



NEWSLETTER

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development

27 to 33 months

Your child is learning what they can do and is more confident in their abilities. They are proud of their big kid skills. Your child also wants control. They want to do things their way and on their timeline. It can be frustrating when your child tells you “no” or wants to do things “by myself.” The trick is to give your child a little control while still being in control yourself. For example, always offer two acceptable choices when requesting something of your child: “Do you want to put on your red shirt or your blue shirt?” This small choice provides a little bit of control that feels good to your independent toddler.

“Keep on Trying”

Your toddler is taking on more challenges, and these challenges can trigger big feelings. It may not take much for your child to become discouraged and give up on a task that is hard or to say, “You do it.” Encourage and support your child: “Keep on trying. You can do it.” Stay close and, if needed, help them before they do give up. Let your toddler know you have confidence in their abilities. When your child learns something new, let them know how proud you are.

First Friends

Make times when your child can be with other children their age. Your child may enjoy attending music, movement, or dance classes with other children. If that is not possible, consider trips to the park or dancing together during play dates. Such activities are low-stress for your child, since there is little need to share toys or other belongings.

Calm First, Talk Later

Your child is learning to express and control their big feelings. This is a very hard thing to do! If your child is upset, help them calm down before trying to talk to them. Hold them lovingly in your arms and breathe together. “You’re okay sweetie. Mommy’s here.” Talk about and practice calming ideas at times when your child is not upset. Ideas include deep breathing, using words to talk about feelings, taking a break, or switching to a new activity.

Exploring the World

Give your toddler opportunities to explore new activities and places. Take your child to a park, the library, or other fun places. New places may be scary for your child at first. Keep them close and let them watch before joining in activities. Show your child how to greet new people, such as a clerk at a store. It is okay if your child is shy at first. When they are ready, they will let you know.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child’s ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child’s success in school and in life

(continued)

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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.