Toddlers can drive you bonkers...so adorable and fun one minute...so stubborn and demanding the next! Yet, as unbelievable as it sounds, there is a way to turn the daily stream of “nos” and “don'ts” into “yeses” and hugs...if you know how to speak your toddler’s language. In one of the most useful advances in parenting techniques of the past twenty-five years, Dr. Karp reveals that toddlers, with their immature brains and stormy outbursts, should be thought of not as pint-size people but as pint-size...cavemen. Having noticed that the usual techniques often failed to calm crying toddlers, Dr. Karp discovered that the key to effective communication was to speak to them in their own primitive language.
When he did, suddenly he was able to soothe their outbursts almost every time! This amazing success led him to the realization that children between the ages of one and four go through four stages of “evolutionary” growth, each linked to the development of the brain, and each echoing a step in prehistoric humankind’s journey to civilization:• The “Charming Chimp-Child” (12 to 18 months): Wobbles around on two legs, grabs everything in reach, plays a nonstop game of “monkey see monkey do.”• The “Knee-High Neanderthal” (18 to 24 months): Strong-willed, fun-loving, messy, with a vocabulary of about thirty words, the favorites being “no” and “mine.”• The “Clever Caveman” (24 to 36 months): Just beginning to learn how to share, make friends, take turns, and use the potty.• The “Versatile Villager” (36 to 48 months): Loves to tell stories, sing songs and dance, while trying hard to behave. To speak to these children, Dr. Karp has developed two extraordinarily effective techniques: 1) The “fast food” rule — restating what your child has said to make sure you got it right; 2) The four-step rule — using gesture, repetition, simplicity, and tone to help your irate Stone-Ager be happy again. Once you’ve mastered “toddler-ese,” you will be ready to apply behavioral techniques specific to each stage of your child’s development, such as teaching patience and calm, doing time-outs (and time-ins), praise through “gossiping,” and many other strategies. Then all the major challenges of the toddler years — including separation anxiety, sibling rivalry, toilet training, night fears, sleep problems, picky eating, biting and hitting, medicine taking — can be handled in a way that will make your toddler feel understood. The result: fewer tantrums, less yelling, and, best of all, more happy, loving time for you and your child.

These days, it seems as though every book written by a doctor has a catchy gimmick designed to grab the interest of the reader. This book was no exception, as on the back cover Dr. Karp lovingly refers to toddlers everywhere as pint-sized cavemen. Since I am currently in the throws of the toddler years, I had to agree with Dr. Karp, as there are days that my little one happily wreaks destruction. Lest you think that Dr. Karp is somehow being insulting, let me assure you that it is very evident that not only does he enjoy toddlers and find them fascinating, but that he respects them as well. The point of all the prehistoric talk is really just a clever way to point out the differences that exist between the thought processes of an adult and a child (ages 1 to 4).

Dr. Karp’s premise is that in the first four years of life your child will accomplish huge developmental milestones as their brains grow and develop. He divides the ages into four groups: The Charming Chimp-Child (12 to 18 Months), The Knee-High Neanderthal (18 to 24 Months), The Clever Cave-Kid (24 to 36 Months), and The Versatile Villager (36 to 48 Months). Each of these groupings is actually a pneumonic used to describe the highlights of that particular age grouping, for example Cave-Kids are: C= Curiouser and curiouser A= Attention Increases V= Very Busy E= Enjoys Pleasing You K= Kinder I= Interested in Order and Comparisons D= Determined to Communicate

Dr. Karp also encourages adults to speak to toddlers in their own language, or what he refers to as Toddler-ese. Basically, the idea is that when a child
is upset it is pretty pointless to try and talk to them as little adults. He offers basic tips on communicating more effectively with your toddler, and I found that many of these tips were good communication pointers in general.

I took my time reading this book as I was anxious to give his suggestions a try. Many of them actually worked! It was a little embarrassing speaking Toddler-ese in public, but Dr. Karp makes a good point that when your child is in the midst of a tantrum, you usually feel that you are the center of attention anyway. Most of all, I really enjoyed reading this book as it was fascinating to think about all the things my little one has already accomplished and all she will continue to accomplish. If you have young children, or spend a lot of time with the 1 to 4 set, then I cant recommend this book highly enough.

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