

The time you spend with your toddler is important! As their parent, they look to you for, well, about everything. From drinks to hugs to snacks to pants, your toddler really does see you as the source of all good things. All that time, while you are taking care of their needs and messes, you are giving your toddler exactly what they need most to learn and grow. Even if you're a working mom, those few hours of quality time you spend with them makes a huge impact!

There are four important concepts that can make a huge difference in the time you spend with your toddler.

## Parent to Your Child's Personality

Everyone, including your toddler has a unique personality. Their personality makes them who they are and affects how they react to people and situations. So what makes up your child's personality? Temperament is based on five characteristics:

- **Their emotional intensity.** Do they have big reactions when happy, frustrated, or sad? Or are they easy-going and take things in stride?
- **Their sensory reactivity.** Can they handle lots of stimulation—like an hour-long outing at the grocery store? Or are they more easily overwhelmed and upset by it?
- **Their activity levels.** Do they thrive on lots of active play like running, jumping or climbing? Or do they prefer quieter, less active play, like puzzles and books?
- **Their adaptability.** Do they settle into new experiences easily, or do they become upset by changes or by the unexpected?
- **Their persistence.** Are they patient and able to work through challenges? Or are they more easily frustrated and likely to give up?

*There is no right or wrong temperament.* Knowing about personality is not about changing your child, but about understanding them.

## Encourage Independence

It is a parent's job to help our toddlers safely explore their independence. You can help encourage independence by allowing them to *do things* for themselves. Get them involved in picking up toys or other age-appropriate tasks with you. Involve them in choosing what clothes to wear by giving them a couple of choices. Guide them to build skills and whenever they master a new one, give them lots of praise.

You can also help them have patience when they're trying to master new skills by assuring them that they will soon be able to do whatever it is they're learning. Try not to sweat the messes as they are learning. It's only for a little while and every bit of patience you give will help them grow and learn.

## Teach Them About Their World

The world is a big, big place and there is a lot to learn about it. As your child grows in independence and confidence, they begin to tackle it. But they still need your help to find their way. They need your guidance to help them navigate through challenging circumstances and tricky social situations. You teach them to be strong and kind by shaping their responses. Helping your child learn to communicate helps them form good relationships with others.

## Teach Loving Limits

We teach our children that there are limits to their behavior. *Limits* are like little fences we put around our children to make them feel and be safer in their world. Limits teach them to respect others and themselves. Our children learn to respect reasonable limits at home first, which will help them respect limits set at daycare or school, when they get there.

We also teach our children that there are limits to their reactions. *It's okay to feel frustrated*, but there are limits to what they are allowed to do when they have these feelings. *It's not okay to act mean, say hurtful things, or throw things when they're upset or frustrated*. Your toddler is experiencing so many new emotions, and they may feel overwhelmed sometimes.

## Conclusion

Your time, love and patience will give your child everything they need to begin developing confidence, to learn to understand their emotions, and to create strong relationships. It's so rewarding to know that the time you take with your toddler will result in an incredible little person who is ready to face the world and its challenges.

### Resources include:

1. Zero to Three. Nurturing Your Child's Development from 12 to 18 Months. 2003. Washington, DC. Found at <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1052-nurturing-your-child-s-development-from-12-to-18-months>, accessed 5/25/2019.
2. Zero to Three. Temperament: What Makes Your Child Tick. 2016. Washington, DC. Found at <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/159-temperament-what-makes-your-child-tick>, accessed 5/25/2019.
3. Williams, Glenda, MD. Pediatrician – Interview.
4. American Academy of Pediatrics. Emotional Development: 1 Year Olds. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Emotional-Development-1-Year-Olds.aspx>, accessed 5/26/2019.
5. American Academy of Pediatrics. Emotional Development: 2 Year Olds. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Emotional-Development-2-Year-Olds.aspx>, accessed 5/26/2019.
6. Sears W, Sears M, Sears R, Sears J. The baby book, revised edition: Everything you need to know about your baby from birth to age two. Hachette UK; 2013 Jan 8.