

tantrums that occur past 5 years old, last longer than 15 minutes, or occur more than five times a day are considered abnormal and may indicate a serious problem (Daniels, Mandleco, and Luthy, 2012). Nurses should be alert to situations that require further evaluation.

Negativism

One of the more difficult aspects of rearing children in this age group is their persistent negative response to every request. The negativism is not an expression of being stubborn or insolent but a necessary assertion of self-control. One method of dealing with the negativism is to reduce the opportunities for a “no” answer. Asking the child, “Do you want to go to sleep now?” is an example of a question that will almost certainly be answered with an emphatic “no.” Instead, tell the child that it is time to go to sleep and proceed accordingly. In their attempt to exert control, children like to make choices. When confronted with appropriate choices, such as “You may have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or chicken noodle soup for lunch,” they are more likely to choose one rather than automatically say no. However, if their response is negative, parents should make the choice for the child.

Nurses working with children and parents can assist parents in understanding this concept by role modeling. For example, when the nurse approaches the toddler for taking vital signs, instead of asking, “Can I listen to your heart?” the nurse can say, “I am going to listen to your heart.” Because of normal developmental behavior, toddlers first resist having their vital signs taken because it is an intrusion on their bodies. Second, toddlers are most likely going to answer “no,” not because they necessarily fear the procedure itself but because of the tendency to answer all questions with a negative response. If the nurse asks the question and the toddler says, “No” but the nurse proceeds anyway, the toddler starts to mistrust the nurse's actions because they contradict his or her words.

Regression

The retreat from one's present pattern of functioning to past levels of behavior is referred to as **regression**. It usually occurs in instances of discomfort or stress when one attempts to conserve psychic energy by reverting to patterns of behavior that were