



Your Toddler and You

Support and advice
as your little one grows

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Welcome

Welcome to Your Toddler and You

Your baby is growing into a toddler, and this is such an exciting time in their life. Toddlers are full of curiosity, learning new things every day. The world is fun and full of surprises, and they are figuring out what they like and do not like. They can reach for things to play with and for things you do not want them to play with! They are also learning to say 'no'. This can be a happy time, but it can also be tricky for both toddlers and parents.

The word 'toddle' means 'to walk unsteadily'. While toddlers are learning to walk, they wobble, lose their balance, bump into things, and fall over. It takes practice.

'Unsteady' is a good description of the feelings that come with this time of growth and change for both toddlers and parents. As a parent of a toddler, you are learning too about how to stay close enough to keep your little one safe whilst allowing

them space to try and sometimes fall. This is normal. Learning and growing is part of life for both toddlers and parents.

From ages 1 to 3, toddlers go through big changes. These changes come with big feelings. Many parents say it is easier to manage these changes when they know what is happening. This booklet was created with help from families and experts to explain what toddlers are going through. It will guide you through the changes and feelings that come with this stage. No matter what your family looks like or how you became a caregiver, this booklet is for you.

There are also three short videos online that go with this booklet – **scan the QR code to watch them.**

We have used 'he' and 'she' for the toddler and words like parents, partners, or caregivers for the adults who care for them.



‘Your Toddler and You’ is Here to Help

When your baby was born, she left the cosy world of the womb, where all her needs were met. It was her first time being a separate person. By being held, fed, loved, and cared for, your baby learned about her body, relationships, and the world.

Now that your baby is becoming a toddler, she is starting to do more on her own. This happens naturally as her brain grows and develops. It is a big step! It takes time, and both of you might struggle and make mistakes, but that's part of learning.

When toddlers start standing and walking, they see the world in a whole new way. Imagine suddenly being two feet taller! Walking changes everything – they can now explore on their own, which is very exciting. But they can also walk away from



“ I feel really lucky to be able to see things through her eyes ”



you, which might feel scary for both of you. Some parents say, ‘He used to be fine when I left, but now he cries like I’m never coming back.’ This might feel like a step backward, but it is actually progress. It is a sign your toddler understands more about the world.

Walking also frees up their hands to explore. They want to touch, grab, and figure out how things work. This curiosity is wonderful, but it also means they might get into dangerous situations, like putting fingers in sockets, pulling heavy objects, or climbing stairs.

There is a famous saying: that there are two gifts we should give our children: one is roots and the other is wings. This means toddlers need to feel safe and loved (roots) while being encouraged to explore and become more independent (wings).

‘Your Toddler and You’ is Here to Help (cont’d)

Toddlers have big feelings and show them clearly. They can go from happy to furious very quickly. Their brain is still developing, and the part that calms them down is not as strong as the part that gets them going. It is like learning to drive a car – it takes practice to control the brakes and the accelerator. Your toddler needs your help with this.

Your toddler’s brain also grows based on the world around them. A calm, caring environment helps them thrive. Seeing some anger in family life is okay – it teaches them it is normal, short-lived, and things can get better. But a home with constant shouting and aggression can make young children anxious because it feels unsafe. A loving, safe environment helps toddlers feel secure and strong, confident and resilient.



Sometimes toddlers seem to want two things that are the opposite of each other. For example, they might say, ‘I do it myself!’ but also, ‘I want you to do it!’ This can be exasperating and confusing for both of you. They are just finding it hard to have to choose.

All parents were once toddlers. Even if you do not remember it, your

experiences from that time are still inside you. These old feelings can pop up and make it hard to stay calm, but they can also help you understand what your child is going through.

Before a big developmental leap, toddlers might cry more, cling, have trouble sleeping, eat less, or act out. This phase usually lasts a couple of weeks.



Growing and Developing Together

What goes in? Food, fads, and favourites

This chapter is about how to make sense of all the feelings that come with developments in feeding, toileting, and sleep. The toddler years are a time of major change around who owns and controls your child's body, what goes in (feeding) and what comes out (toileting).

These changes can be exciting but also hard for both of you as your toddler becomes more independent.

Feeding is about more than just food; it is also a way for your toddler to learn about their body and the world. When your toddler was a baby, feeding was a chance for you to bond. Holding them and talking to them during feeding helped you get to know each other and build your relationship.

As your baby becomes a toddler and begins to eat solid foods, you might gradually let go and allow your toddler to take more control of their eating.

Toddlers love to try feeding themselves. Parents can trust them to practice new skills, like picking up finger foods or using a



“ when it comes to mealtimes? She might refuse certain foods, or she's not ready to have mealtime. Refusing at mealtimes, it is quite hard, and you have to try and think on your feet ”

spoon. This can be messy and even a little scary, but it is an important part of learning. Toddlers quickly figure out what is hot or cold, smooth, or lumpy, salty, or sweet, sharp, or soft. They also discover what they like and do not like. Mealtimes can sometimes turn into battles for control, which can make eating stressful. If you have made a meal, you think they will love, and they push it

away, it can hurt your feelings. It might feel like they are rejecting you, but they're not usually, they're maybe just letting you know about their experience. Focus on what they are eating and not what they are rejecting. If they refuse broccoli today, try it again another day. They might change their mind. It is hard to eat when you are upset or arguing, so try to keep mealtimes calm, fun, and sociable.

Sometimes selective eating or refusing food happens because toddlers are worried but do not know how to explain their feelings. Controlling what they eat might feel easier than dealing with emotions they do not understand. If your toddler is having a hard time at meals, think about what is going on in their life. Are they worried about a new baby in the family? Are they noticing stress from you?

What comes out? Toilet training

Learning to use the potty and give up nappies is a big step towards independence.

Toddlers need to begin to recognise the different feelings in their body that come with wee ing and pooing before they can develop the muscle control to hold on or let go.

There is no set time for learning these skills, every toddler is different. Do not rush or force them. First, your toddler



needs to notice what is happening in their body. For example, they might tell you when their nappy is wet. This shows they are starting to understand the feeling of wee ing. Later, they might notice when their bladder is full.

This is a good time to begin potty training. Make plans for a time to introduce the potty when you feel ready to give it a go, calm and not too busy.

Some toddlers feel worried about using

the potty. Poo feels more solid and so it is not unusual for toddlers to feel that it is a part of their body. They might not want to get rid of it. Other toddlers might present their poo to you in the potty as a precious gift. Potties are usually less scary than big toilets, which can feel overwhelming. Some toddlers imagine they could be flushed away with their poo, or think the loud flush is a monster. This can feel especially scary with poo because they cannot see themselves doing it.

Like with feeding, toilet training is a team effort. Stay calm, be patient, and show understanding

Toddlers also gain new control over their muscles, so they might hold in their poo as a way of saying 'No!'.

Some toddlers find potty training easy, while others might struggle. If they cannot do what is expected right away, they might get upset. Like with feeding, toilet training is a team effort. Stay calm, be patient, and show understanding. Avoid criticism or disappointment. Praise their efforts and growing independence – this helps them feel proud and confident.



Separation and Sleep

Toddlers are very attached to their caregivers. Being away from them or meeting new people can make toddlers feel anxious. Remember, all this growing and learning can feel overwhelming for them.

Sleep is important for everyone, but many parents find it hard to manage. Teaching your toddler how to fall asleep and go back to sleep during the night takes time. It is linked to helping them feel safe and okay with being alone. It is common for toddlers to resist naps or bedtime. They do not want to stop exploring the world or feel like they are

Having a routine can help. Routines give toddlers a sense of what is coming next and make bedtime easier

missing out on fun things happening without them. They also need to learn that being alone is okay and that you will come back when they wake up. Sleeping in their own bed might feel lonely or scary, but these feelings are normal.

Having a routine can help. Routines give toddlers a sense of what is coming next and make bedtime easier. Start winding down in the evening with steps like dinner, playtime, bath, putting on pyjamas, and reading a story. Before leaving the room, you could tuck in their favourite toy or blanket, say goodnight, and calmly remind them you will see

them in the morning. Many toddlers find comfort in holding a soft toy or blanket to help them feel safe.

It is important to feel confident when you leave your toddler to settle. If you seem worried, they might feel unsure and think it is not safe to sleep alone.

Pick a routine that works for your family. The key is helping your toddler know what to expect, not which routine you choose. Feeling secure helps them manage bedtime and sleep better.

All toddlers wake up during the night

sometimes. Sometimes they feel safe knowing their parents are nearby and can go back to sleep on their own. Other times, they wake up feeling lonely or scared and need help to feel calm again.

Even in loving homes, toddlers can have nightmares. Dreams are how they work through tricky feelings and experiences.

Make-believe and real-life can get mixed up. For example, if a child feels angry with their parent, they might worry the parent is angry too and have a dream about monsters under the bed!

Some toddlers feel more anxious or lonely than others. If they do not get a chance to practice managing these



Understanding Emotions

Aggression, tantrums, and saying 'no.'

Some children have more intense feelings than others and some are more easy-going. One of the most important jobs, parents have is to help your toddler understand and communicate their feelings in acceptable and non-aggressive ways. This is not a small task and requires time and patience. With your support and guidance, over time, your toddler will learn how to manage their 'big' feelings.

Aggression is a normal part of toddler development and can involve hitting, kicking, biting or other behaviours that hurt others. It is just another way to communicate frustration or express wants and needs. As they are learning to use words to communicate, they rely heavily on their actions to tell us what they are thinking and feeling. Sometimes this can be shocking or upsetting for parents and, of course, setting limits is important.



All the time they are learning to be independent, they still need you. They often get upset because they want to do things by themselves, like putting on their coat but cannot quite manage yet. This makes them feel little and vulnerable which can be difficult to bear and lead to frustration and overwhelm.

Tantrums are often a result of this frustration and overwhelm. They are a way for toddlers to share their feelings

with someone they trust, usually you. Even though tantrums might seem scary or frustrating, they are normal and show that your toddler is learning and growing.

Sometimes, toddlers have tantrums because they want to feel big and in charge like a grown-up. They do not like being reminded that they are small, need help, and cannot control everything. At these moments, their feelings are very strong – everything is all or nothing.

Hearing 'No!' can feel like a huge loss, as if, 'They don't love me anymore.'

It might seem like your toddler is pushing you away at times, but they are really showing you how upset they are. Toddlers cannot explain their feelings with words yet, so they act them out. This can make parents feel frustrated or angry too, but it is important to stay calm and not react with anger.

“ He didn't say no, he screamed no at me, because I said no to a biscuit at half past six, and he wanted that biscuit ”

Learning about rules and limits takes time, but it helps your toddler grow and develop

When handling tantrums or aggression, it can help to:

● **Stay calm:** take a deep breath and count to ten before you respond.

● **Empathise:** use words to name your child's feelings and get alongside them. This helps them feel safe. Let them know they are not alone with their big feelings.

● **Redirect attention:** distracting your child or safely moving them to a different place or activity. This can allow time for calming down.

● **Explain consequences:** e.g. 'I said no to sweets because it's nearly dinner time' or 'It's not OK to hurt people'.

● **Look for patterns:** Try to understand why they are upset. Take a step back and think about how they are feeling.

Tantrums usually happen for a reason. Have you noticed what is likely to trigger a tantrum or your child to be aggressive?

● **Talk to others:** It can be helpful to talk to other adults who know your child well and think about this together.

Toddlers might feel like they hear 'No' all the time, and that can be hard for them. But saying 'No' is important – it keeps them safe and helps them learn how to share, listen, take-turns and follow rules.

Setting limits is good for your toddler. It helps them learn how to wait, take turns, manage big feelings, and trust that you will keep them safe. Even if your toddler is upset, staying calm and holding to the rules helps them feel secure.

Learning about rules and limits takes time, but it helps your toddler grow and develop. If they are too upset to listen, just being calm and staying close can help.



Difficulty getting used to a new baby

Having a new baby in the family can bring lots of feelings. It can be exciting and happy, but it can also feel hard and different. This is especially tricky for toddlers, who are still learning about relationships.

Your toddler might be used to being the only child and feeling like the centre of attention. It is normal for them to feel jealous or upset about sharing your love and care with the new baby.

These feelings can show in different ways. Your toddler might:

- act loving towards the baby but be difficult with you.

- become quieter or seem sad.

- go back to 'baby' behaviours like wanting to be carried, sucking their thumb, or drinking from a bottle.

- show challenging behaviour, like throwing tantrums.

These feelings will pass, but it is important to remember that toddlers can feel left out or worried about getting less attention.

Here are some things you can do to help:

● **Let your toddler help with the baby, like fetching a nappy or singing to them. Praise them for being helpful.**

● **Spend one-to-one time with your toddler so they still feel special.**

● **Make sure they know they are loved just as much as the baby.**

Helping your toddler feel safe, loved, and included will make it easier for them to adjust to the new baby.



Play and Language



Play is a bit like work for toddlers. Imagine trying to learn how to kick a ball without falling, pedal a tricycle, or stack bricks without them toppling over. Playing and talking with your toddler helps them learn how to talk to others and get along as they start to see themselves as separate from you.

Toddlers love water and messy play. They are often drawn to things like digging in mud and splashing in puddles. Your little one has so much to learn about the world. The best gift you can give them to help them to explore safely with all their senses. There is a time and place for this but dressing for the right activity and

having spare clothes can help. It is good to remember that children are washable. Some toddlers love the outdoors and nature, some become overwhelmed in the outside world, at the park, playground, or soft-play centre. Some are interested in other children early

“ I quite like sitting back and watching him play, watching him do that problem solving and figuring out what goes in what, how does that shape go into that box and how does this go into there ”

on and some find other children a bit off-putting. Introducing new experiences gradually can help you gain confidence together in what you can both manage.

Toddlers love games about things coming and going. Hide and Seek or Peepo are great examples. They might also enjoy opening and closing doors, posting shapes through holes, or sending toy trains through tunnels where they disappear and reappear. These games help them practice being apart and coming back together. Play helps toddlers deal with big feelings

or scary experiences, like a hospital visit. Using toy medical kits on teddy bears or caregivers helps them feel more in control.

Through play, toddlers learn about the world. They love copying you, like trying on your shoes or pretending to be a grown-up. By doing this they are saying ‘Look mum/dad! I’m just like you!’ This also helps them figure out who they are.

Big feelings, like anger or jealousy, can be explored safely in play. For example, they might be upset about a new baby and take their feelings out on a doll.

This is normal and harmless. Tucking a teddy into bed helps them practice managing bedtime feelings too.

Talking with your toddler helps them learn words for their feelings and experiences. Naming emotions like ‘angry’ or ‘jealous’ shows them these feelings are okay and can be managed. Over time, they will get better at managing these emotions on their own.

The more you talk with your toddler and let them know that you are interested in listening to what they are trying to say,



the more they will try to communicate with you using words. This is a way to support your little one's brain development and helps you get to know each other better too. When your toddler gets to the point that they can tell you about what they are thinking, it gives you a window into their unique way of seeing the world. You never know, they may have a thought that has never been thought before.

When toddlers are learning to talk, they may use one word to mean a whole number of things. For example, 'Chair!' could mean 'That's a chair!' or 'I want to sit in that chair' or 'I want you to sit in that chair.' Be patient and work it out together.

Sometimes toddlers can't tell the difference between make-believe and real life. Fears like monsters down the



plughole, feel very real to them. Simple explanations and reassurance can help make these fears less scary.

Sharing playful moments, like laughing at a TV show, singing nursery rhymes, or remembering funny times from when they were a baby, helps your toddler feel safe, happy, and close to you. These little moments build their emotional health as they grow.

Should I Be Worried?

Most parents worry about their children sometimes, but it is good to remember that every child is different. Toddlers develop at their own pace. Some barely say a word while others chatter away. Some are scared of the potty, while others are eager to try. Some are cautious about walking, while others rush off without worrying about falling. By the end of the toddler stage (around three years old), most are walking, talking, potty-trained, and beginning to be sociable even if it is not perfect.

Try to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. Does your relationship with your toddler feel warm and happy? Are they eating, sleeping, playing with

others, and learning new things? If they have challenges in one or two areas, giving them extra love and support might be enough to help.

Sometimes a toddler's behaviour changes because of what is happening at home. Big changes, like a new baby, moving house, illness, a death in the family, parents feeling unhappy, or a separation, can affect them.

Other times, their behaviour changes because they are learning something new. For example, they might stop sleeping through the night just before a big improvement in their talking. Or they might have toilet accidents when they are

You know your toddler best and can find what works for them

getting used to a new nursery routine.

Parents can become detectives to figure out what helps their toddler. Does something upset them? What helps them calm down? Maybe they need a quiet space, or they need you to explain changes in routine, like Granddad picking them up instead of Mum.

Watching closely and trying different things can help. You know your toddler best and can find what works for them. If you are still worried about their behaviour or development, talk to your health visitor – they are there to help.

Parents Need Looking After Too!

In this booklet, we have talked about how challenging it can be to care for a small child all day and night.

There are times when your toddler wants to be independent but still needs your help, times when they need firm rules, and times when they need cuddles and comfort. It can be a lot for parents to manage. Toddlers go through many big feelings – frustration, messiness, demands, and sometimes aggression. They might say, 'I want to do it!' but then get upset when they cannot manage and need your help.

These mixed feelings often lead to tantrums when your toddler feels overwhelmed. It is normal for parents to feel frustrated and overwhelmed too. Sometimes parents feel like they want to have a tantrum as well.

If you are finding the toddler years hard, you are not alone. Many parents feel this way. Your toddler is learning to become their own person, which can be a tricky process for both of you. Just as your toddler struggles to move away from you, you might find it hard not to be needed in the same way anymore. Some parents

feel sad or rejected, while others wish their child would grow up faster. It is normal to feel a mix of both.

Part of this stage means teaching your child what they can and cannot do. You might have to say 'no' to keep them safe or teach them about how the world works. This is an important job, but it can feel exhausting. You might feel like you are always arguing, being the bad guy, or getting things wrong.

It is normal to want to be the best parent, but no one is perfect. Research

shows parents do not need to get it right all the time, they just need to be good enough. A good enough parent tries to understand, support, and love their child. Mistakes happen, but what matters is fixing them and moving forward.

Remember, toddlerhood will not last forever. Your child will grow, and tantrums and arguments will get easier. Your relationship will change as they become older and more independent.

Some parents feel anxious and embarrassed if their toddler says 'no'

to them or has a tantrum in public or is unfriendly to another child or adult. This can put parents off from socialising and lead to isolation. Sharing your experiences of parenthood with others can often be helpful and reassuring. Do you have a family member or friend you can talk to about your worries about your child or parenting challenges? Parent and toddler groups or parent support groups can also be a useful place to get information, advice, and support.

If parenting feels too hard or starts affecting how you feel about yourself

or your child, it is important to ask for help. Reach out to your GP, health visitor, or early years professional. There are also parenting and family support services that can help you find the right support for your family.

If you would like further information on other services and support you can find this on our Tameside Grow website www.gotogrowthameside.co.uk where you can also find the most up to date advice from local midwives, health visitors and early years workers.



Thank you for taking the time to read *Your Toddler and You*. We hope it has been helpful for you on your parenting journey.

We would be grateful if you could take some time to give feedback on the booklet



Scan to complete the short questionnaire