

Two to Three Years

Developmental Tasks

Discovering and establishing a positive, distinct self through continuous exploration of the world

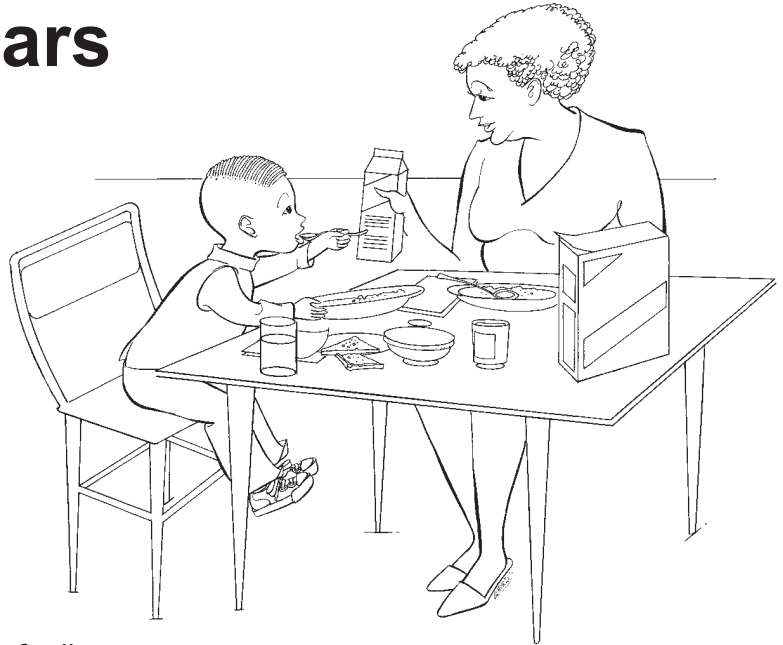
Developing communication skills and experiencing the responsiveness of others

Using memory and acquiring the basics of self-control

Learning to separate thinking from feeling through experiencing opportunities to make choices

Becoming aware of limits

Creating personal solutions to simple problems (choosing foods, clothes, activities, etc.)



What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Strengthens its motor circuits so walking, eating, climbing, pinching, jumping, and zipping all improve.
- ❖ Begins problem solving.
- ❖ Remains open and flexible to learning other languages because the language center is still so active.

Domains

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Physical	Runs, kicks, climbs, throws a ball, jumps, pulls, pushes, etc.; enjoys rough-and-tumble play	Provide lots of room and many active experiences that promote use of arms and legs.
	Is increasingly able to manipulate small objects with hands; likes to scribble; eats easily with a spoon; helps to dress self; and can build a tower of 6 to 7 blocks	Provide activities that involve the use of fingers: playing with clay, blocks, and finger-paint; using large crayons and pickup and stacking toys; dressing self and dolls.
	Begins to control bowels, with bladder control occurring slightly later	Gradually start toilet training; consult pediatrician, nurse, or other professional if unsure how to begin.
Emotional	Needs to develop a sense of self and to do some things for him/herself; enjoys praise	Provide simple experiences in which the child can succeed; praise often.
	Tests his/her powers; says “No!” often; shows lots of emotion: laughs, squeals, throws temper tantrums, cries violently	Be firm in following through with your instructions, but do not discipline the child for expressing feelings and showing independence as s/he is not deliberately being “bad” but cannot control feelings until they have been expressed.
	Fears loud noises, quick moves, large animals, and departure of mother (or primary caregiver)	Avoid sudden situations involving such fears; do not force or make fun of the child.

Social**Typical Characteristics****Suggested Behaviors
for Effective Parenting**

Still considers the mother (or primary caregiver) very important; does not like strangers

Don't force child to relate to strangers.

Imitates and attempts to participate in adult behaviors such as washing dishes, mopping floors, applying make-up

Allow the child time to explore and begin to do things for him/herself.

Is able to participate in activities (such as listening to a story) with others

Provide brief experiences with other children, but don't expect much equal interaction.

Mental

Continues to learn through senses; is still very curious

Provide sensory experiences; allow the child opportunities to explore (with limited "no-no's").

Has a short attention span

Don't make the child do one thing for more than a few minutes. When the child becomes frustrated by a task, assist the child just as much as they need to accomplish the task.

Uses three- to four-word sentences

Talk with the child, and provide simple explanations when questions are asked.

Begins to sing simple songs and make rhymes

Provide low-key, rhythmic songs and rhymes to enjoy and learn.

Enjoys (sometimes demands) consistent repetition of activities and experiences, e.g., has a bedtime routine.

Accept the need for ritual. Tell the same stories and sing the same songs over and over as long as the child desires it.

Moral

Usually appears self-reliant and wants to be good but is not yet mature enough to be able to carry out most promises

Accept the child's limited ability to carry out promises; understand that noncompliance is not deliberate, just the child's way of expressing independence.

Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Overly withdrawn, passive, and/or fearful

Obsessive head banging, finger sucking, and/or rocking

Lack of interest in objects, environment, or play

Excessive temper tantrums: uncontrollable hitting, biting, and hyperventilating and/or constipation or smearing of feces (stool) as an expression of anger

Excessive stubbornness and/or consistent overreaction to reasonable limits

Weak sense of positive, distinct self (shown as not making choices, meekly accepting the impositions of others, etc.)

Memory problems

Regressive behaviors (such as thumb sucking that stopped a year ago or not speaking anymore)