Taking Time by Rebecca **Escott**

Oh, the Wonderful Things A Toddler Can Do!

My daughter, just past her 18-month birthday, is already actively demonstrating her independent streak!

She has a Dr. Seuss book that she loves, Mr. Brown Can Moo. Can You. It starts, "Oh, the wonderful sounds Mr. Brown can do. He can sound like a cow.

He can go Moo, Moo." These days I find myself saying under my breath with some sarcasm, "Oh, the wonderful things a toddler can do, she can ..."

This week, the list sounds like this: She can put her foot on the table and giggle. She can ask to sit on the potty and as soon as I get her there, she can scream "no" and say "diaper." She can

ask for water, and when I give her water, shove it away and ask for juice, and when I give her juice say "Nooo" and ask for milk. She likes to say, "Paula SIT!" Of course, that usually means she wants to sit on the chair that someone else is already on or she wants a chair of her own, not sitting on an adult's lap.

Oh the wonderful things a toddler can do! I am working hard to tell myself that these acts of independence and demonstrations of power are not deliberate attacks on me. Of course, convincing myself of this at the end of a hard day is difficult. I am also reminding myself that children need limits and after the second or third time of trying to meet a wish, it's okay to simply say no and allow her to pout, throw a temper tantrum or whatever.

What have I found out about dealing with tantrums? When at all possible, simply ignore them. Walk away (to give yourself a break) as long as your child is safe. Remove the child from a public setting (like a grocery store, playground, etc.) if necessary. You may also want to remove the child from the situation if she wants to strike out (by throwing something or hitting, etc.). Sometimes holding a child closely and talking softly will help the child get back under control. Try to avoid "giving in to" the tantrum or whining in order to regain some peace and quiet.

All this "wanting things the way they aren't currently" reminds me of a family story that my mother tells of a youngster not wanting to take a bath. At first the water was too hot. After cool water was added, then it was too cold. Finally, in exasperation, the child proclaimed that the water was too wet.

That's the life of a toddler. They want to choose, and when they can't control everything around them, the best thing they know how to do is to refuse what the parent suggests.

Fortunately, I have found within a few minutes she comes over looking for a kiss. And it's at these times that I'm reminded of all the other wonderful things a toddler can do-like stare wide-eyed in amazement at a sky full of clouds at sunset, or dance with abandon to music, or give hugs freely to anyone, or walk between your legs a hundred times saying, "Mommy, tunnel" and giggle.

With toddlers, as with ail children, it's a matter of taking time to appreciate them as they

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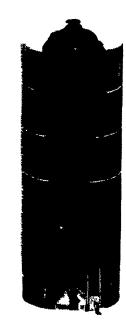
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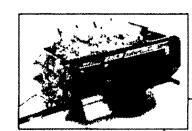


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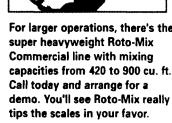


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