

IS YOUR TODDLER GETTING BAD HABITS... FROM YOU?

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# “He didn’t get that from me...

# did he?”

The last thing you want is for your child to start copying you when you’re doing something you shouldn’t be. But how do you stop him?

## “He seems to be as shy as I am”

**Madaline Newman, 29, from Leeds, mum to Thomas, 3, and Phoebe, 18 months, wants her son to be more outgoing.**

“Whenever I go to the shops with Thomas he gets really shy and buries his head in my legs if someone talks to him. He does the same if someone he doesn’t recognise comes to the house. I feel guilty because I’m quite wary of strangers myself and I’m not good at having conversations with people that I don’t really know. I’ve also told him that some strangers are bad. Could he have picked up on this?”

**EXPERT’S SOLUTION** “Don’t worry about this,” advises child psychologist and founder of [www.raisingkids.co.uk](http://www.raisingkids.co.uk), Pat Spungin. “It may be that Thomas is just shy by nature. But don’t label him by saying things like, ‘He’s so shy’. Let him see you being comfortable and relaxed with people. If he says ‘hello’, praise him for it, if he doesn’t, just leave it. At the moment you probably shouldn’t warn him against strangers as he’s mostly with people he knows and it may make him fearful of

everyone he doesn’t know. At his age, he won’t be able to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ strangers anyway.”

## “My daughter shouts back at me when I shout at her”

**Kristin Binnie, 35, from Hampshire, mum to Rosalie, 3, is finding it impossible to discipline her copycat tot.** “I’ve been losing my temper with Rosalie a lot recently and I’m having to shout at her a lot more as she seems to do the opposite of everything I ask. But when I shout at her, she’s started to shout back at me, only even louder. How can I stop her from doing this?”

**EXPERT’S SOLUTION** “It’s tempting to shout, especially when you’re at the end of your tether,” explains Pat. “But understand that Rosalie wants to assert herself at this age and part of that is saying ‘no’. If she does something you don’t like, don’t shout. Get eye to eye with her and say ‘I don’t want you to do that!’ and then turn away. If you stop shouting, before long, so will she.”

## DO IT LIKE THIS

### Five things that will help

- ✓ Eat together as a family and make mealtimes sociable
- ✓ Say “please” and “thank you” – your manners will influence your tot’s manners
- ✓ Always eat healthily
- ✓ Don’t ask your toddler to do something if you wouldn’t be prepared to do yourself
- ✓ Admit your own mistakes

## NOT LIKE THIS

### Five things that won’t

- ✗ Don’t always have the TV on in the background
- ✗ Don’t snack between meals – at least not with your tot
- ✗ Try not to lose your temper, even if you’re provoked
- ✗ Don’t get stressed at meal times, even if the food you’ve made ends up on the floor
- ✗ Don’t chop and change your house rules – set your boundaries and stick to them





### "I fear I'm making him obsessive about cleanliness"

Samina Patel, 26, from Luton, mum to Aamina, 2, and Rahil, 3½, notices her son getting as fanatical as she is about keeping things clean. "We had new carpets put down about six months ago, and I'm really careful about keeping them clean. A couple of months ago Rahil screamed when some coal dust blew onto the carpet from the fireplace. I tried to calm him down but he just kept saying, 'Clean it, mummy, clean it.' Now, whenever we go to a friend's house and someone drops crumbs on the floor he gets upset. It's got so bad that I've even considered taking a dustpan and brush with us when we go out. Is it too late to 'cure' him?"

**EXPERT'S SOLUTION** "He's definitely picked up on your tidiness," explains Pat Spungin. "But don't worry. You can easily make him much more relaxed around dirt by indulging in messy play time. Get out the soft dough, do some finger painting, and fill some pots with sand and water. If you do these kind of things together he'll understand that there are circumstances where not only is it OK to make a mess, it's actually fun!"

### "I hate her copying my accent"

It's really important to Maureen Every, 48, from West Sussex that her daughter, Amy, 4, learns to speak properly. "I've got a bit of an accent and if I'm not concentrating I often start to drop my 'h's and 't's. One time I was talking to Amy about going to a friend's party but I dropped the 't' from party. As quickly as anything, she copied me but didn't say it just once – she kept repeating it over and over. I thought it was funny at the time but now I hate it. I was determined not to pass on my accent to Amy, and I've always tried to correct her, but recently it's become harder and harder because she's started doing it all the time."

**EXPERT'S SOLUTION** According to Pat, this is just a form of attention-seeking behaviour on Amy's part and not something that Maureen should worry about too much. "Children love attention," she explains. "And it seems that Amy's picked up on the fact that this is a way to get your attention. The simple solution, if you want it to stop, is to try and ignore it. Most children learn to speak like their parents until they go to school when they then pick up the accent of their peer group." ☺

### "He's afraid of the same things as me"

Diana Christie, 31, from Birmingham, mum to Malachi, 2, is worried she's fostered her son's fear of spiders. "When I was having a clear out last December I kept coming across spiders. I've always hated them and every time one appeared I'd scream and jump out of the way. Malachi seemed stunned at first, then he started to walk backwards and hide behind the sofa.

"He's been petrified of spiders ever since. I bought a bug catcher and he screams for it shouting, 'Catch the spider mummy, quick!' every time he sees one. I do try to tone down how I react in front of him but it depends on the size of the spider! How can I cure him of my phobia?"



**EXPERT'S SOLUTION** Diana needs to control the way she reacts towards spiders to help Malachi, advises Pat. "Maybe you could overcome your fear of spiders together," she suggests. "Start in a low-fear situation, by looking at pictures of spiders, then look at small spiders and graduate to larger ones. After a while, you'll find that although you may still hate spiders you won't feel that you have to show it in such an obvious way."