

All about toddlers

Life can be very exciting for your toddler as they grow rapidly between the ages of one and three!

This is a time of many changes for toddlers as they grow to become separate, independent people.

As a parent, you may be unsure about how to handle these changes. In many ways, toddlers are still babies and they need your love and support. They can move from being independent and 'I do myself' to being very needy and dependent again, all within a short space of time. They want to feel safe and free. Knowing what is happening for your toddler will help you to be more patient and understanding.

Sometimes when toddlers are on the way to learning self control, children will say 'No! No! No!' to themselves while they do something that they shouldn't. They are not meaning to disobey you. They are on the way to learning what they mustn't do, but haven't quite got there yet.

Toddlers are:

- * active and curious - they want to explore, touch, open, shut, throw and empty
- * learning who they are and trying out their wills - they like to say No!
- * learning to walk, talk, feed themselves, toilet train
- * learning about living with others

Living with toddlers

- * starting to learn how to show love, how not to hurt others, how to share and take turns.

Toddlers are not able to:

- * understand reason or understand why we want them to do one thing and not another
- * sit still, wait, share or control their angry feelings; they will learn all these things, but they cannot do them well yet
- * stop themselves from doing the wrong thing; they still need adults to remind them and to keep them safe.

It is normal for toddlers to:

- * want to say 'No' and show they have a mind of their own

- * get angry and rebel sometimes
- * not want to share and to say 'That's mine'
- * want to make some choices for themselves
- * find it hard to cope with changes
- * want to be like their parents, eg try on lipsticks and use parents' tools
- * want to feel very secure and safe but at the same time be free
- * get upset and 'fall in a heap' sometimes.

Encourage your toddler, give them time to explore and allow them to make simple choices. They like to test out their independence and will come back to you for comfort. They need your patience and understanding!

Talk...and listen...to your toddler

The way you listen to your toddler is as important as what you say. Talk to your toddler with respect and care and they will learn to talk to you in the same way. Give your child time to say something without interrupting or thinking about how you'll respond.

Look at your child's face when he's talking - it shows you're interested. Your toddler's behaviour may say more than his words - pick up on the cues. Share activities like putting toys away - it's a good way to talk together. Take time to find out what things are special in your child's life today.

