

## FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

Imagine a child trying to build a tower with blocks. Initially, everything seems to be going smoothly, but as he/she keep stacking, the tower becomes wobbly and eventually collapses. There is a dramatic cry followed by louder screams, throwing around the blocks in frustration, crying and refusing to continue building. On the other hand, another child may react calmly, express mild disappointment but then proceed to rebuild the tower without getting overly upset or giving up entirely. They might say something like, "Oh no!! Let me try again!"

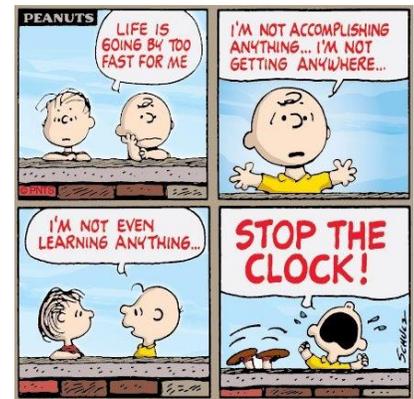
This ability to handle the frustration of their tower collapsing and continue working towards their goal demonstrates what psychologist's call, 'frustration tolerance.'

Frustration is felt by each one of us at different ages, whether it is a 5-year-old trying to button their shirt, a 10-year-old struggling with math, a teenager deciding on a career path. Even as adults, many a times, we face stressors in our workplace or personal life, and unknowingly we might displace all the anger and frustration on our children. The ability to tolerate frustration develops over time and may get better with age. As a parent, it's crucial for you to have age-appropriate expectations from the child with regards to frustration tolerance.

During the early formative years, young children often feel frustrated as they navigate a world filled with tasks and rules that are new and sometimes overwhelming. They may express their frustration in the form of tantrums and meltdowns, signaling their struggle to cope with these big feelings.

Around middle age, children process information more logically. They grow less impulsive and become more thoughtful.

Older children continue learning about frustration with experience. Teenagers often feel frustrated if they are not heard or understood, struggle with authority figures for their space and privacy or feel they lack control over their lives. They often struggle with perfectionism, influenced by unrealistic social media portrayals. Encouraging them with a balanced view of online content helps foster healthy self-esteem and greater resilience. They may begin to use critical thinking skills for problem-solving, and they can imagine hypothetical situations others might face.



Below are some of the techniques that you can use to help your child build frustration tolerance:

- **Model patience and resilience-** Children learn to handle challenges by observation. Sharing your real life experiences or showing a relevant video of a great personality who overcame their challenges will help them in dealing with their frustration in a better way. A lot of our frustration as parents arises from the way we expect our child to behave and walk on the road that we have chosen for them. But these children are separate individuals having a mind of their own. If we accept our children the way they are rather than who we *expect* them to be, our frustration as parents will reduce.
- **Acknowledge feeling-** Help children recognize and label their emotions when they're feeling frustrated. Encourage them to express how they feel and validate their emotions. Saying things like "I can see you're feeling frustrated right now" helps them understand and accept their feelings.
- **Teach problem solving and coping skills-** There is always a calm after the storm." After a meltdown, it is time to stop and reflect together on what happened during the frustrating situation. How it can be accepted or avoided or dealt with.
- **Encourage a positive mindset-** Help them reframe negative thoughts into more realistic and constructive ones. E.g.: - Instead of saying "I can't do this," they could say "I will try again to do it."
- **Focus on the process, not outcome-** Acknowledge your child's efforts and progress, even if they haven't achieved their desired outcome. Praise their persistence and willingness to try, which can boost their confidence and motivation. Offer two positive comments for every critical one. At the same time, prepare children to deal with others who may provide negative feedback as well, but for their betterment.
- **Practice delayed gratification-** When each demand of the child is immediately fulfilled, it results in issues with delayed gratification. By encouraging them to wait for their rewards or privileges, you can help them develop patience and self-control over time. Avoid giving in to their tantrums, otherwise, they will resort to them more and more. It is necessary to establish limits and let them know that the word "NO" exists.

Now, looking at the same situation shared above, as a parent, you may want to jump in and rebuild the tower for them. Instead, let your child feel the anger and frustration and point it out. You can be like, “That was quite a tall tower that you made. You look really angry and upset! Let’s take a deep breath, and we will try to build it together.” That way, you are validating the child’s emotion, offering a coping strategy and allowing your child to build frustration tolerance by trying again.

No one is born knowing how to be a parent. Just like our children, we are always learning and evolving. If we want them to stop and think before reacting, then we need to show them how. That means we need to practice pausing, keeping ourselves regulated, and then responding- not just with them but in all areas of life.

*Support your children as they navigate through challenging situations.*

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