



## Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development, 27–33 months

### Big Feelings

Your emotional toddler may be happy one minute and mad the next. They may want to do something without your help and then get frustrated and start to cry. These big feelings are normal. Name your child's and other people's feelings: "Jimmy looks happy to see you." When your child is eager, say, "You look excited! I am excited to make cookies, too." When your child is upset, say, "You sound mad."

### I Missed You!

Find time each day to have special one-on-one time with your child. Mute your phone and turn off other electronic devices so you can focus on each other. This is especially important if your child was away from you in care during the day. Your child missed you and needs to reconnect with you to feel secure. Even a small amount of one-on-one time soon after you come home will reassure your child that you are still connected. Otherwise, your child may act out to try to get your attention.

### Setting Limits

Your independent toddler will start to test limits. Have a few simple rules, such as, "Always use gentle hands." Be consistent. When your child forgets, go back to the rule. "You are mad, but it is not okay to hit. Remember, we use gentle hands." Notice when they follow the rules. "You asked for the toy and waited for your turn!" The more you notice your child doing the right thing, the more often they will do the right thing. They want you to notice!

### Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. Screen time includes television, games, computers, phones, and tablets. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems. Social-emotional skills develop through interactions with real people and real activities. Your child feels pride and develops self-confidence through real-life experiences.

### Same Way, Every Day!

Routine activities happen every day, such as mealtime and bedtime. Consistent routines help your child know what to expect, so they feel safe and secure. Routines also help them move from one activity to the next with fewer struggles. For example, your child learns that after play, toys go in the bin, and then it is snack time. They learn that even if they fuss, snack won't happen until toys are picked up. Same way, every day!

### Change Is Hard

Change can be confusing and scary for your child. If a change in the routine must happen, talk to them ahead of time and let them know what will be different. Your child can understand a lot. They may want to ask questions. Help your child understand why the change needs to happen. Holding a comfort item, such as a favorite stuffed animal or blanket, may help them stay calm.

### Bedtime Fears

Your toddler is becoming more aware. Your child may struggle with bedtime because of new fears, such as being afraid of the dark. Comfort your child and try different things to help. A stuffed animal, a nightlight, or quiet music might help them relax. Stay kind but firm and stick to the routine. The benefits of a good night's sleep are important to your child's overall mood and behavior during the day—and to yours!



### Mealtime and Snacks

Your happy toddler may suddenly become grumpy. They may just be hungry. Your child's stomach is small, so they can't eat much at one time. Offer food every couple of hours. Offer small amounts of healthy foods you know your child likes and new foods to try. Let your child explore foods and feed themselves. Do not force your child to eat. Your child will eat when hungry.