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## Understanding your toddler

Here is some information about how children learn and grow. Remember each child grows at their own pace and not all children will be learning the same things at the same ages. Use this information to notice where your child is growing at *their* pace, and support their growth as only you can. If you have questions about your child's development, bring this information and your questions to your child's next medical appointment or Early Intervention visit.



### WHAT I CAN DO

EXPLORE! I can understand what you say to me, and I am learning to walk and talk. I am learning

to trust you and understand that I am lovable. I am also becoming my own person, learning about limits, power, and independence. I like to say NO! and MINE! These are experiments – I am not trying to be difficult. Be patient with me.



### WHAT I AM LEARNING

I am learning how to talk and communicate by watching you. I may have tantrums when I have

big feelings because I am still learning how to express my feelings and ask for what I need. I am a SPONGE. I am listening to everything that is said around me.



### WHAT I NEED FROM YOU

Talk to me a lot and tell me everything we're doing and going to do. Remind

me that you love me and teach me how to explore safely with my five senses. I might move really quickly now, so keep an eye on me to make sure I'm safe. Tell me it's okay to get upset and have a fit, but that you'll keep me safe and won't let me hurt myself or anyone else. Teach me words so I can ask for things and learn to cooperate with others. Teach me about feelings and how to care about myself and my friends. Let me try new things and push limits, keep the rules consistent, and don't take my limit-setting personally. Keep me on a steady routine. Look at books with me! Praise me. Watch me. Laugh with me.



## WHAT THIS TIME MIGHT BE LIKE FOR YOU

It might be hard to keep up with your child now that they are moving around. You might feel more tired than you did before, with less time for relaxing. They may be less willing to take naps now that there's so much of the world to explore. You might get frustrated by how often you have to chase them around to make sure they don't get into things that can hurt or harm them. You may miss time with your friends because your child needs so much from you. You also might start to really fall in love with how cute they are, and the new ways they are talking and communicating.



## WHAT YOU MIGHT BE FEELING

It may feel like you're losing control while your child struggles for independence. It might feel like they are testing your patience or trying to make you mad, but they don't mean to. They may not want to sit still or cuddle with you as much as they used to, and this might make you feel sad or like they don't need you anymore. That's not true. In fact, they need you more now. You may feel frustrated with your child if it takes them a long time to learn things. It might seem easier (and faster) to do things for them when they struggle, but they need to learn for themselves. It's hard to adjust after parenting a baby, but try to resist doing things for them. With your help and patience, they will get stronger and more capable every day.



## HOW YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF RIGHT NOW

Give yourself permission to take "time outs" and regroup if you are getting frustrated. Try to get enough rest, maybe by laying down while they have a nap. Reach out and connect with other moms and talk to them about what you're going through and how it feels. Remind yourself that this phase will pass as your child gets older. If you can't get out of the house, find an online recovery support group. Keep up with your own medical/mental health appointments.

*"What has been helpful to me is having people say, 'me too,' about the fears and the doubts, and not pretending that everything is always wonderful, because that's not true."*

