

the magic of everyday
moments

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you by the
Johnson & Johnson
Pediatric Institute,
L.L.C.
And
ZERO TO THREE®



18-24 months

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ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit organization of renowned pediatricians, educators, researchers, and other child development experts who specialize in the first years of life.



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DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

The Magic of Everyday Moments™: 0-4 Months

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The Magic of Everyday Moments

Loving and Learning Through Daily Activities

If you are like most parents today, your greatest challenge is probably caring for your child while also taking care of yourself and your responsibilities. The competing demands on your time and energy make finding the time to connect with your child no small challenge. But daily activities, such as getting dressed and doing household chores and errands don't need to take time away from bonding with and enjoying your child. In fact, these everyday moments are rich opportunities to encourage your child's development by building her: **self-confidence; social, communication and thinking skills; and her capacity for self-control.** Most of all you build her desire to learn about her world.

The booklets in this series are not intended to be general guides to everything that is happening at each specific age. Instead, they focus on how, through interactions with your baby during everyday moments, you build a strong and close relationship—the foundation of your child's learning and her healthy growth and development.

If your child's development is delayed, you can adapt the information in this booklet to meet your child's individual needs. If you are at all concerned about your child's development, consult your pediatric health care provider.

It's the special interplay between parent and child that makes everyday moments so meaningful. The potential is limitless. The starting point is you.



What's it like for you:

When your child starts to talk, it opens a whole new world and ends a lot of guessing games. Most children this age can use several words. This reduces a lot of frustration for you and your child. It can also be a very exciting time as you see a vocabulary “explosion ” with new words every day. The more you talk with her, the more words she learns. She'll also have more confidence in her ability to communicate.

Of course, more words doesn't mean an end to all parenting challenges. You may experience what many call the “terrible two's” (which often starts before 18 months!) But while toddlers can be exhausting and infuriating at times, they aren't “terrible.” They are just eager explorers, testing out different behaviors without yet understanding right from wrong; and, without the self-control to stop themselves from doing what they want, even if they've been told countless times what is and isn't okay. So choose your battles and decide what is important to address. When you do lay down the law and are met with angry protests and tears, remind yourself that you're doing the right thing. Although it's never fun to be the “heavy,” children thrive on clear and consistent limits. Limits help children learn what is and isn't acceptable and helps them make good choices as they grow.



running errands

You don't have to dread taking your child on errands. Doing errands together can actually be wonderful bonding and learning experiences.

If your toddler could talk:

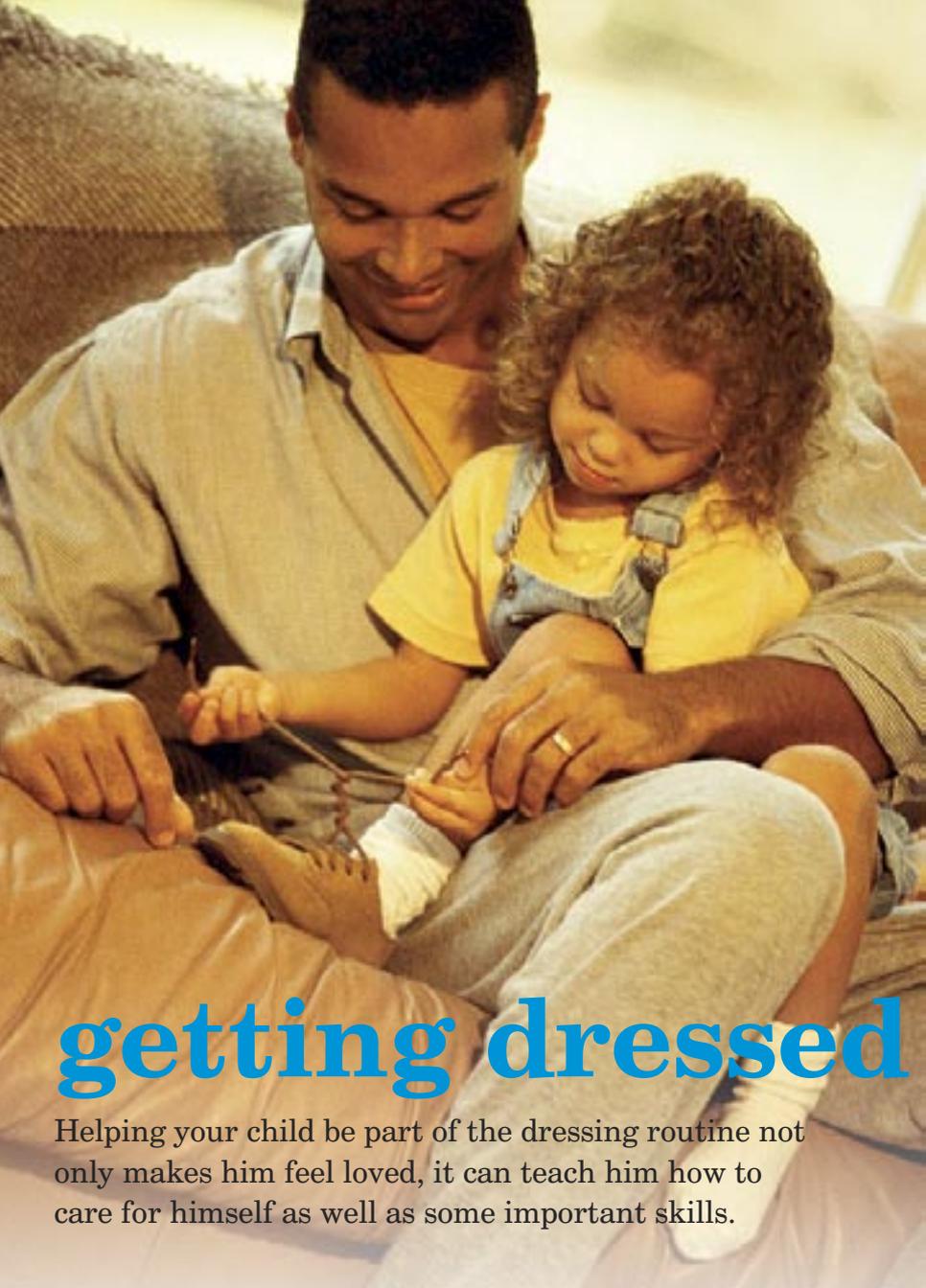
There are so many places to go and people to see. I may throw a fit when you buckle me into my car seat. It's no fun to have to sit still. There's so much I want to touch, smell, taste, and climb. But I do love to sing and talk with you as we ride in the car or the bus. You name the places we pass and they become familiar to me. All the big people in the shops and stores can be a little scary. Some come close, talk loudly, and even touch me. It helps when you hold me close and tell others to go more slowly to say "Hi". I also see things that I recognize from our home. When you name them, I learn new words. Going from one place to another can also be hard. Just when I'm having fun hiding behind the clothing racks, we have to go! It makes it easier when you give me some warning.

What your toddler is learning:

Most parents bring toddlers along on errands out of necessity. But, these trips can be great learning opportunities. Stores, banks, cleaners, and other places are full of new people to meet, and new things to explore. Your child watches and copies how you interact with people. Each time you stand in line, ask for help, or say thank you, you are teaching your child about taking turns, learning to wait, and respecting and appreciating others. You help your child with language and thinking skills as you name items in the stores. You build her imagination as you talk about how you might use what you buy. You teach about counting and the value of items as you pay the cashier. You help her handle changes when you tell her where you're going next. These outings may also be a chance to go beyond your own neighborhood and see people from different cultures and backgrounds – another important learning opportunity.

What you can do:

- Encourage your child to help by putting items in your cart or handing the cashier money.
- Plan errands when your toddler isn't overly tired or hungry.
- Make sure the car seat is in good condition and properly installed. Ninety percent of car seats are used improperly.



getting dressed

Helping your child be part of the dressing routine not only makes him feel loved, it can teach him how to care for himself as well as some important skills.

If your toddler could talk:

Arms up! I can follow your directions when you help me get dressed. But I might still be a bit of a wiggle worm. We can count my toes as you put on my shoes. I like to name the colors of my clothes—red, blue, yellow, green. Sometimes I just want you to dress me. I feel really special when you do it carefully (not too rough pulling the shirt over my face!) and give me a hug and tell me how cute I am. Other times I might try to pull away and say “Me do it!” If you let me try, you will see how much I’ve learned from you. I may put my socks on inside-out or my pants on backwards. But when you let me try, it makes me feel confident that I can do some things for myself. And have no fear, whatever I put on, you’ll eventually see me take it off. That’s another new skill I’m learning!

What your toddler is learning:

Whether you are helping your toddler put on clothes, brush his teeth, or wash his hands, it tells him that he is important and that he can trust that you will take care of him. When you encourage him to help, and let him try some or all of it on his own, it builds his self-confidence. It also teaches him the skills he will need to take care of himself as he gets older. He is learning colors, numbers, and the names of clothing as you talk to him. When you tell him to raise his arms or lift his foot, he practices following directions. At the same time, he’s learning the names of his body parts and how they work.

What you can do:

- Allow him to practice making choices. Provide two shirts, and let him choose. This gives him a sense of control and lets him know you value what he likes.
- Make getting dressed part of a game. He will be more attentive (and less wiggly!) when you make it fun.
- Be silly. Try putting a sock on his hand or a pant leg on his arm. Laugh with him and say, “Oops! That’s not right. Where does it go?”



Reading Your Child's Cues

What follows is a chart that describes what children are learning at this stage and what you can do to support the development of these new skills. You will see that the age ranges are broad. This is done intentionally because children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Whether a child reaches a milestone earlier or later within the normal timeframe is not significant.

what to expect

between 18 and 24 months:

I'm sure hand-y!

Your toddler's hands and fingers are able to do much more. This opens up new ways to play.

- Provide opportunities to color, turn pages while reading, and operate more complicated toys.
- Have fun in the kitchen: finger paint with colored pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake.

Mine!

For toddlers, emotions still win over self-control. This can make sharing very hard. Your child may understand "no" but her mind still says "yes" as she grabs a toy from another child.

- Play back and forth games to help her understand and practice turn-taking.
- Make sure your child has lots of opportunities to play with other children. Be their guide in learning to share. Developing this skill takes time and practice.

Chatter-box

Your toddler may be experiencing a "vocabulary explosion." He's learning new words every day and may combine two or more in a phrase. He may want to practice talking...a lot!

- Expand his words and phrases into a sentence: "Me down" becomes "You want to get down."
- Play games with words. Try replacing a word in a familiar song: "Row, row, row your car."

Let off some steam.

Your toddler may have more tantrums. He may get frustrated when he can't do something he wants by himself.

- Continue to label his emotions to help him feel in control and to let him know you understand.
- Help him slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed.

what you can do:

what to expect between 15 and 18 months:

Let the Music Play

Your toddler will love music, dancing, singing, clapping, and other rhythm games. Sharing music is a great way to bond with and teach your child new words, ideas, and movements.

- Make music a part of your day in ways you and your child enjoy. You can even dance on the way to the bath or sing in the car as you do your errands. Don't worry about your voice—children don't judge!
- Dance and introduce simple music games like freeze and the hokey-pokey.

Monkey-see, Monkey-do

Your toddler learns by imitating you and others she sees, especially other children.

- Be aware of your own actions and words. Let him see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.
- Provide opportunities for him to see other kids practicing good habits like buckling up and eating healthy foods.

I can solve that!

Your toddler is getting better at problem-solving. She may try several times to figure out how to work a toy or puzzle.

- Provide toys that challenge her but that she can master. If they're too easy she'll get bored, and her learning will be limited.
- Coach your child – but don't do it all for her. Provide just enough help to allow *her* to solve the problem.

I feel your pain.

Your child is beginning to understand that others have feelings, too. He may pat your back, or even comfort another child.

- Show that you appreciate his compassion: "That hug sure makes me feel better."
- Label your own feelings: "I'm sad because I bumped and hurt my toe."

what you can do:



What Your Baby Needs Most

We know that you want to do your best to nurture your baby's healthy development. We also know that many parents are overwhelmed by busy days, and the thought of adding extra activities to boost their child's development may simply be too much.

That is the power of the magic of the everyday moment. What your baby needs most to thrive is you. Nothing else can replace the power of what your child learns as he explores the world and shares his discoveries during everyday moments with you.

We hope this booklet has shown you that the magic of parenting is not in any toy you buy or in the latest product claiming to make your baby smarter. The magic is in your everyday interactions that help your child build the crucial capabilities — such as confidence, curiosity, cooperation, and communication — needed for lifelong learning and success.

Remember, everyday moments are rich bonding and learning opportunities. Enjoy the magic of these moments with your child.

*Don't miss the other booklets in
The Magic of Everyday Moments™ series:*



For more information on early childhood development, go to:

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