

Learning About Your Toddler

Attachment

What is attachment?

The close relationship between you and your child that gives her a safe place from which to explore the world.

A healthy attachment is one of the key factors in raising a happy and confident child.

When your child is attached well, she feels secure. She can try new things, knowing she can always return to her safe place with you.

Attachment grows over time through day-to-day actions and routines. When you respond to your toddler in a loving and accepting way time after time, she learns that she can rely on you to support and protect her.



KEY TAKEAWAY

A healthy attachment is key to raising a child who's happy and confident. Attachment grows over time through consistent, responsive and loving interactions between you and your toddler.

Building a strong attachment with your child means:

- **Providing comfort every time she's sick, hurt or upset** by reassuring, rocking or holding her.
- **Paying attention and responding to her.** Show her that she's important to you by spending one-on-one time with her and doing things that interest her. See [Brain Development](#) to learn more about "serve and return" interactions.



TRY THIS

Find activities that you and your toddler both enjoy. Spend time talking, listening to her and taking her places. Read stories, go for walks and play games together.

- **Following daily routines** so she knows what to expect. Try to keep mealtimes and bedtime predictable and make rules that are clear and consistent.
- **Showing her you trust her** by letting her explore while you watch over her. Let her go off a short way when she's learning to crawl or walk, for example, but stay nearby so she can return to you.

- **Talking with her about events that may upset her.** Things like the birth of a new sibling or a friend moving away can cause nightmares and other distress. Even very negative experiences can be made easier by the presence of a positive and caring adult.
- **Preparing her for any time you're apart.** Only leave your child in the care of someone you trust. Then set up a goodbye ritual (a kiss, some special words and a wave from the driveway, for instance) and leave with confidence. Provide her with things to do, a photo of you and a favourite blanket or toy. Let her know when you'll return, and make sure to come back on time.
- **Building good memories** by telling her family stories, looking at photo albums together, keeping a collection of her crafts and artwork, writing a diary of her achievements and making videos of her special events.
- **Creating a sense of belonging** by honouring family and cultural traditions.

Temperament

What is temperament?

Your child's unique character that makes her "who she is."

Your child's temperament may be obvious right from birth or show up over time.

Temperament includes:

- her general mood
- how active she is
- how she reacts to new situations
- whether she's easily distracted or can focus well

Your toddler's temperament may be similar to yours or very different. Home environment and the people around her will have some effect, but temperament is mostly just a natural part of who she is.



DID YOU KNOW

Accepting your child's temperament doesn't mean letting her do whatever she wants. It means helping her develop in a way that's comfortable for her.



FAMILY STORY

A nurse suggested I get down on the floor with my son and watch what he was doing while trying to imagine what he was thinking. I learned a lot about him from this simple act of quiet watching.



Support your child's temperament by:

- **Understanding her.** By watching her in a variety of settings, you'll learn a lot about her, including her likes and dislikes and how she feels most comfortable dealing with others.
- **Not labelling her.** A child who grows up hearing that she's shy or that she talks too much, for example, will tend to believe it and live up to those expectations.
- **Being open and accepting of who she is,** rather than expecting her to be a certain way. Let her take the lead in uncovering her talents and preferences.



BRAIN BUILDER

Instead of scolding your toddler, help her understand what's happening and show empathy toward her feelings. Rather than "Stop throwing your toys and calm down!" try "It seems like you're really upset. I'm sorry you feel that way. I get upset sometimes, too."

As she grows, help her put words to how she's feeling and to handle big emotions in a healthy way: "Can you tell me what you're feeling? Is there a way you could tell me you're angry without throwing your toys?"

- **Finding ways to direct her temperament into positive activities** in a way that's comfortable for her.
- **If she's shy** in a playgroup, for example, try letting her sit with you and watching until she's ready to join in.
- **If she's full of energy,** try giving her ways to move around – like dancing, running in the yard or helping with chores. If she has to sit still, give her something to hold that she can play with.



DID YOU KNOW

When your child behaves a certain way, she's communicating something to you. What might look like being "naughty" is really just your toddler's way of telling you she needs something. See [Dealing With Common Challenging Behaviours](#) for tips on how to respond.



DID YOU KNOW

Learning to accept and work with your child's temperament rather than trying to change it will help her feel good about herself. And it will make both your lives happier and easier.

