

FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

What is this developmental skill?

Frustration tolerance is the ability to manage disappointment, mistakes, and challenges without becoming overwhelmed. It allows children to continue trying even when things are difficult.

How does this normally develop?

Children build frustration tolerance through manageable challenges with supportive adults nearby. As caregivers acknowledge emotions while encouraging persistence, children gradually learn that uncomfortable feelings can be tolerated and overcome.

How can neglect interfere with its development?

Children who have experienced neglect often have limited experience being comforted through distress. Small disappointments may feel overwhelming because they lack confidence that someone will help them recover. As a result, they may quickly become angry, shut down, or give up.

What might this look like?

A child with low frustration tolerance may:

- Give up quickly.
- Cry or become angry over small problems.
- Refuse difficult tasks.
- Throw objects or destroy work.
- Blame others for mistakes.
- Avoid new experiences.

These reactions often reflect difficulty managing emotional discomfort rather than unwillingness to cooperate.

Parenting Implications

Validate frustration without immediately removing the challenge. Break tasks into manageable steps, celebrate effort instead of perfection, and remind children that mistakes are part of learning. Model calm problem-solving during your own frustrations.

From Understanding to Attunement

Instead of asking, "Why does my child overreact?" ask, "How can I help my child stay with hard feelings long enough to succeed?" Your steady presence teaches resilience.



Helping caregivers understand
attachment, trauma, and neglect.

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