

Parenting Toddlers — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Parenting Toddlers course and gives you a place to observe, reflect, and plan — because reading about toddler development changes little; applying it in your own home changes everything. Each section maps to a course module: you will track real moments with your specific child, build a Family Limit Agreement, design your daily routine, and leave with an action plan you can start tonight.

The Toddler Brain: Development You Can See

Anchor course knowledge to your own child by profiling their temperament, identifying developmental triggers, and noting what you already do that supports their brain.

Exercise: Your Child's Developmental Window

Record your toddler's current age in months, then answer the prompts below. Use your observations from the past two weeks — not an ideal version of your child.

- My child is ___ months old. Based on the course windows (12/18/24/30-36 months), which stage is most active right now, and what are two behaviours you have seen that match it?

- Think of one behaviour that frustrated you this week. Can you now identify it as developmentally normal rather than deliberate defiance? What shifts when you reframe it?

- Write down one moment from the past week where you saw your child's upstairs brain go offline. What was the trigger, and what did you do? What would you do differently now?

- Identify one habit or phrase you currently use that may be expecting more from the PFC than your child's age supports. What is one alternative?

Worksheet: Temperament Profile — My Child

Rate your child on each of the nine Thomas-and-Chess dimensions using the scale: 1 = Low, 2 = Medium, 3 = High. Then note one parenting adjustment for each dimension rated 3 (high) or 1 (low, if that creates friction).

Activity level (1–3):

Rhythmicity / predictability of biological functions (1–3):

Approach vs withdrawal — first reaction to novelty (1–3):

Adaptability — speed of adjustment after initial reaction (1–3):

Sensory threshold — amount of stimulation needed to react (1–3):

Mood quality — ratio of positive to negative affect (1–3):

Intensity of reactions (1–3):

Distractibility (1–3):

Persistence / attention span (1–3):

Overall cluster (circle): Easy / Difficult / Slow-to-Warm / Mixed

Top friction point (which dimension clashes most with your style or schedule):

One targeted adjustment I will make this week:

Checklist: Daily Serve-and-Return Habits

- I notice and name my child's serve (point, babble, reach, eye contact) before redirecting.
- I return their serve with a word, mirror expression, or verbal response at least 10 times per day.
- During Floortime, I follow their play agenda — I do not redirect to my preferred activity.
- I narrate (sportscasting or parallel talk) during at least two routine tasks per day (bath, meals, dressing).
- When a rupture happens, I repair within 30 minutes.
- I expand my child's utterances at least once per mealtime.

Navigating Big Emotions and Tantrums

Build a personalised tantrum map and co-regulation plan using your child's specific triggers, early warning signs, and your own regulation needs.

Exercise: Tantrum Debrief Journal

After the next three significant meltdowns, complete one debrief per event. Do this within one hour while details are fresh. Over time, patterns will emerge that predict and prevent future episodes.

- Describe the meltdown: time of day, location, what the child wanted, what triggered it. Was a HALT factor present (Hungry / Angry-Anxious / Lonely / Tired)?
- Which phase did you intervene in — pre-storm, escalation, peak, or recovery? What did you say or do? Did it help or escalate?
- Rate your own nervous-system state at the moment of escalation (1 = very calm, 10 = fully flooded). What do you think drove that rating?
- What is one thing you would do differently based on the four-phase arc and co-regulation sequence from the course?

Worksheet: My Co-Regulation Plan

Fill in each field to create your personal co-regulation protocol. Post it on the fridge or save it to your phone so it is accessible during a real episode.

My top 3 child-specific early warning signs (before the storm):

My HALT check order (which factor am I most likely to overlook?):

My self-regulation move when my heart rate spikes (e.g., 4-7-8 breath, step back 2 steps, drop shoulders):

My exact attunement phrase for this child in this situation (e.g., 'You are so frustrated. You wanted that cookie.')

Physical containment preference — does my child accept a hug at the peak or need space?

My repair phrase once the storm passes:

One thing my partner or co-parent can do to support me during a peak episode:

Checklist: Proactive Prevention This Week

- I completed the HALT check at least once before attributing a meltdown to defiance.
- I used the 5-3-1 transition warning before at least one transition.
- I provided 10 minutes of child-led Floortime play today.
- I identified and eliminated at least one environmental trigger (removed object, created a yes space, or rotated toys).
- I used emotion-coaching language (name, validate, limit, problem-solve) after at least one emotional episode.
- I debriefed one meltdown in writing within the hour.

Exercise: Identify My Own Triggers

Your reactivity is data, not failure. Answer these prompts honestly to build self-awareness that will improve your co-regulation capacity.

- Which of your child's behaviours most reliably floods your nervous system? Describe the physical sensation in your body when it happens.
- What did that behaviour mean in your own childhood (was it punished, ignored, shamed)? Does that history influence your current reaction?
- List two self-regulation strategies you can realistically use in under 30 seconds during a live episode.
- Who or what in your current life drains your regulation capacity before you even reach the toddler? What is one change that would give you more reserve?

Setting Loving Limits That Actually Work

Write your Family Limit Agreement, practise the two-part limit statement, and design a consistent consequence map for your top five recurring limit tests.

Worksheet: Family Limit Agreement

List your 5–8 non-negotiable limits, the exact two-part phrase you will use for each, and the consistent follow-through. Share and discuss with all regular caregivers before implementing.

Non-negotiable limit 1: | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through if limit is tested:

Non-negotiable limit 2: | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through if limit is tested:

Non-negotiable limit 3: | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through if limit is tested:

Non-negotiable limit 4: | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through if limit is tested:

Non-negotiable limit 5: | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through if limit is tested:

Non-negotiable limit 6 (optional): | Two-part phrase: | Follow-through:

Flex areas (caregiver discretion — list 3–5 areas where variation is acceptable):

Caregiver sign-off (primary parent): | Date reviewed:

Caregiver sign-off (co-parent / partner): | Date reviewed:

Caregiver sign-off (grandparent / childcare): | Date reviewed:

Exercise: Consequence Design — Top 5 Recurring Tests

List the five limit-tests your child repeats most often. For each, decide in advance whether the consequence will be natural or logical, and write the exact response you will give. Pre-deciding prevents in-the-moment inconsistency.

- Recurring behaviour 1: What is the natural consequence? If natural is unsafe or non-existent, what is the related/respectful/reasonable logical consequence? Write your exact words.

- Recurring behaviour 2: Same questions — natural or logical consequence? Exact words?

- Recurring behaviour 3: Is this behaviour HALT-driven (meets a need) or limit-testing (tests a rule)? Does that change your response? Write your exact words.

- Review your five consequences: do any involve shame, lectures longer than 1 sentence, or threats you would not follow through on? Revise those now.

Checklist: Limit-Setting Quality Check

- I stated the limit in 10 words or fewer (acknowledgement + clear limit).
- I did not repeat the limit more than twice before following through.
- I used a calm, low, slow voice rather than matching the child's volume.
- The consequence I applied was related, respectful, and reasonable.
- I did not add a lecture, explanation, or shame statement after the consequence.
- I followed through consistently — the same as yesterday and the day before.
- I debriefed the limit interaction with my co-parent or caregiver within 24 hours.

Daily Routines That Build Secure Attachment

Design your specific daily routine, blueprint your bedtime sequence, and commit to language-rich rituals that compound into secure attachment over time.

Worksheet: Our Daily Routine Blueprint

Fill in each time slot with the activities you commit to. The goal is three fixed anchors (wake, nap, bedtime) with rough structure in between — not a minute-by-minute schedule.

Fixed wake time (target): ± 15 min window:

Morning routine (20–30 min): sequence of activities after wake:

Morning activity window (post-wake to nap 1): approximate duration:

Nap 1 start time: | Target duration:

Nap 2 start time (if applicable, for under-15-month-olds): | Target duration:

Afternoon connection ritual (Floortime or outdoor play): time and duration:

Dinner time: | Screen-free at table? (yes/no):

Wind-down start time (30 min before bed): low-stimulation activities chosen:

Bedtime routine start: | Duration target (20–25 min):

Lights out target time:

One routine transition that currently causes the most resistance:

One specific change I will make to that transition this week:

Exercise: Bedtime Routine Design and Rehearsal

Write your 5-step bedtime routine using the blueprint from the course, then practise reading it aloud to hear how it sounds. Run the routine at the same time for 14 consecutive nights before adjusting.

- Write your 5-step sequence: Step 1 (bath/wash — what exactly), Step 2 (pyjamas + teeth — what choices you offer), Step 3 (books — how many, which signal closes it), Step 4 (song or lullaby — which one, every night), Step 5 (goodnight phrase — write it out word for word).

- What is your current biggest bedtime challenge (curtain calls / resistance to starting / overtiredness / fears)? Which specific strategy from the lesson addresses it? Write how you will implement it this week.

- After 14 nights: what changed in sleep onset time, night wakings, or morning mood? What will you keep, adjust, or drop?

Checklist: Language and Connection Habits — Weekly Review

Wake time was within 15 minutes of target every day this week.

Bedtime routine ran on schedule at least 5 of 7 nights.

I provided at least one 10-minute Floortime session per day.

Meals were screen-free and included at least 5 minutes of face-to-face conversation.

I used sportscasting or parallel talk during at least two daily routines (bath, dressing, meals).

I read at least one book per day, following the child's interest.

I applied the expansion technique at least once during today's interaction.

I completed a repair within 30 minutes of any significant rupture.

Your Action Plan

1. Tonight: run the HALT check before bed and note which factor was most relevant — use this as your baseline observation.
2. This week: rate your child on the nine temperament dimensions and identify your top friction point; make one targeted adjustment.
3. Day 1: introduce the 5-3-1 transition warning before the two most challenging transitions of the day.
4. Day 2: write your Family Limit Agreement for 5 non-negotiables; share it with every regular caregiver before the end of the week.
5. Day 3: begin your 14-night bedtime routine trial using the exact 5-step sequence you designed in the workbook.
6. Day 5: complete your first Tantrum Debrief Journal entry within one hour of the next significant meltdown.
7. Week 2: add 10 minutes of screen-free Floortime daily; measure any change in afternoon meltdown frequency by week's end.
8. Week 2: introduce one additional language ritual (sportscasting, parallel talk, or expansion) into your daily routine.
9. Week 3: review your consequence map with your co-parent; identify any limit that is being enforced inconsistently and align on one phrasing.
10. Month 1 review: re-rate the temperament profile, check whether the goodness-of-fit adjustments reduced friction, and set two goals for month 2.

