

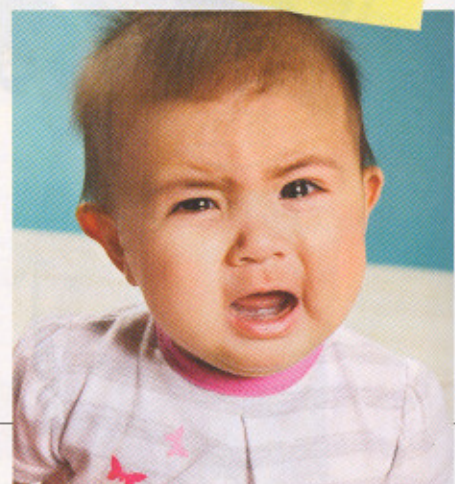


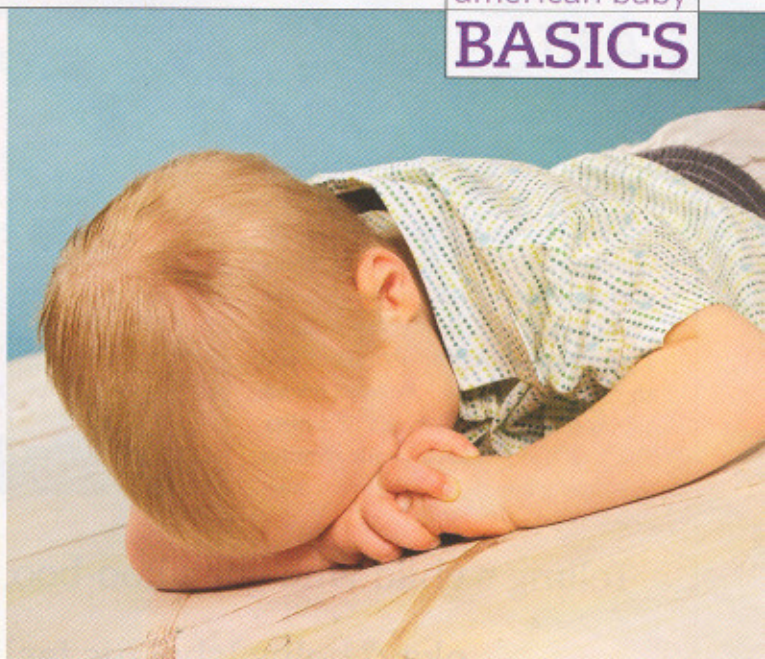
Good

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES (Birth to 3 months)

- Smiles and experiences joy.
- Stops crying when picked up and talked to.
- Shows pleasure by giggling, squealing, kicking his legs, and waving his arms.

A SENSE OF
PRIDE DEVELOPS
AROUND AGE 2.





Mood, Bad Mood

How to help kids understand and deal with their emotions

It was the kind of gash that Matt Hertenstein knew would need more than just a bandage. His 22-month-old son howled in pain, but it was another emotion that Hertenstein saw on the boy's face: fear.

"It's okay to be scared—we're here to keep you safe," Hertenstein told his toddler. Hertenstein, a psychologist and lead researcher at the Infant Discovery and Emotion Lab at DePauw University, in Greencastle, Indiana, knew that by comforting his son, he was also teaching an important lesson in empathy. When someone feels afraid, you hug him, let him know you understand his feelings, and tell him everything will be okay.

In the first few months of life, an infant's range of emotions is pretty limited, but within just a few years, he'll experience the gamut. He won't understand what he's

feeling, however, or be able to label emotions. Parents can help by translating feelings, putting a name to them, and teaching kids the proper way to react.

The First Three Months: TWO BASIC EMOTIONS

If there is one skill a newborn has no trouble mastering, it's the heart-wrenching sob. Your baby is communicating a need—"I'm hungry"—but also an emotion: "I'm upset!" Newborns have two basic emotional states: happy and unhappy. "A content baby is sleeping or just observing what is going on around her," says Sara Van Bortel, a social worker at the Mt. Hope Family Center, in Rochester, New York. Everyone knows the features of an unhappy baby: tears, screams, and

writhing. "It's a full-body experience," Van Bortel says. All those theatrics are your baby's way of saying "Help me feel calm again." When you fulfill that need, you're teaching an important first lesson in emotions. When she's

OUR PICK
Babies are fascinated by their own expressions. Try Manhattan Toy's Color Burst Mirror (\$15; manhattantoy.com).

By Cynthia Ramnarace

unhappy, a person who loves her will take care of her.

After crying, smiling is the second expression of emotion. Real smiles start at around 6 weeks of age. Just like adults, who can flash a polite smile to a person they pass on the street and an overjoyed grin to a beloved friend, babies have different kinds of smiles. The true "I'm so happy" smile requires the use of a muscle near the eye, a mus-



perience is deepening and widening. These new emotions include curiosity ("Wow, I could stare at my hands all day!") and surprise "Where's Mom? There she is! Peekaboo is fun!"). In addition to increased physical skills, cognitive skills have advanced to the point where he can set goals. This growing emotional intelligence allows him to feel the joy of success or the frustration of failure. Consider

Telling a child who got a boo-boo, "Yes, you got hurt, but you're okay" helps label his feelings and teaches empathy.

WHAT'S TEMPERAMENT GOT TO DO WITH IT?

How children respond emotionally to a situation depends largely on their temperament, an inborn way in which they experience the world. "Some kids are more easily frustrated than others, and some children are less outgoing or more easily intimidated," says infant development researcher Julie Braungart-Rieker, PhD. Although temperament is inborn, it is adaptable. So if you have a child who is easily frustrated, that frustration need not always turn into anger. You can stop this cycle by helping him learn to identify that feeling of frustration and find ways to diffuse it. And realize, too, that children have different emotional needs. One child may want constant cuddling, while another prefers crawling around the room. This doesn't mean that the more active child doesn't need your love as much as the cuddly one. It just means he's busy. For a child like that, a tickle attack or a wrestling match is just the kind of "I love you" he needs.

cle that very few people can manipulate voluntarily. It's reflexive and controlled by the part of the brain that is responsible for emotion, according to Lise Elliot, PhD, author of *What's Going On in There? How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years* (Bantam Books, 2000).

3 Months and Up:
NEW SKILLS LEAD TO NEW FEELINGS

Starting at around 3 months of age, your baby's motor skills will improve, and he'll figure out all the fun things he can do with his body: roll over or kick at a dangling toy. The previous "good or bad" world of emotional ex-

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES (4 to 7 months)

- Develops variety of facial expressions to communicate feelings.
- Shows affection by patting parent and gets upset when Mom or Dad leaves.
- Temperament emerges, becoming a factor in baby's everyday dealings.

an 8-month-old whose hands are reaching toward a desired toy. "If you stop a baby from trying to get something, that is going to make him mad," says Susanne A. Denham, PhD, author of *Emotional Development in Young Children* (the Guilford Press, 1998). "They have a goal,



OUR PICK
Children practice empathy partially through role-playing. Here's the Little Doctor Kit from International Playthings (\$20; amazon.com).

and they do not like that you're keeping them from it."

Fear is another emotion that appears before a child's first birthday, usually in conjunction with stranger anxiety. This new emotion is another sign of higher thinking. "It's hard to be afraid of a stranger if you can't figure out whom you recognize," Denham says.

Tempestuous Toddlers: THE UPS, THE DOWNS, THE DRAMA

As your baby reaches her first birthday, she'll feel excited about new adventures—walking up and down stairs or riding the slide at the park—but will also be apprehensive about doing it all by herself. On the one hand, she doesn't want any help, but she melts down easily when things don't go her way. Frustration is not a new emotion for a toddler, but there's an added layer to the babyhood version. An 18-month-old, told it's time to leave the playground, isn't just mad because she's not getting what she wants. She's also mad because she understands that Mom *could* give in but is choosing not to, which enrages her even more. Not surprisingly, this lack of emotional control, which increases between ages 2 and 3, is really a cry for help. Your child simply doesn't know how to handle the intensity of her emotions.

Consider what happens when you slam your finger in a drawer. Pain, an-

ger, and maybe even fear will flood your brain. But you quickly sort through these emotions: your finger hurts, but you know the pain will subside, so there's no need to panic; you shake off your anger; you rule out fear because you can identify the severity (not very high) of the injury.

Toddlers, however, don't yet have this power to rationalize. They don't know which emotions to ignore and which ones are justified. This is why when a child falls, her first reaction is often to turn and look at Mom's face. Do you look afraid? Sad? Angry? This emotional referencing helps your child learn the appropriate responses to difficult situations. "Kids need to know, 'I am feeling something but I am going to be okay,'" Van Bortel says.



**EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MILESTONES
(7 to 12 months)**

- Lots of smiles, more social, aware of the comings and goings of others, less fussy.
- Becomes more attached to primary caregiver and develops stranger anxiety.
- Uses smiles, tears, cooing, and squealing to communicate emotions.

several new emotions, such as embarrassment. When your potty-training 2-year-old has an accident at day care and is laughed at, he understands that



From elated to enraged in just moments— it's not easy being a toddler!

Toddlers are also becoming more self-aware. "Put an 18-month-old in front of a mirror with a little rouge on his nose, and he recognizes himself and will try to remove the rouge. Before 18 months, they don't," Hertenstein says. Burgeoning self-consciousness brings with it

others are making fun of him. But this new emotional understanding also has a positive side: your toddler now can experience the pride that comes from a job well done. Praise him for a colorful picture he drew or a tower he carefully built, and he'll smile brightly and puff up his chest.

**EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MILESTONES
(1 to 2 years)**

- Fierce independence followed commonly by clinginess.
- Seeks comfort from Mom when lonely, sick, or scared.
- Frustration over inability to properly communicate her needs, leading to temper tantrums.