

CHANGES ...

can be stressful for toddler!

The arrival of a new baby, being sick, moving house, sleeping in a new bed or being separated from Mum and Dad are all things that can stress toddlers. They also can get upset if Mum and Dad are fighting or crying. A toddler does not have the words to say how he is feeling so he may show this stress through his behaviour.

Your toddler will need you to help them learn to be independent and feel good about themselves. At the same time you don't want them to be unsafe or have a home life that is full of battles.

Toddlers do not need to be forced to 'be good'. They need your approval, love and affection more than anything else - then they will be ready to accept limits.

Helping your toddler cope with change

- ❖ Give your toddler extra attention – and allow him to be a baby for a while.
- ❖ Be positive. For example instead of saying 'Don't slam the door,' say 'I know that you can shut the door quietly, let's see you do it.' Then praise them for learning a new skill.
- ❖ Make up fun games where your child can practise saying 'No' eg 'Does Daddy sleep in the bath?' 'Does the cat say moo?'
- ❖ Don't give your child a choice if there isn't one. For example, if you have to pick up an older child from school, don't ask your toddler if she wants to come, say 'We're going to the school in the car now.'
- ❖ If there is something she does not want to do, try to make a game of it. You could say 'See if you can hop like a kangaroo to the bath,' or make having a bath more attractive.
- ❖ Distract instead of ordering. For example 'Let's get out the building blocks,' rather than 'Stop doing that.'
- ❖ If your child refuses to come with you and there is no time to use any

of the above methods, pick her up and carry her. Don't threaten to leave her as this is very frightening for young children.



Help with fears

Let your child know that you understand he has fears, and you don't think he's silly or babyish. It is never useful to force children to face their fears and can often make things worse.

Remember that the world can seem very fearful to children of this age, because there are lots of things they don't understand yet.

Things to try for some fears

Fears about going down the hole. Let your child bathe in a baby bath for a while, and don't pull out the plug while he is still in the bath. Let him use a potty instead of the toilet or let him flush the toilet himself with your supervision.

Fears about nightmares. If he has a nightmare tell him that 'It is only a dream, it goes away, and you're safe'. Cuddle and comfort him until he settles.

Fears of monsters. Tell him that there are no monsters. Don't look for monsters in the room, because he may think that you believe there are some there to look for.

Fears of separation. Stay with him until he feels more secure. Let your child have his comforter or dummy when he needs it, to help him feel safer. Some children will need their dummy or comforter until they are three or four years old.

Fears of the dark. Stay with your child to reassure him. Perhaps use a night light. Let him sleep in the same room as a brother, sister or parent. Keep to bedtime routines, eg the same number of kisses goodnight or the same story.