



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

23-24

Build your child's self-esteem.

A child's **self-esteem** is his **overall view of himself**. It determines whether he likes, accepts, and respects himself. One of the greatest and most important challenges you face is to help your child feel good about himself.

Children begin very early to form good or bad pictures of themselves. You can help your child feel good about himself by telling him that you like who he is and how he does things.

Catch him being good.

Let him know when you think he does a good job of putting blocks in a bucket or dumping them out of the bucket. Thank him for putting napkins on the table or hanging his towel up. Show him with smiles as well as words.

Tell your child **what to do** rather than what not to do. Instead of saying, "Don't carry the cat that way," say, "Hold the cat like this," and show him. This way, he'll feel like a success rather than a failure.

Show he's important to you.

Listen to what your child says and answer his questions. Take time to understand his feelings — his joys and his fears. You are showing him that his ideas and feelings are important.

All this will help him feel important and capable. You are helping him develop the self-confidence to become the responsible, successful person he can be.

Let him help you.

Toddlers love to help with chores! Ask him to help with simple tasks, like tearing up lettuce for a salad or dusting the tables. When your child helps he learns how to do more. This makes him feel good about himself.



Talking toddlers learn better.

What kinds of daily experiences are most likely to help young children learn better? Joseph H. Stevens, Jr., a professor of early childhood education, reviewed research to answer this question.

The way parents and caregivers help their children develop language influences children's learning, the research showed.

Children who were most intelligent had parents or caregivers who:

- ♥ talked to them a lot,
- ♥ encouraged them to use language, and
- ♥ did things with them that helped them learn and practice language.

Professor Stevens found that a **child's intelligence improved** when parents and teachers actively helped the child to **label, describe, compare, classify, and question**.

What's it like to be 23 and 24 months old?

How I grow:

- ♥ I can pedal a small tricycle.
- ♥ I can throw a ball into a waste-basket.
- ♥ I can walk down stairs alone with both feet on one step at a time, while holding the railing.
- ♥ I can walk a few steps on tip-toe.
- ♥ I like to walk on low walls, while holding someone's hand.
- ♥ I usually like to run more than I like to walk.
- ♥ I might be afraid of the noise of trains, trucks, thunder, toilet flushing, and the vacuum cleaner. I might also fear rain, wind, and animals. Be patient with me.

How I talk:

- ♥ I can ask questions just to keep the conversation going.
- ♥ I can answer some questions such as: "What is your name?" "What does the dog say?" "What does the cat say?"
- ♥ I can name almost everything that I see often, like things in my house, my preschool, or my neighborhood.
- ♥ I can ask for food and drink.
- ♥ I'm beginning to learn the meaning of "soon," and I am learning to wait.

What I am learning:

- ♥ I can sit and "read" picture books and turn the pages myself.
- ♥ I can put together a puzzle with three to six pieces.
- ♥ I can make a tower of eight blocks.
- ♥ I know pretty well where things are located in and around my house.

How I get along with others:

- ♥ I like to please others.
- ♥ I am interested in babies and their mothers.
- ♥ I like to be with other children for short periods of time, but I still don't understand sharing.
- ♥ I like to order other people around.
- ♥ I want my way in everything.
- ♥ I sometimes show my anger by slapping, biting, or hitting.
- ♥ I am sometimes stubborn and defiant. I use short phrases like "That mine," "Don't like," "Go away," and "I won't." And I say "No" a lot.
- ♥ I am afraid of disapproval and rejection.

What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I can take off all my clothes and put most of them back on.
- ♥ I can turn doorknobs and open doors. Keep dangerous things out of my sight and reach.
- ♥ I like to unwrap packages.
- ♥ I want to do lots of things by myself.
- ♥ I know what a toilet is for, but I probably don't want to use it yet.

Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to play simple chase games like tag.
- ♥ I like to be pushed on a swing.
- ♥ A teddy bear or soft doll is still my favorite toy.
- ♥ I like to take things apart and put them together. Watch out, so I don't play with small pieces that could choke me.
- ♥ I can stack five rings on a peg toy in the right order.
- ♥ I mess happily with soft modeling clay.

Remember:

Parenting the Second and Third Years describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special, and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Parenting the Second and Third Years*. If you are concerned about your child's development, visit with your doctor.

Building family rituals, traditions, and celebrations

In a fast-paced world, the same activity repeated in the same way makes children feel safe and secure. Knowing what is going to happen helps children feel comfortable. It also helps them develop a sense of their family's unique identity.

You can start some traditions for holidays, birthdays, and the changing seasons. Children look forward to celebrating holidays because you repeat the same activities year after year.

Research at the University of Wisconsin shows that strong families often have "spur-of-the-moment" celebrations as well. They might celebrate when a child learns to tie shoelaces or when a parent gets a raise. The celebration might be going out for ice cream after dinner or something else that is easy to do without planning.

Strong families notice life's small successes and celebrate them.

Record these memories in a family album. Children love to look at these. Albums help promote a sense of "we-ness," and the feeling that "Together, our family has a rich heritage and a promising future."

Toddlers like lots of different experiences.

I learn from all the different things I get to do. The more experiences I have, the more I can learn. I like it when you make up a song or a story. Use my name, and change the words to match my actions or feelings. This may help me calm down when I am cranky.

Sing me songs like "Rain, Rain, Go Away" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb." These simple songs will be easy for me to copy. I won't really be able to sing until I'm closer to 3 years old.

Let me smell some sweet-smelling spices like cinnamon and cloves or flavorings like vanilla and almond. Watch me closely, so I don't eat any!

Look at the night sky with me. Show me the clouds, the moon, and the stars.

Keep me interested in my toys by dividing them into two boxes and switching boxes every week.

Take me places: shopping, the library, wherever you are running an errand.

Read to me often. I like to hear my favorite stories over and over. But also read books about new things I see and do.



Get ready for toilet training.

Many girls are ready for toilet training at about age 2 and many boys at about 2½. Don't rush this process. But here are some things you can do to set the stage:

♥ **Teach your child the words he needs to ask to go to the toilet.**

A good time to do this is when you change his diaper. Tell him why you are changing him: "You peed, and made your diapers wet," or "You pooped (or had a BM or bowel movement)." Show him, and tell him the word for the toilet or potty chair you will want him to use. Some children will let you know when they need to go potty by saying the words, pulling your hand, or tugging at their diaper.

♥ **When your child shows he wants to go to the toilet, sit with him at least the first few times.** Don't give him toys to play with. And don't insist that he sit on the toilet when he wants to get off, even if he has not "done" anything.

♥ **Encourage him to succeed.**

Don't criticize or punish his accidents.

♥ **Remember:** Some children will not be interested in learning to use the toilet yet. Don't rush them. Wait until your child shows interest.



Homemade toys that teach

SHAPE BOARD

This toy can help children learn about **shapes** and about what is **alike** and **different**.

Materials

- ♥ **Cardboard sheet** about 8½ by 11 inches
- ♥ **Crayon**, in a bright color
- ♥ **White paper**
- ♥ **Scissors**

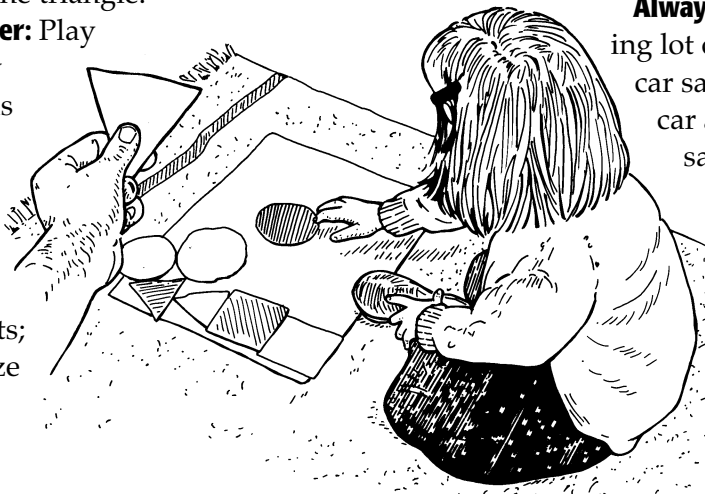
Making the toy

On the cardboard, use a brightly colored crayon to draw and color in simple shapes — a star, a circle, a square, and a triangle. Then, on the white paper, draw, color in, and cut out matching shapes.

Playing

Show your child how to match the cut-out shapes to the shapes drawn on the board. Talk about the pieces, naming their shapes. Ask her to put the star on the star, the circle on the circle, the square on the square, and the triangle on the triangle.

Remember: Play this and any game only as long as it is fun for both of you. **Encourage** your child's efforts; don't criticize failures.



Guidance and discipline: The easily frustrated child

All toddlers get frustrated sometimes. But some toddlers get frustrated more often, and more easily, than others.

Your child asks you to tie her shoes. You do this, but she says they don't feel right. "Tie them again, Mommy." And again. And again. Your daughter feels frustrated, and she wants you to handle it for her, so you become locked in a cycle that's hard to end.

The same thing can happen when she asks for candy. You say, "No," with her begging and pleading, on and on. She sees your "No" as a frustrating obstacle, so she repeatedly tests the limits.

After explaining why you are saying no, arguing doesn't help.

What should you do?

- ♥ Take a stand. Kindly and firmly say something like: "You've asked three times already. I'm not going to change my mind."
- ♥ Empathize. Let her know you understand what she wants and how frustrated she feels. Sometimes it works to give a child in fantasy what you won't give them in reality. "Oh, wouldn't it be great to have all the candy in the world or to have a house made of candy!"
- ♥ Try distraction. Redirect her into something she enjoys doing.
- ♥ Give her positive attention if she calms down.

What if your daughter keeps on complaining? Make sure she is in a safe place and remove yourself from the room. This tells her when mommy says, "No," she really means it.

Keep your child car-safe.

Your child darts around quickly now. He probably likes to run more than he likes to walk. He doesn't know what things could hurt him and may suddenly do something dangerous. Don't let him play near the street.

Always hold his hand when you are in a parking lot or crossing a street or driveway. Use a car safety seat every time your child is in the car and place it in the back seat. Buckle the safety seat in the car with the car's seat belt. Buckle your own seat belt as an example for your child.

Never leave your toddler alone in a car or other vehicle.

Traffic Safety experts recommend that **all children age 12 and under sit properly restrained in the back seat** due to dangers from air bags.

Games for growing

Color learning

Help your child learn to **match colors** and begin to **learn their names**.

How to play

- ♥ Select five blocks or other objects of different colors.
- ♥ Place two blocks of different colors in front of your child.
- ♥ Name each color. For example, point to the red block and say, "This is red." Then ask your child to give you the red block.
- ♥ Ask your child to say the color of the block she gave you.
- ♥ Use only two colors at a time, but change the colors. For example, start with blue and red together, then switch to blue and green.
- ♥ Tell your child the name of the new color only. See if she can remember the name of the other color.

Other color games

Have your child tell you the names of colors in stoplights, on signs, in books, or in magazines. Put together different things that are the same color and ask her what is the same about them. Help her use crayons or colored pictures to learn the names of colors.

BLINDFOLD GUESSING

Help your child name objects she cannot see. This way, she learns to connect the name of an object with the way it feels.

How to play

- ♥ Ask your child to sit on your lap, facing away from you.
- ♥ Place a blindfold on your child. If the blindfold is scary to her, just ask her to close her eyes or turn her head.
- ♥ Bring together objects she knows well, like a spoon, rattle, or small stuffed toy.
- ♥ Give her different things one at a time to feel and ask her to guess what she is holding.

OTHER BLINDFOLD GUESSING GAMES

Put safe, familiar things in a box or paper bag and ask your child to put her hand in and tell you what she feels. Or name one of the items in the bag, and ask her to take it out without looking at it.

Remember: Play games only as long as it's fun for both of you.

Learning to write

Toddlers learn how to write by experimenting with making marks on paper, just as they learned to say words by experimenting with making sounds.

Provide writing materials for your childpaper, nontoxic crayons and washable markers. Let him see you write. He will want to do it too! Encourage his early attempts at writing by accepting his scribbles as "real words" — just as you responded to his early babbling as "talking."

At this age children's drawings and "writing" may look the same — only the intention is different. Your toddler will tell you if his marks represent words or pictures.

Have a special place where you display your child's work. Include your toddler's pictures or scribbled messages in cards to relatives or friends (if he agrees). This lets him know you value his words or drawings.

Over time your child's early "scribbles" will come to more closely resemble real letters.

He or she? Him or her?

Parenting the Second and Third Years gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she."

Please note: When we use he or she, we include all children.



Nutrition: New foods are strange.

It isn't easy for a toddler to switch from baby foods to adult foods. Many toddlers won't eat a new food the first time it's offered.

When your child rejects a new food, it doesn't mean she doesn't like it. It could mean she's a little afraid of it and needs some time to get used to it.

Here are some things you can do to help:

♥ **Serve yourself the new food.**

Eat it to show that you like it.

♥ **Encourage her to taste it.** But don't force, bribe, or punish her if she doesn't.

♥ **Serve the new food again within 1 to 2 weeks.** The second time, it won't seem so new.

Again, don't make a fuss if she doesn't eat it. Sometimes, it takes ten tries before a toddler will even taste a new food.

Most toddlers would be happy to eat nothing but three or four favorite foods. To be well-nourished, they need **variety**. Fix many different kinds of food for your toddler, not just her favorites. Let her help with simple tasks such as washing vegetables and fruits.

Help her enjoy foods like milk, yogurt, cheese, fruits, vegetables, breads, rice, cereals, fish, chicken, meat, eggs, beans, and peanut butter on bread. Let her choose when she will eat a new food.

Toddlers learn about sex.

Your toddler is learning fast. You love his curiosity. You encourage his questions. You know that means he is alert, enthusiastic, and capable. What about his curiosity about sex?

Sexuality is an important part of life. At some point, your child will have questions about where babies come from and why boys' and girls' bodies are different. Sure, these questions can be embarrassing, especially in public. But when your child is curious or confused, you have a chance to help him learn.

You can show your toddler you admire his curiosity and that you want him to learn about all kinds of important things, including sex. If you can talk to your child about his body now, it will be much easier for both of you to talk about sex later, as he grows.

You can expect your toddler to wonder about babies and where they come from. Tell him the truth in words he can understand. Say something like: "Babies grow in a special place inside the mother's body." Show him you are glad he asked the question.

If he asks how babies get inside the mother, you may simply say that babies are made by mothers and fathers together.



Your child's early sexual concerns and questions may be about the differences between girls and boys. Little girls may wonder why they have no penis. Boys may worry that they could lose their penis. You can help your child learn that boys and girls are born with different genitals. Teach your toddler the correct names for his body's sexual parts, just as you teach him the names of other body parts.

All young children touch their genitals. Normal children like to explore all parts of their bodies. When they touch their genitals and find that this feels good, they may rub them. They may masturbate when they feel bored or upset.

Some masturbation does no harm. It is normal, and it is best for you to ignore it. Or, tell your child that you know it feels good, but we don't do this in front of other people. If you try to stop it and tell your children that it is bad, they may feel that they are naughty or that sex or sexual feelings are bad.

Also teach your child that his body is his own, and **no one** should touch his private parts. If you can talk openly about sex, your child will feel comfortable coming to you if he ever has a question or problem.



Bedtime talk

You might enjoy starting bedtime talk as part of your bedtime routine with your toddler. Bedtime is a good time to talk to your toddler without interruption in a cozy, private place.

Go over the best things that happened that day and talk about plans for tomorrow. The sound of your soft, comforting voice will help your child ease into sleep. You'll probably find yourself doing much of the talking at first. But you're setting the stage for later discussions.

As your child grows, he'll want to have private talks with you about important things. You can practice for these with your bedtime talks. Some nights, you may be in a hurry and try to skip your talk. Don't be surprised if your child says: "You forgot to talk to me about today and tomorrow."

Help! Why does my 2-year-old bite?

Sometimes when young children play together, they push, hit, slap, or bite. Most children bite and hit when they are feeling angry.

Some toddlers have difficulty tolerating "intrusions" — for example, when another child bumps into them or grabs a toy. These more intense, less adaptable toddlers may be more likely to bite or hit.

When your toddler bites you or another child, say firmly, "No. Biting hurts." Move her to a safe place, look her in the eyes, and say, "Stay here until you feel calmer. I cannot let you bite." After a minute or 2, ask her if she is ready to play again without biting or hitting. If she says, "Yes," let her return to her play.

What if your child keeps biting? Try giving her something like a wash cloth or teething ring that she can bite, and say, "Bite on this, instead of a person."

Never bite or hit your child back. This does not stop the behavior. In fact, it may make her believe that biting is all right. Most children who bite do so for only a short time. Hitting may go on for a longer time than biting.

Help your child learn better ways to handle her anger. Teach her to use phrases like, "Stop that," "Go away," or "I don't like that" instead of hitting and biting.

When she uses words instead of hurting, encourage her with words and hugs. Tell her: "You did a good job of using words instead of hurting." As your daughter learns to express her feelings in words, she'll hit and bite less.

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