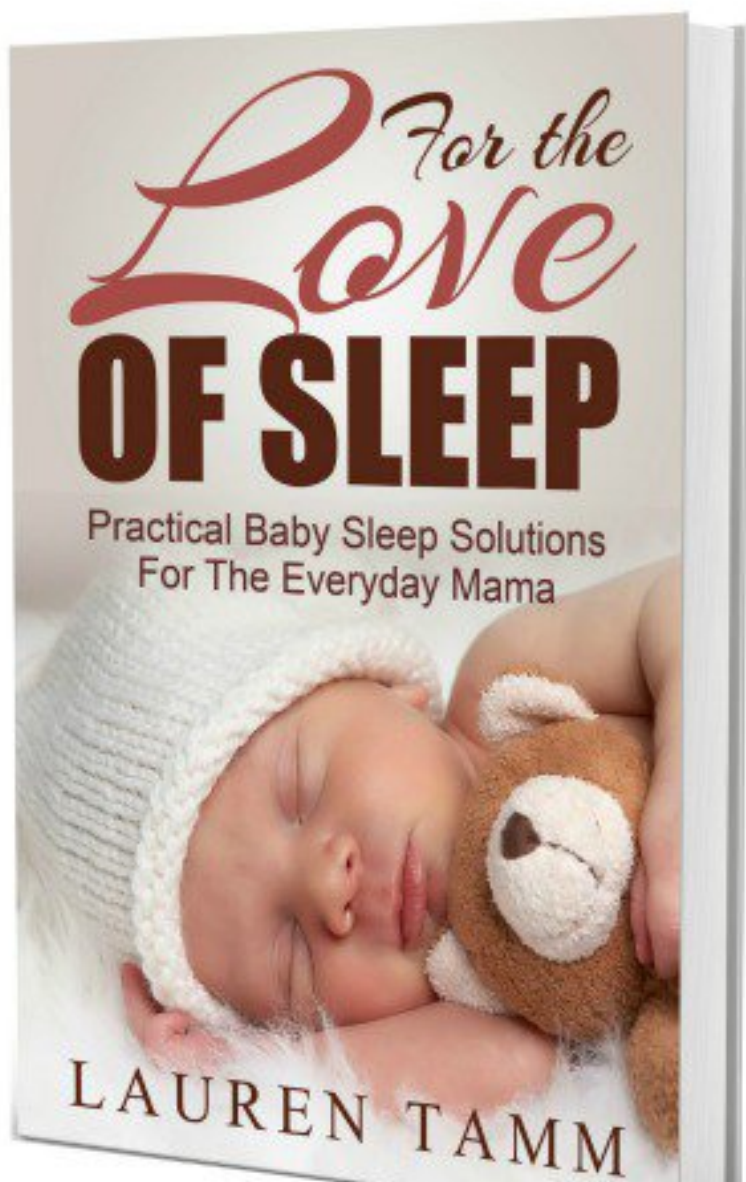
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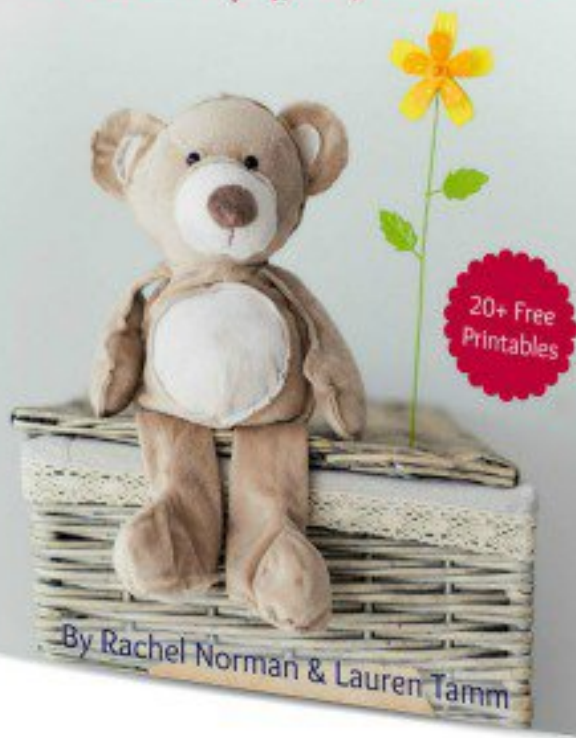
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# Rhythms, Routines & Schedules

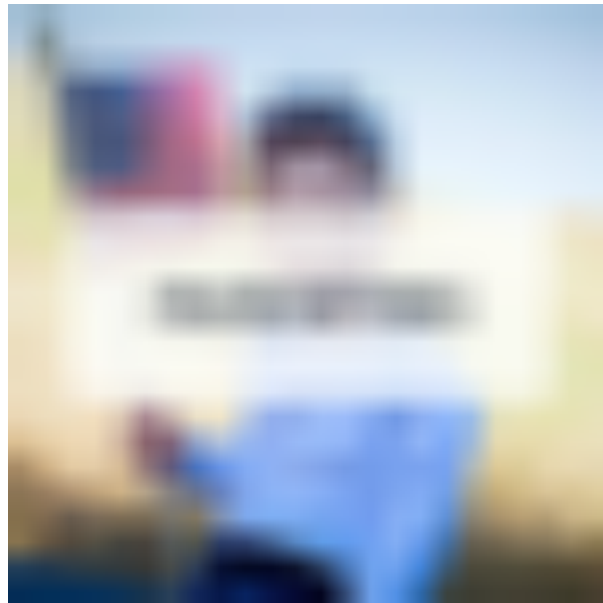
*How to Simplify Life with Kids*



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