



## What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



### That Good Feeling of Control



When I hear all the concerns these days about self-regulation and self-control, I am reminded of something that a mother once told me. She said she learned her most helpful parenting lesson from Mister Rogers. It was such a simple and clear statement: “It’s okay to be angry, but it’s not okay to hurt.”

That’s such a great way to use the ideas in Fred’s well-known song, “What Do You Do with the Mad that You Feel.” He wrote that song in 1968, and its messages have remained timeless -- that anger is natural and normal...that there are things we can do when we’re angry that don’t hurt...and that it’s a good feeling when you can stop yourself when you’re about to do something wrong.

The last part of his message about self-control may be even more important for

children today who seem to have more stresses and more anger -- and less control. Before they can find healthy ways to express their anger, they first have to have some measure of control.

All through the *Neighborhood* series Fred talked about self-control, but he really highlighted that message on this video. Be sure to see what he does and says after the song.



Children aren't born with self-control. That's something that emerges as they grow -- with the help of caring adults. Here are some ways you can build on Fred's messages to help children develop self-control:

### **Offer activities to build impulse control**

Toddlers are beginning to learn what it feels like to control their bodies and stop, but preschoolers can use help with that, too. You can help children practice control with stop-and-go games, stacking and pouring, moving toy cars along a road, going through an obstacle course and playing with snap-together toys.

When children are able to control their bodies in these activities, you can reinforce it by saying something like, “See, you *can* stop,” and letting them know that’s a sign they’re growing inside. You could also remind them that if they can control their bodies or hands during activities, they may be better able to stop from doing other things like pushing, hitting, and kicking.

### **Catch them doing something right**

When children are about to do something wrong and can stop themselves, that’s a great moment, as Fred showed us in the video. Let them know you noticed that they stopped themselves and didn’t hit, and that you hope they’re proud of themselves for finding that control. (Some children may respond better if you don’t call attention to them out loud, but give just a smile and a nod to let them know you noticed.)

### **Be there to help them stop**

Some children don’t know what it feels like to stop. It’s not that they “won’t stop” -- maybe they “can’t stop.” When you’re right there with them, holding them back from hitting or kicking, they learn what it feels like to stop. Besides that, they need to trust that you’ll help them manage their anger until they’re able to control themselves.

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Remember, too, that with any development, children often take two steps forward and one step backward. And some days are better than others. Take care of yourself, too, because your patience and understanding will go a long way towards helping children grow towards finding positive ways to manage their anger and develop self-control.



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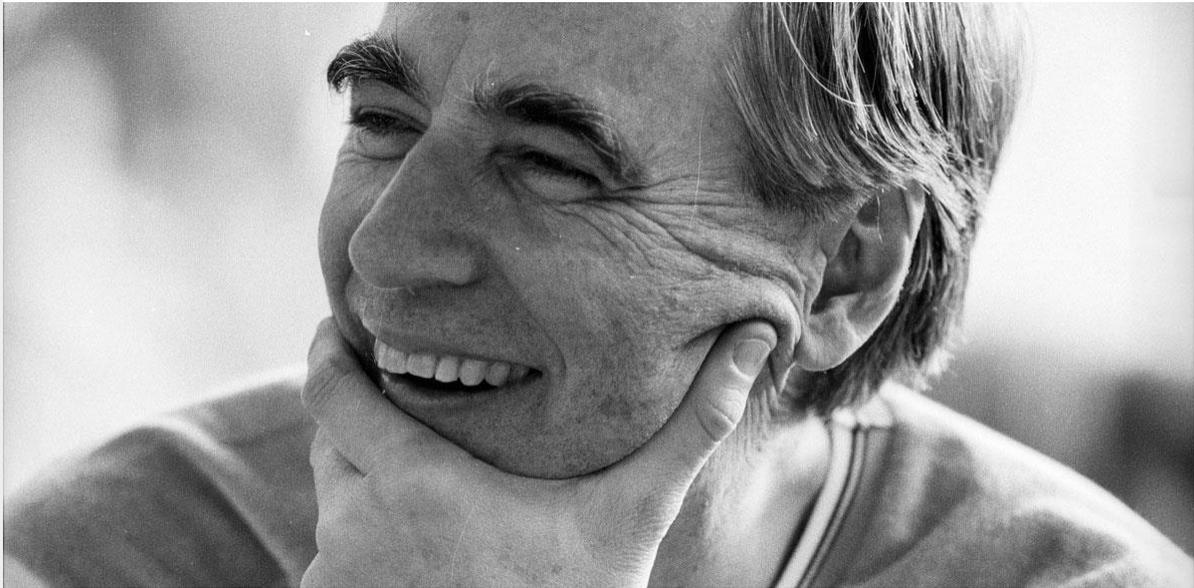
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## Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"We can't expect our children never to be angry, any more than we can ask that of ourselves. But we can help them find healthy outlets for the mad that they feel -- and help them know the good feeling that comes with self-control."

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