



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.

Talking toddlers learn better.

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

The way parents and caregivers help their children develop language does influence 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, both feet on one step at a time, holding the railing.
- ♥ I can walk a few steps on tip-toe.
- ♥ I like to walk on low walls, 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 out of my 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, repeating 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.

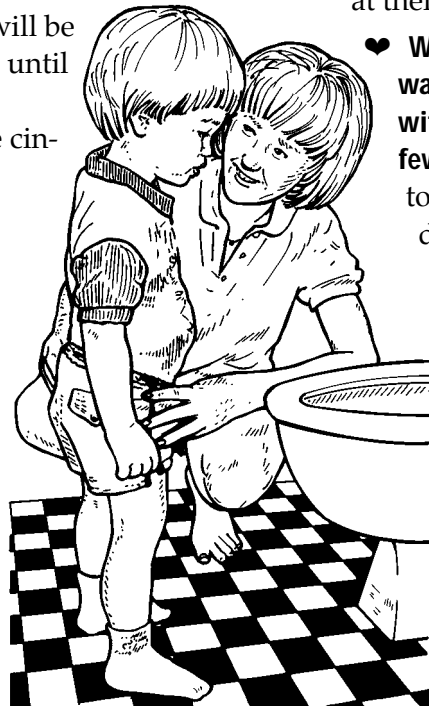
Sing me songs like "Rain, Rain, Go Away" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb." These simple songs will be easy for me to copy. I won't really be able to sing until I'm closer to 3 years old.

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.



Get ready for toilet training.

Many girls are ready for toilet training at about age 2, 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 had a bowel movement)." Show him, and tell him the word for the toilet or potty chair you will want him to use.

♥ **When your child is ready for training, dress him in loose-fitting training pants he can pull off easily.** 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.



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**, a bright color
- ♥ **White paper**
- ♥ **Scissors**

Making the toy

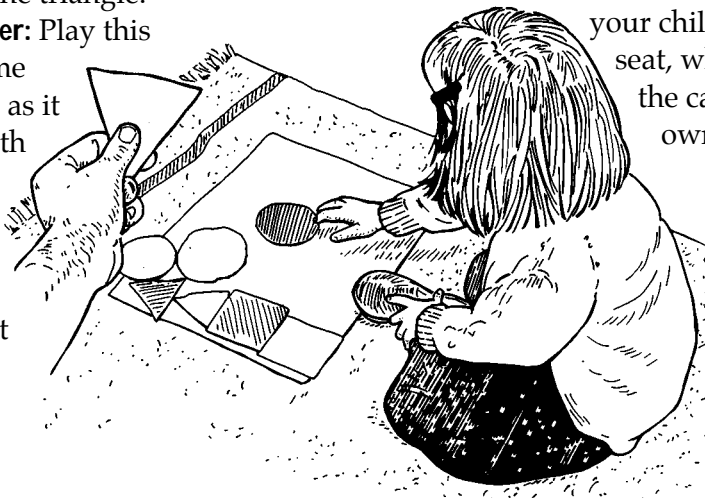
On the cardboard, use a bright-colored crayon to draw and color in simple shapes — a star, a circle, a square and a triangle. Then, on the white paper, draw, color in and cut out matching shapes.

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 persistent child

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. They still don't feel right.

Your daughter is being **very persistent**. The more you try to please her, the more she complains. You are locked in a cycle that is hard to get out of. This same thing can happen when your daughter asks for candy. You say "no," with her begging and pleading, on and on.

After explaining **why** you are saying no, arguing doesn't help. A long discussion doesn't help. Giving in will make things worse.

What should you do?

- ♥ Take a stand. Stick to it.
- ♥ Make it clear that you are the leader.
- ♥ Kindly and firmly say something like: "You've asked three times already. I'm not going to change my mind."

What if your daughter goes on whining or complaining? Let her know you understand what she wants, but it is time to stop whining. If necessary, make sure she is in a safe place and remove yourself from the room.

Show your daughter that whenever Mommy says "no," she really means it. If you do this every time, your daughter will eventually learn to accept "no" the first time.

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, which is safer. 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.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board 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 he can remember the name of the other color.

Other color games

Have your child tell you the names of colors in stoplights, on signs, on television or in magazines. Put together different things that are the same color, and ask him what is the same about them. Help him 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.

Good books on toddlers

A Healthy Head Start: A Worry-Free Guide to Feeding Young Children by Mary Abbott Hess, et al (New York: Henry Holt), 1991.

How Should I Feed My Child? by Sandra Nissenberg, et al (Minnetonka, Minn.: Chronimed), 1993.

Playtime Learning Games for Young Children by Alice Sterling Honig (New York: Syracuse University Press), 1982.

References

Meudt, June, and Karen Bogenschneider, *The Whipper Snapper*, 24-29 months (Dodgeville, Wis.: Iowa County University of Wisconsin-Extension), 1987.

Stevens, Joseph H., Jr., "Everyday experiences and intellectual development," *Young Children*, 37 (1), 1981, pp. 66-71.



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 a week or two.** The second time, it won't seem so new.

Again, don't make a fuss if she doesn't eat it. Sometimes, it takes three or four 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 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. You could explain that the father's sperm comes into the mother through the father's penis.

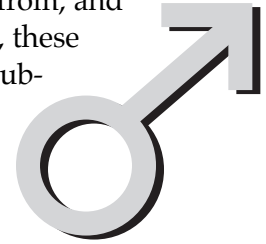


Your child's early sexual concerns and questions may be about the differences between girls and boys. Little girls may wonder why they have no penis. Boys may worry that they could lose their penis. You can help your child learn that boys and girls are born with different genitals. Teach your toddler 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 when he doesn't want them to. 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 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?

Q. What do I do about my 2-year-old who bites and hits other children? Should I bite her back?

A. Biting and forceful hitting must be stopped right away.

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

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 two, 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 this 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 words 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.

Credits

Authors: Jill Steinberg, associate specialist, Center for Action on the Family, University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW-Extension; David Riley, professor, Child and Family Studies, UW-Madison, and child development specialist, UW-Extension; and Dorian Schatell, technical writer, Madison.

Produced by Cooperative Extension Publications, UW-Extension: Susan Anderson, designer; Rhonda Lee, editor. Illustrations by Nancy Lynch.

Some articles adapted with permission from:

Cudaback, Dorothea, *Parent Express* (Oakland, Calif.: University of California Cooperative Extension), 1988.

Advisory Board: Mary Bradley, maternal-child specialist, Public Health Office, Madison, Wis.; Stan Englander, pediatrician, All-Saints-Kurten Medical Group; Susan Nitzke, associate professor of nutritional sciences, UW-Madison and UW-Extension; Mary Roach, child psychologist, UW-Madison; Susan Uttech, certified health education specialist, Maternal and Child Health Section, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Bureau of Public Health; and the Family Living Programs Parenting Issues Team, UW-Extension.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and North Central Cooperative Extension Services. Programs and activities of the Cooperative Extension Services are available to all potential clientele without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion or disability. NCR Publication No. 578, 1997.

Funded in part by a federal Title V MCH Block grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Section.

© 1997 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

Cooperative Extension Publications
630 W. Mifflin St., Room 170
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 262-3346 (Voice & TDD)
FAX (608) 265-8052

In cooperation with the NCR Educational Materials Project. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Services of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin (publishing state).

North Central Regional Extension Publications are subject to peer review and prepared as part of Cooperative Extension activities of the 13 land-grant universities of the 12 North Central States, in cooperation with the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. Programs and activities of the Cooperative Extension Services are available to all potential clientele without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion or disability.

Parenting the Second and Third Years NCR 578 is a set of 12 newsletters. For copies of these or information on parenting, contact your county or area extension office. If your state does not have copies — or if you need this material in an alternative format — contact the publishing state:

Cooperative Extension Publications
630 W. Mifflin St., Room 170, Madison, WI 53703
(608) 262-3346 (Voice & TDD)
FAX (608) 265-8052
E-mail: breitzman@admin.uwex.edu



**NCR 578 Parenting the Second and Third Years
Months 23-24 (1997)**

I-6-97-10M-500