

## Behavioural milestones

Behavioural expectations of children should not be higher than what is developmentally appropriate for their stage of development and should be consistent with their level of understanding. Remember that each individual child develops in their own way and at their own rate.

### 0-12 months (approx.):

- No understanding for consciously intentional behaviour. The baby doesn't understand that this is unacceptable behaviour, they are just exploring.
- No understanding of conscious reactions during interactions. Babies are unable to understand the concept of sharing at this stage.
- Beginning to develop trust (first step towards positive self esteem).

### 12 - 36 months (approx.):

- Still does not consciously plan actions or have control.
- Does not have the capacity to understand, remember or obey rules.
- Sharing is developmentally incompatible at this stage.
- Begins to become interested in other children.
- Beginning to develop independence.
- Starts to test boundaries.

### 36 - 60 months (approx.):

- Becoming consciously aware of their own interests and intentions.
- Becomes easily frustrated when things don't turn out as expected.
- Begins to manipulate ideas in their minds.
- Begins to understand consequences of their behaviour.
- Able to make appropriate decisions before acting.
- Will follow rules to please adults.
- Able to follow simple rules.
- Becomes very competitive.
- Beginning to comprehend the relationship between actions and consequences.



# A guide to support parents to understand children's behaviour and emotions

It is important to remember young children are developmentally not as experienced as older children in dealing with social and emotional situations. They are inexperienced human beings. Young children are just really beginning to explore the bigger social world and, in many instances, mixing with children outside of their own family groups for the first time. Their ability to problem solve, communicate, negotiate and cope with social situations is still just beginning to develop.



The year between age 2 and age 3 is an exciting one. Toddlers are realising that they are separate individuals from their parents and caregivers. This means that they are driven to assert themselves, to communicate their likes and dislikes, and to act independently (as much as they can!). Toddlers are also developing the language skills that help them express their ideas, wants, and needs.

At the same time, toddlers do not understand logic and still have a hard time with waiting and self-control. In a nutshell: Two-year-olds want what they want when they want it.

### **Learning to Handle Strong Feelings**

We need to work together to help your young toddler navigate the strong emotions they are experiencing this year. This is no small task, because the emotional lives of 2-year-olds are complex. This year they are beginning to experience feelings like pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment for the first time.

Older toddlers are a lot like teenagers. Their feelings may swing wildly from moment to moment. So toddlers really need our guidance to figure out how to cope with their emotions.

### **Practicing Self-Control**

When there is challenging behaviour, it usually means that the child can't figure out how to express their feelings in an acceptable way or doesn't know how to get a need met. We need to teach the children different ways to handle their feelings.

Learning to cope with strong feelings usually happens naturally as children develop better language skills in their third year and have more experience with peers, handling disappointment, and following rules. Although children won't completely master self-control until they are school-age (and practice it all their lives!).

### **Ideas for helping your toddler begin to learn how to manage their behaviour and feelings:**

#### **TALK ABOUT FEELINGS.**

Read books and notice aloud how the characters are feeling. Talk to your child about how you are feeling. When children can label how they are feeling, it helps them gain control over their emotions and communicate them to others.

#### **OFFER YOUR CHILD IDEAS FOR HOW TO MANAGE EMOTIONS.**

Young children need guidance when it comes to figuring out how to deal with big feelings like anger, sadness, and frustration. So when your child is really angry, validate what they are experiencing: *You are really angry right now because I said no more television.*

#### **EMPATHISE WITH YOUR CHILD.**

It's okay to let your child know that you understand the choices being offered are not the ones they want: *I know that you really want to play with that toy but you have to wait because it's Liam's turn.*

#### **LET YOUR CHILD MAKE CHOICES APPROPRIATE TO THEIR AGE.**

Some examples include: what to wear and what to play with, perhaps offer 2 choices. This gives the child a feeling of control and supports growing confidence and sense of competency (the belief that "I can do it").

#### **LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD "PRACTICE" SELF-CONTROL.**

There are many daily moments when you can teach your child this skill. For example, games that require turn-taking are great for practicing how to wait and share. Timers are also great tools for helping children learn to share.