

Growing Through the Grades

Big Feelings, Brave Beginnings

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Introductions

Shereen Mohsen, Psy.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

- Practicing in the field of psychology since 2005
- Extensive experience working with children, families, adults, and couples
- Owner of Mental Health Group Practice in San Jose: **Relucent Psychology Group**
  - Treating children, adolescents, adults, families, and couples
  - Specializing in Child Therapy. Parent Coaching, Co-Parenting & Family Therapy

Emily Tahamont, LMFT
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

- Practicing in the field of psychology since 2013
- Background as a teacher for infants and preschoolers
- Special interests include:
  - Co-Parenting Support
  - Anxiety Management
  - ADHD Guidance

Central Framework

1. Behavior as Communication

- Children are “good inside,” even when their behavior is difficult.
- Behavior is communication—not the child’s identity.

2. Two Things Can Be True

- “My child is having a hard time.”
- The behavior still needs a boundary.

3. Connection & Leadership

Attachment-based parenting is not permissive parenting. Children need both **connection** and **confident adult leadership**.



What is Developmentally Normal in TK–1?

1. Emotional vs. Self-Control Development

Their emotional systems develop faster than their self-control systems.

2. Inconsistent Regulation

Regulation is inconsistent, especially when children are:

- Tired or hungry
- Overstimulated or rushed
- Adjusting to change



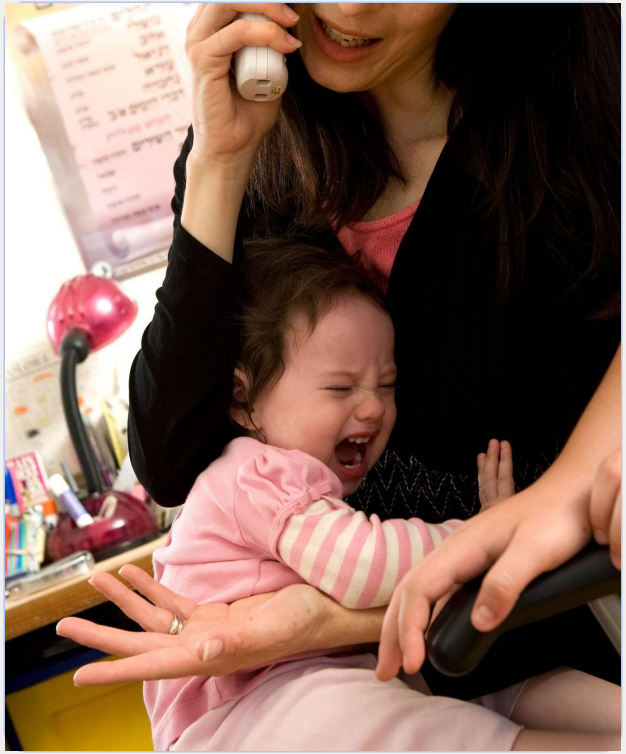
What is Developmentally Normal in TK–1?

3. Stress Release at Home

Children often release their accumulated stress at home because home feels safe.

4. Transition Reactions

Regression, clinginess, irritability, sleep disruption, or increased meltdowns can occur during transitions.



Starting School Brings Significant Demands

01

Separation from caregivers

02

Following directions in a group

03

Waiting and taking turns

04

Managing frustration

05

Navigating friendships

06

Tolerating mistakes and correction

07

Holding it together for many hours

Behavior is the Tip of the Iceberg

MINDSET SHIFT

Shift from: **"How do I stop this behavior?"** ➔ To: **"What is happening underneath it, and what skill is still developing?"**

Possible Needs Beneath Behavior:

Connection	Predictability	Sensory Relief
Rest or Food	Help with Separation	A Sense of Control
Support Naming Emotions	Tolerating Disappointment	Assistance with an Overwhelming Task



💡 We can be curious about the feeling while setting a firm limit on the action.

Regulation Begins with the Adult

01 Children initially borrow regulation from calm, steady adults.

02 A parent's calm does not require feeling perfectly calm internally.

03 Regulation means slowing down enough to respond intentionally.

04 During dysregulation, fewer words are usually more effective.

05 Teaching and problem-solving work best ***after*** the child is calm.

💡 **Regulate child <u>first</u>, THEN teach them how to better navigate similar situations in the future**

Video

Regulation Begins with the Adult

01 Pause and regulate yourself.

02 Get physically lower and reduce your volume.

03 Name what is happening without judgment.

04 Hold the necessary boundary.

05 Stay nearby without forcing the child to calm down.



EXAMPLE

“You really wanted to keep playing. It’s hard to stop. I won’t let you hit me. I’m right here while you’re upset.”

💡 **The goal is not to make the feeling disappear. The goal is to show the child that the feeling is survivable and the relationship remains secure.**

Connection and Boundaries can Coexist

Characteristics of a “Sturdy Parent”

Warm, connected, and empathic

Clear and confident

Not afraid of the child’s disappointment

Willing to make necessary decisions

Able to distinguish validating feelings from changing the boundary

Use “Connect, Limit, Support”

CONNECT

“You really don’t want to leave.”

LIMIT

“It’s time to go. I won’t let you run away from me.”

SUPPORT

“You can walk, or I can carry you to the car.”

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

⚠️ **Over-explaining** during a meltdown

⚠️ **Repeatedly negotiating** a settled boundary

⚠️ **Trying to convince** the child not to feel upset

⚠️ **Giving in** primarily to end the distress

⚠️ **Threatening consequences** unrelated to the behavior



💡 **Your child's disappointment does not necessarily mean you made the wrong decision.**

Three High-Impact Tools

TOOL #1: PREVIEW TRANSITIONS

Young children do better when their brains know what comes next.

- **Give brief, concrete previews.** Keep details simple and sequential.
- **Use visual routines** when helpful to build familiarity.
- **State your actions:** Tell the child what you will do—not only what you want them to do.

EXAMPLE IN ACTION

“First we’ll put on shoes, then drive to school. I’ll walk you to the gate, give you one hug, and Ms. Lee will help you go inside.”

💡 KEY TAKEAWAY

Clear step-by-step previews reduce anxiety by removing uncertainty during daily transitions.

Three High-Impact Tools

TOOL #2: VALIDATE & HOLD BOUNDARIES

Acknowledge feelings while holding firm on necessary limits.

- **Accept emotions:** Children are allowed to feel upset or disappointed about boundaries.
- **Maintain the limit:** Validation doesn't mean giving up the boundary.
- **Offer support:** Partner with the child to move forward safely.

EXAMPLE IN ACTION

“I believe you. You wish today was a stay-home day. Today is a school day, and I’m going to help you get ready.”

💡 **KEY TAKEAWAY**

This avoids debating whether the child “should” feel upset.

Three High-Impact Tools

TOOL #3: PRACTICE OUTSIDE THE HARD MOMENT

Teach skills when the child is regulated:

- **Role-play entering the classroom** or asking to join a game.
- **Rehearse responses:** Practice what to do when someone says no.
- **Create a separation ritual:** Keep drop-offs predictable and brief.
- **Practice calming strategies:** Try deep breathing or grounding techniques together.

COPING PHRASES

Prepare coping phrases such as:

"I can do hard things."

"Grown-ups come back."

"It's okay to be new at something."



The Importance of Repair

WHAT REPAIR LOOKS LIKE

Perfection is not expected, and acknowledging and intentionally repairing after we've made an error is vital to the parent/child relationship.

💡 WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"I yelled earlier. That probably felt scary. It wasn't your fault, and it's my job to work on how I handle my frustration. I love you, and we're okay."

BUILDING SECURE ATTACHMENT

Secure attachment and a healthy regulated child doesn't come from getting every interaction right. It develops through thousands of moments in which children learn:

1. My feelings are welcome
2. The adults can handle them
3. Boundaries keep me safe
4. When relationships become disconnected, we can repair

Five Key Takeaways: What Children Need Most

01

Behavior is communication.

02

Connection and boundaries belong together.

03

Regulation comes before reasoning.

04

Skills are practiced outside the difficult moment.

05

Repair matters more than perfection.

Thank you for listening!
Questions?

Have more questions or need more support?

EMAIL SUPPORT

Reach out via email for general inquiries, detailed questions, or personalized support:

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PHONE CONSULTATION

Directly schedule a free phone consultation by scanning below: