

COMING TOGETHER AROUND MILITARY FAMILIES:®

SUPPORTING OUR BABIES AND TODDLERS

STRESS AND BEHAVIOR

“You think you’re stressed!”



Babies and toddlers **do** pick up on stress in the home and often act out what they are unable to put into words.

Developed by



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During stressful times, try not to forget that your child, as little as he is, is affected by the feelings of others close to him. If his behavior becomes more challenging, remember that this might be his only way of telling you that he is stressed too!

- Learn to be a **“Feelings Detective.”** Babies or toddlers may communicate their stress through increased aggression, regression (a return to more “babyish” behaviors such as night awakening, wanting to be held all the time, or losing interest in the potty—depending on her age), sleep changes, whining/crying, and/or clinginess. Rather than getting mad, try to figure out what your young child is trying to tell you about how she is feeling. Often these behaviors are a sign of needing more reassurance. Then you can figure out how to support her through this rough time as best you can. Don’t hesitate to talk to your pediatrician or a counselor if you have concerns about your child’s behavior.
- Reassure your child, through words, gestures, and comforting activities, that he will continue to be loved and nurtured no matter how he is behaving or what is happening in the world around him.
- Babies and toddlers pick up on the stress of their caregivers. When you feel sad and scared, they do too. It’s a tall order, but try to be aware of your own behavior and responses during stressful times. This will help you manage your feelings and actions in ways that can reduce the stress on both you and your child.

