



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

31-32

Your child enjoys other special adults.

Have you noticed how much your child enjoys other special adults — grandparents, aunts, uncles, older friends, and neighbors?

You are the most important adults in your child's life. But your child also learns from other caring adults that she can trust, love, and enjoy. They make your child's world more varied, interesting, and exciting. Encourage these special relationships.

Your toddler needs these adult relationships. They can be a precious part of your child's life.



Especially for solo parents

A parent who "goes it alone" can certainly raise healthy children, although it will take extra time and effort.

To feel secure, children need a confident, competent parent, one they can always rely on. This means:

- ♥ **Organize your life** as much as you can.
- ♥ **Set firm but reasonable limits.**
- ♥ **Stick to routines** that make your child feel comfortable.

Moving from place to place makes children feel insecure. Try to stay put once you find a neighborhood where you are comfortable. This gives children a chance to learn the landmarks and people in the area and will help them do better once they start school.

Single parents should try to provide a positive view of the other sex. As a mother, for example, this means making sure your children get to spend time with men you want them to like and admire. The same idea is true for solo dads. Children also need to see healthy male-female relationships. You may want your son to spend time with relatives

or friends who are couples, so he can see how men and women get along as marriage partners.

If you are recently divorced or separated, it is easy to feel angry and bitter toward your "ex." Sharing these feelings with your child will only confuse him. Instead, talk with a counselor or adult friend. When you talk about the other parent to your child, do so in a way that is positive or neutral, never critical.

It is hard on children to get close to — and then lose — adult friends. This can happen as their parents start and break up relationships. If this happens several times, it can make children afraid of getting close to anyone new.

Does this mean you shouldn't date? Of course not. Your needs are important, too. You need to socialize with adults.

If you want your child to know a special adult friend in your life, **gradually** introduce your child to that person. You can even go on outings together. They need to form their own relationship. Expect your toddler to feel jealous and threatened, though. This is normal. Be sure to continue having plenty of family times together, without outsiders. This helps show your child that you are the person who will always be there for him.

What's it like to be 2¹/₂ years old?

How I grow:

- ♥ I can walk on my tiptoes now.
- ♥ I can run pretty well. But I can't start or stop very quickly.
- ♥ I can walk up stairs taking turns with my feet. But when I come down stairs alone, I usually put both feet on each step.
- ♥ I can stand on one foot for about 2 seconds.
- ♥ I can kick a ball pretty well.
- ♥ I'm really unpredictable and have to be watched all the time.
- ♥ I like my clothes, especially my shoes.
- ♥ I like bedtime rituals, and I don't like it when you change them.

How I talk:

- ♥ I am learning lots of words — about 50 new words a month.
- ♥ I make some four- or five-word sentences like, "Get some for me."
- ♥ I enjoy rhyming words, and I'm interested in how words sound.
- ♥ I can tell you where things are — like where the birds live, where the table is, and where my bed is.
- ♥ I use "I" instead of my name when I refer to myself.
- ♥ I may be able to tell people my last name as well as my first name.
- ♥ I get angry or unhappy when adults don't understand my words.

- ♥ I may understand "cold," "tired," and "hungry."
- ♥ When I am 3 years old, I will understand almost all the words I'll ever use in ordinary speech. But I won't yet be able to say all these words.
- ♥ I like to have you tell me about when I was a baby.

What I am learning:

- ♥ I'm good at matching shapes on a form board.
- ♥ I can match some colors.
- ♥ I love to learn, and I ask questions almost constantly.
- ♥ I can draw an X on paper, if you show me how.
- ♥ I'm learning about sequence, like "When Daddy comes home, then we eat," or "After I have a bath, I go to bed."

How I get along with others:

- ♥ I like doing things for others — sometimes.
- ♥ I may order others around or threaten to hit them if they don't do what I say.
- ♥ I love to give orders.
- ♥ Once in a while, I can be kind and polite with other children.
- ♥ Most of the time, I don't like to share my toys with others.
- ♥ When I want something, I really want it. But sometimes, I can't decide what I want.
- ♥ I act angry when you don't let me do what I want to do or when you interrupt my play.

- ♥ I'm beginning to learn about differences between boys and girls. I am very curious about sex organs and like watching others in the bathroom or when they are undressing.

What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I'm beginning to control my bladder and bowel movements during the day. I probably won't be able to control them at night until I am 3 or 4 years old.
- ♥ I can feed myself at least part of a meal without too much spilling. But when I get tired, I want help.
- ♥ Sometimes, I want to do everything for myself. And sometimes, I want you to do everything for me.
- ♥ I am starting to learn to button my clothes.
- ♥ By the time I'm 3 years old, I'll probably be able to pick out and put on my own clothes, if you give me a few choices.

Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to hear stories read just as they are written. I don't like it when you skip parts.
- ♥ I like pretend play, like feeding my toy bear or "sweeping" the floor.
- ♥ I like to play with modeling dough. I can make long snakes.
- ♥ I like to make mud pies.
- ♥ I like to make block houses, and I like knocking them down.
- ♥ I like to march to music.

Child care: Help your child get off to a good start.

Leaving your toddler in a new child care or preschool may be hard for both of you. Your child will face new adults and children, new routines, and new limits. She is used to your comfort and help. She may be scared about being alone and angry with you for leaving her.

You may worry that the teachers won't care for your child the way you would, or that they may ignore or hurt her. You may worry that she will embarrass you by crying or misbehaving. These feelings are normal when beginning something new. Some planning may reduce them.

Prepare your child.

You have already taken the first step by carefully choosing child care that you think is right for your child. You have found child care workers you like and can begin to trust. Now, talk with your child about what is going to happen. She may not understand everything you say, but she certainly will pick up your feelings of confidence.

If possible, visit the program with your child **before** her first full day. Let her watch and explore, with your help and protection. Show her where the bathroom is and where she will hang her coat.

Talk with the teacher about your child, before she begins the program. Tell the teacher about your child's eating and sleeping schedule, allergies, and other health concerns. You will want to talk about what upsets your child and how she can be comforted.

The first day at preschool

On the day your child starts in the program, be sure you bring all the forms, clothes, equipment, and food the teachers request. Bring one of your child's favorite things, such as a stuffed animal, a blanket, or a toy.

Arrive a few minutes early so you can talk with the caregiver, put away your child's things, and sit with your child to watch what is going on. When it's time to leave, with a calm face and hugs and kisses, say: "Good-bye. I'll be back this afternoon."

Of course, your child may cry, scream, kick, or retreat to a corner with her thumb in her mouth. She may like this place, but she wants you with her and needs to say so. Even though it is very hard, keep walking. Remember that you trust the teacher and trust your child. Children usually stop crying in a couple of minutes. It may help to call the teacher in an hour to learn how your child is doing.

Pickup time

When you pick up your child, greet her with warmth and words that show you know it was hard for her. Tell her that you are proud that she made it through the day. Don't be surprised if she is both glad to see you and mad that you left her.

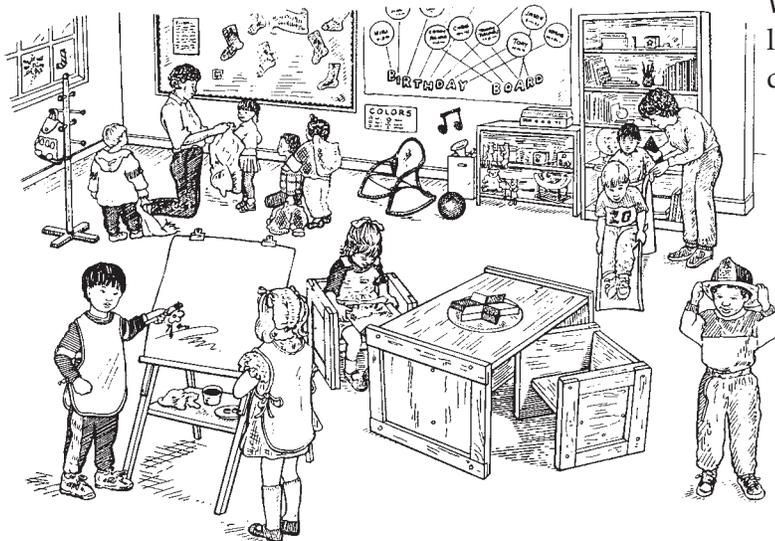
After starting child care, some children change eating and sleeping patterns. Some children need more time curled up in their parents' laps or sucking their thumbs. These behaviors will change as your child becomes more comfortable in the child care program.

You can help most by trusting:

- ♥ the caregiver's ability to teach, care for, and comfort your child.
- ♥ your child's ability to learn new and difficult skills.
- ♥ yourself and the decisions you have made about the caregiver.

Remember: You are helping your child learn how to adjust to changes that may be frightening.

We all need to learn how to do this!



Sugar and behavior Nutrition: Snacks with appeal

Does eating sugar make children hyperactive? Lots of people think so, but more than a dozen scientific studies show this is a myth.

Why, then, do children seem so “hyper” after Halloween or a big birthday party? It probably has nothing to do with the sugar, but a lot to do with the excitement of the day.

So, should you let your child eat freely from the candy bag? Of course not. Sugar contributes to tooth decay and provides empty calories that can easily take the place of more nutritious foods and lead to obesity. Besides, some sweet treats like chocolate and colas have caffeine in them, and caffeine is a stimulant.

Books on nutrition

Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming, by Ellyn Satter (Madison, WI: Kelcy Press), 2005.

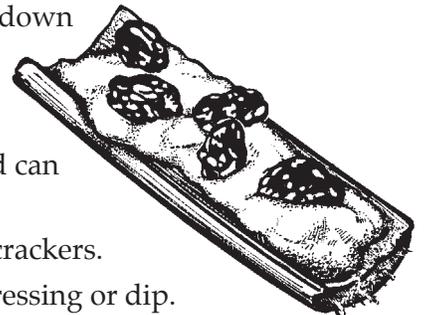
The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers, by Janice Newell Bissex and Liz Weiss (New York: Broadway Books), 2003.

The Toddler Bistro, by Christina Schmidt (Bull Publishing), 2009.

Your child was born liking sweet things. That's why snacks like popsicles, cakes, cookies, and candy are so appealing. They all tend to be high in sugar and very sweet. But these snacks offer little in the way of good nutrition. They provide calories, but almost no vitamins or minerals. They can also lead to dental problems.

Many nutritious foods are naturally tasty and will appeal to your child. Here are some suggestions:

- ♥ **Fruit juice.** Instead of fruit-flavored drinks, offer 100 percent fruit juice. Read the label carefully. Look for 100 percent juice. If it says fruit drink, cocktail, or punch, it's not 100 percent juice. When you use frozen fruit juice concentrate, add an extra can of water. If you buy bottled or canned fruit juice, dilute it with water before your child drinks it. This will give it a milder flavor and stretch your food dollar. Too much juice isn't great for children either. Try to limit juice intake to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each day.
- ♥ **Yogurt popsicles.** If you have a blender, you can make yogurt popsicles. Drain liquid from a 16-ounce package of defrosted frozen fruit. Put the fruit in a saucepan. Add a tablespoon of unflavored gelatin. Heat slowly, stirring until the gelatin dissolves. Place this in a blender with 16 ounces of plain yogurt (2 cups). Blend together. Pour into paper cups. Insert plastic spoons as handles. Cover with foil to keep handles in place and freeze.
- ♥ **Snack-size pizza.** Split an English muffin, and spread about 2 tablespoons of tomato sauce on each half. Sprinkle with grated low-fat cheese and some chopped vegetables. Put your mini-pizzas under the oven broiler or in a toaster oven until the cheese melts.
- ♥ **Quesadillas.** These are easy, popular snacks for children. Sprinkle low-fat cheese on half of a flour tortilla. Fold the other half over the cheese half. Heat in a frying pan or oven at low heat until the cheese melts. This also works well in a microwave. You can add shredded meat, chopped vegetables, or beans with the cheese. Dip in salsa or tomato sauce.
- ♥ **“Ants on a log.”** Place peanut butter down the center of a celery stick. Put some raisin halves on top. It's ready to eat! **Note:** This snack is better for toddlers who have all their teeth and can chew well.
- ♥ Low-fat cheese or peanut butter on crackers.
- ♥ Cut-up veggies and low-fat ranch dressing or dip.
- ♥ Cut-up fruit dipped in yogurt.



Punishment doesn't teach.

When children misbehave, we need to **stop** them, let them know **what** they have done wrong, and tell them **why** it is wrong. **Most important, we need to teach them the right thing to do.**

When we punish children, we make them suffer to “pay” for doing something wrong. Punishment usually does stop the unwanted behavior for a while, but it can cause problems, too. Punishment may cause children to fight back or be more naughty. It may teach them that they can do what they want, as long as they are willing to “pay the price” of punishment. They could come to feel like “bad” children — unloved and unlovable — and give up trying to please you.

Most important, punishment usually does not help children learn what they should do — only what they should not do. Punishment does not guide or teach. It does not build a sense of personal responsibility.

A young child who has done something wrong may not know what he should have done. If your toddler throws a toy truck at his sister because she won't let him play with her ball, he needs to learn **why** he should not throw trucks. He also needs to learn **how to manage** without having the ball. This calls for guidance, not punishment.

Of course, you need to keep your toddler from throwing trucks. You also need to tell him in simple words why he should not throw the truck and how he can play with other toys until it is his turn to play with the ball. He may need a “time-out” to cool his anger. If you are patient, he will learn to cooperate. Punishment alone cannot teach him this.

“More” on breakfast cereals

Some breakfast cereals contain a lot of sugar. In some cases, a serving of cereal can have more sugar than a donut or three chocolate chip cookies. Since sugar contributes to tooth decay and obesity, cereals that are lower in sugar are healthier options for your child. If you feel your child won't eat a “healthier” cereal, here is some encouraging news.

Recently, a group of researchers at Yale University looked at the breakfast behaviors of a group of children. Half of the children were given low-sugar cereals (1-4 grams of sugar per serving) and the other half was

given high-sugar cereals (11-12 grams of sugar per serving). The children in both groups were allowed to put strawberries or bananas on their cereal. They found that the children ate, and liked, the low-sugar cereals. They also ate more fruit on their cereal than the children who were served the high-sugar cereals.

If you are having trouble getting your child to eat a breakfast cereal that is lower in sugar, try offering some fruit with the cereal. Your child will be eating less refined sugar and getting more of the fruit he needs — a double-good deal.

Try on your child's view of the world.

Sometimes, it's easier to understand and guide toddlers if we try to see the world as they do. Most of us don't remember what it was like to be a toddler, so we have to use our imaginations.

Suppose Anita runs up to you happily to show you that she has learned to take the arms off her doll. Do you think first of the armless doll, or do you see the world through Anita's eyes? Can you share her happiness and show her how proud you are of her new-found skill?

Sam has just learned he can hit two pans together and make a beautiful, loud noise. Is your first thought to stop the terrible noise or to show him your pleasure with his new discovery?

Anita and Sam love to learn. Encourage this learning now. Repairing the doll or quieting the banging can come later, as you help your child use this new skill in a more acceptable way.

It's not always easy to set aside your own feelings to appreciate your toddler's achievements. But try it! You may find it makes life with your child more fun for both of you.





Checking toddler development

How do we know if our toddlers are learning what they need to become healthy children? A **developmental assessment** checks toddlers as they learn to walk, feed themselves, listen to stories, say words, ask for toys, and follow directions.

A developmental assessment compares your child with other children of similar ages. This helps find possible delays. Even though children's development normally varies, infants and toddlers tend to learn similar tasks at similar ages.

Doctors or nurses do an initial assessment as part of the child's checkup and health history. They will watch and talk to the toddler. Information from the parents is especially important since parents know the child best.

If the doctor finds a delay, ask for more testing by experts in child growth and development. If a toddler lags far behind, she may gain from special help.

Marching parade

Children love music. A musical parade is a great way to burn off energy indoors! Here's how:

- ♥ Play some marching music.
- ♥ Make homemade instruments from spoons, cooking pots, or other things that make noise.
- ♥ March around the house to the music while playing your instruments.

Keep in mind this activity can be loud. It's not the sort of play to do just before bedtime or if your child is sensitive to noise.

Games for growing

DOESN'T BELONG

Help your child learn about **alike** and **different** and increase his **observation skills**.

How to play

Draw four or five pictures or cut out four or five shapes that are all alike except one. Start with having your child match pictures or shapes that are very different, such as four pictures of trees and one picture of a house, or four red triangles and one white circle.

Later, you can make the "different" pictures more like the others: for example, four dogs and a cat, or four small red triangles and one large red triangle. Ask your child to show you the one that is different from the others. Take turns.

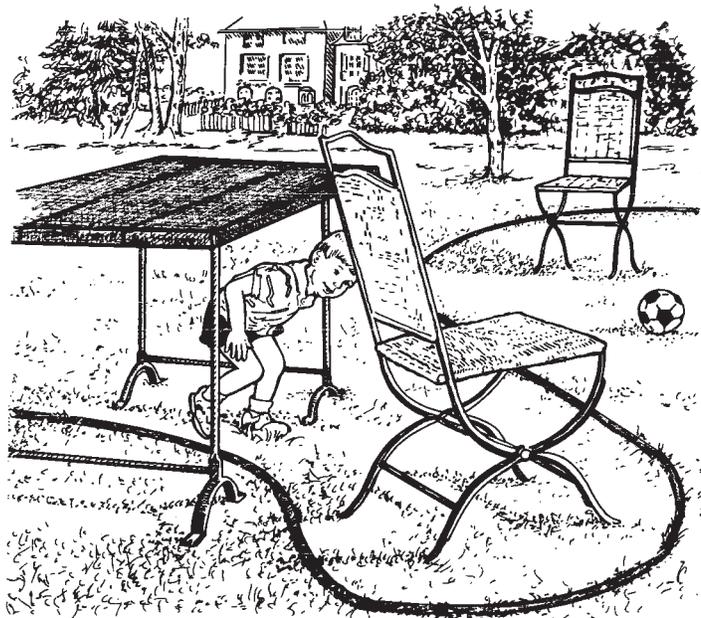
You can also play this with actual safe objects found around the house and yard, such as four bottle caps and a rock, four spoons and a fork, four red flowers and a white one.

SURPRISE PATH

Encourage your child's **physical development** and help her learn how to **follow a path**.

How to play

This game can be played indoors or out. When your child isn't looking, make a path marked out by chalk, a rope, garden hose, or string. Be creative. Lay out the path so it goes around in circles, over rocks, up stairs, under boards and tables, through tunnels, and so on. Let your child follow the path alone, or you can take turns leading each other.



Getting control over your life

Sometimes, stress comes from feeling you have so many problems you can't even begin to solve them all. But if you handle one problem at a time, you may begin to feel you're in control of your life.

Here are some problem-solving techniques:

- ♥ **Start by choosing one problem you can succeed with quickly.** An example might be that you can't get from work to the preschool on time to pick up your child and often must pay a late charge.
- ♥ **Think about all the possible ways you could solve the problem.** For example, you could ask someone to help pick up your child in exchange for a service you can offer them, or you could carpool with other families.
- ♥ **Pick the solution that is most possible and most comfortable to you.** Maybe you can afford to pay a babysitter for just a few hours on days that are especially difficult. Or, maybe you could adjust your work schedule.
- ♥ **Decide exactly what you're going to do.** Think about the steps you must take to make the solution work.

Solving problems one at a time may seem slow. But each problem solved helps you feel more in charge of your life.

Is your child highly sensitive?

Some children aren't bothered by loud noises or scratchy tags. But 15 to 20 percent of children are very sensitive to stimulation such as tastes, smells, touch, noise, lights, etc.

Sensitive children may complain about certain smells or refuse to eat another brand of peanut butter because it "tastes different." Tags on clothes or lumps in socks may drive them crazy. The noise, lights, and crowd at a birthday party or the mall may easily overwhelm them, bringing on tears. What can you do?

- ♥ First, realize that your child is not trying to be difficult. He really is more sensitive.
- ♥ Learn to recognize when there is too much stimulation for your child.
- ♥ Find ways to reduce the stimulation. For example, leave the mall if it's crowded or let your child select clothes that feel comfortable.
- ♥ Teach your child to recognize when he feels overwhelmed.
- ♥ Help him find ways to reduce stimulation, so he feels more in control. For example, he might go to a quiet spot when it's too noisy.

Enjoy the positive aspects of his sensitivity. He may notice details, like the shape of clouds or the smell of flowers, which enrich our lives!

Book for parents:

The Highly Sensitive Child, by Elaine Aron
(New York: Broadway Books), 2002.

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