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# "I wish the ground would swallow me up"

Is your toddler forever dropping clangers in public? Take heart, because it's a good chance to teach him some valuable lessons...

**M**ummy, why does that lady have such a big nose?" It's the sort of question mums dread – especially on a crowded train. But once your child enters toddlerhood it's one of many cringeworthy situations you're likely to find yourself in.

According to clinical psychologist and parenting expert, Claire Halsey, these 'I wish it wasn't happening' moments give you the chance to talk about things you might not otherwise have an opportunity to discuss. "These scenarios teach your child life lessons," says Claire. "Whether it's about politeness, or diversity, they're crucial experiences and should be enjoyed – even if they don't seem funny at the time!"

## THEY...

### Start doing pornographic art

Why is it that toddlers always seem to do the most embarrassing things when you



least expect them to? Christine Carey, 34, from Manchester, mum to Ewan, 7, and Yasmin, 4, thought

her daughter was behaving exceptionally well during a trip to the doctors.

"The waiting room was crowded with lots of old people and all eyes seemed to be focused on us.

**A TAD RED-FACED**  
3-year-old Chris Air's folks were left blushing when he climbed into a grabber machine at a Skegness fair intent on getting a prize. He was stuck for half an hour.

so I thought I'd try and get Yasmin to do something quiet and sat her down on the floor with some pens and paper," she says.

"She was busying herself with lots of imaginative drawings and I felt really proud, until she shouted out 'Look, mummy I've drawn a bear with a big willy!'"

"Upon inspection she clearly had! The old lady sitting next to me gasped in horror and I wanted the ground to swallow me up. If I hadn't been called in to see the doctor at that instant, I think I would've made a run for it!"

## YOU...

"On the way home, try explaining that wilies are something that we only talk about at home," suggests Karen Sullivan, parenting expert and author of *Commonsense Healthcare for Children* (Piatkus, £13.99).

"Try doing drawings together to reinforce this and ask your child to concentrate on drawing lifelike ears, or another feature, which will distract her from the bottom end. If all else fails, suggest that perhaps the bear needs a pair of nice trousers to protect his modesty, and what colour would she suggest?"

## THEY...

### Diss granny's home-made gift

No matter how much effort you put into teaching toddlers manners, they always find a way to show you up when it matters



most. Sharon Wall, 28, from Aberdeenshire, mum to Andrew, 10, Stuart, 8, Jessica, 3, and Sophie, 1, told her four to be on their best behaviour when their great gran came to tea.

"Everything was going well," says

Sharon, "Until grandma pulled a knitted cardigan out of her bag as a present for Jessica, and she shouted, 'Yuk, I'm not wearing that!' I raised my daughter to take an interest in clothes and have a sense of style but at that moment I wished I hadn't!"

## YOU...

According to Claire Halsey, it's impossible to avoid this situation altogether because toddlers haven't yet developed an awareness of social conventions.

"It's honest to show your embarrassment and apologise to a great grandmother who is probably quite understanding. Do talk over the idea that it's the thought people put into a gift that counts more than the present itself. Your child won't be ready to accept this yet but it's a message worth introducing."

## THEY...

### Pee in the middle of the shopping centre

Some toddlers like to relieve themselves whenever – and wherever – they feel the need. For 3-year-old Ronan Keaveney, that's the middle of a shopping centre. "I dread taking him there," Aileen, 37, from the Republic of Ireland, sighs. "There's an outdoor area with some plants and flowers, and for some reason he likes to do his wee wees there. Most people think it's funny, but I find it so embarrassing."

## YOU...

"Tell him that he can help 'teach' other little children by using the loo every time – he'll probably take some pride in that," says Karen Sullivan. "He could also be given a little extra freedom – perhaps being allowed into the cubicles by himself, or even being allowed some new responsibility in the house."

FEATURE: YVONNE GAWAN PHOTO: ALAMY

## THE MOST CRINGEY STORY WE'VE EVER HEARD...



**Alexandra Seery, 31, from Yorkshire, mum to Joe, 4, and Josh, 5 months, says she's the talk of her village...**

When Alexandra bought bras through mail order, her son Joe asked if he could have one. "I told him that only ladies have boobs," she says, "and that we don't get things for free, we have to save up – that's why daddy works so hard."

Later that day, Alexandra went to her local shop with her

children. "We were in the queue when Joe suddenly announced, 'My mummy's got new boobs and they weren't free! My daddy had to save all his money to get them!'"

I was devastated. If there had been a carpet I'd have crawled under it. I grabbed Joe and rushed out with everyone trying to get an eyeful of my new boobs. Now everyone in the village thinks I've had a very expensive boob job!"

**Think your story can beat this one?**

**Email it to [daniella.delaney@magicalia.com](mailto:daniella.delaney@magicalia.com). We'll give a prize for our favourite.**

Stripping off and weeing in inappropriate places is par for the course with toddlers

## THEY...

### Shout out the names of body parts

Most mums are proud when their children learn to name body parts but it's a different story when they point them out – in public. Victoria Chow, 28, from Hertfordshire, mum to Anamika, 3, and Li, 2, dreads taking her daughter into public toilets. "On the way in she always makes a point of asking everyone if they have a willy!" she laughs. "It really makes me cringe!"



**Heather Jones Gill, 28, from Sheffield, mum to Jasmine, 4, and Jack, 2, has a similar problem.**

"Every time we go to the supermarket, Jack rides in the trolley, asking very loudly, 'Where's mummy's boobies?'" she says. "Then he lifts up my top and shouts, 'There they are!'"

## YOU...

**It's normal for little ones to be fixated by body parts, says Karen**

**Sullivan. "It's a big part of understanding bodies, the differences between boys and girls, and figuring out how they all work," she explains. "At home – perhaps while you're getting them dressed – explain that our bodies are wonderful – yet something that we don't show off in public. The idea is to encourage your child to feel 'secretly' proud of their body from a young age."**

**click it!**

Share more tales of toddler behaviour at [practicalparenting.co.uk](http://practicalparenting.co.uk)