

FEELINGS



*Responding
to your
child's feelings*

Our Mission

To promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health.

Public Health Agency of Canada

Également offert en français sous le titre: « Les Sentiments »

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2 INTRODUCTION

This book is for the parents of children from birth to age 5. It's about children's feelings, how they express those feelings and how parents can respond to their children's feelings.

FEELINGS is a recommended supplemental resource for **NOBODY'S PERFECT**, a Public Health Agency of Canada parenting program. **FEELINGS** can also be used by parents on its own.

NOBODY'S PERFECT has five other books. These are:

- **BODY:** Growth, health and illness.
- **SAFETY:** Injury prevention and first aid.
- **MIND:** Thinking, feeling and playing.
- **BEHAVIOUR:** Helping kids learn to behave and solving some common behaviour problems.
- **PARENTS:** Helping yourself. Finding help and feeling good about what you do.

You'll find more information on many of the ideas covered in **FEELINGS** in these books.

There are other places where you can look for advice and support, and many people you can talk to. You can try:

- *Parent Help Line* 1-888-603-9100 offers parents and caregivers access to information, support and referral 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's anonymous, bilingual and free from anywhere in Canada.
- Family doctor or nurse
- Local public health department
- Family resource centres and childcare centres
- Child and family service agencies
- Parenting programs such as **NOBODY'S PERFECT**
- Native friendship centres, First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations
- Multicultural or newcomer centres

Nobody's perfect. There are no perfect parents, or perfect children or perfect people. We can only do our best, and we all need help once in a while.

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4 FEELINGS

Everyone has feelings – babies, toddlers, small children, and parents, too.

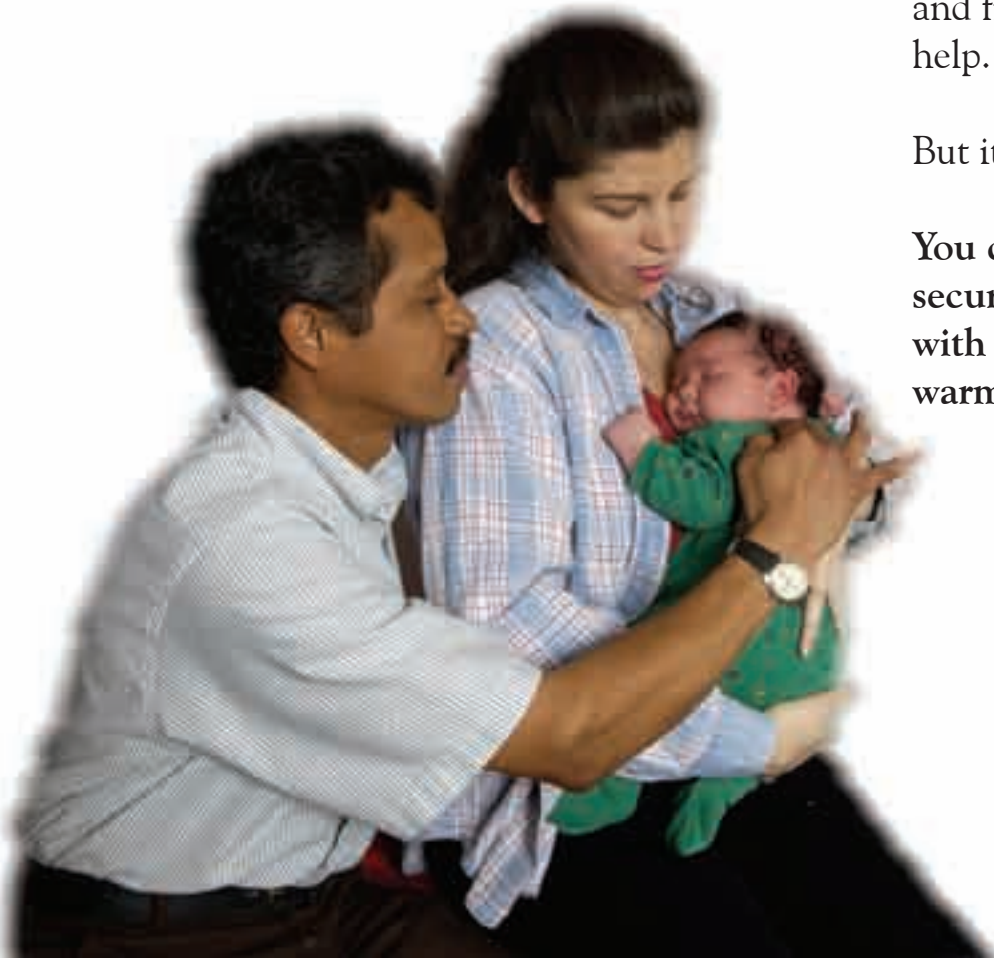
And everyone has ways of showing others how they feel. Adults and older children can tell people what they're feeling. They can say, "I love you!" "I'm mad!" "I'm lonely." "I'm tired." "I'm happy." "I'm bored."

Babies and small children have these same feelings but aren't yet able to tell you how they feel or what they need. It takes many years to learn how to express feelings clearly. Babies and little children do their best with what they have!

It can be hard to understand what your child is trying to tell you. It can be difficult to control your temper when you're tired and frustrated and nothing you do seems to help.

But it is worth the effort.

You can help your child to feel safe, secure and loved by listening carefully with your heart and responding with warmth and patience.



As children grow and learn, body and mind develop step by step.

As their bodies grow and develop, children learn new skills and develop new abilities. They learn to roll over, to sit up, to crawl, stand and walk.

This happens step by step over a period of time. For example, a child can't walk before she can roll over.

As their minds develop, children's ability to express what they think and feel also develops step by step, over time.

A new baby can only let you know how he feels by crying or making little sounds. As he gets older, he learns new ways to communicate. He learns to laugh, to smile and eventually to speak.

How children tell you what they're feeling depends on their age and their stage of development.

By knowing what to expect at each age, you can help your child to understand and share his feelings.



6 YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS

Attachment

A baby's ability to love, trust, feel and learn starts with the deep emotional tie that she forms with the people who take care of her. This emotional connection is called attachment.



A baby's attachment to her parents influences how her brain develops. It has an effect on how she thinks, learns, feels and behaves for her whole life.

When a baby's attachment is secure, it helps her to grow and develop in healthy ways.

Secure attachment develops over time when a parent responds to a baby's needs in a warm, loving, and dependable way. This quick and gentle response is especially important when the baby is upset, sick, frightened, or hurt.

When your baby's attachment to you is secure, she feels safe. She knows that she can trust you to look after her needs.

Your baby's attachment to you will give her the confidence she needs to explore her world. She will know that she can depend on you for comfort if she's scared, hurt or upset. She will know that you love her and will be there when she needs a smile or a hug.

To build a secure attachment between you and your baby:

- Go to your baby when she cries. Babies cannot be spoiled by too much attention. Crying is how your baby tells you she needs something.
- Comfort your baby right away when she's upset, frightened, sick or hurt.
- Touch and talk to your baby in loving ways – hugging, snuggling, rocking, cuddling, speaking and singing softly.
- Pay close attention to your baby. Notice what she's trying to tell you. Notice what she likes or doesn't like, what makes her smile and laugh, what scares her. Follow her lead. Smile back when she smiles. Talk to her when she makes little sounds.
- Play with your baby. Laugh, talk and sing to your baby. This is how your relationship grows.

Parents who have had unhappy experiences as a child sometimes find it difficult to respond to their baby in warm and

loving ways. If you are worried that your childhood might affect how you care for or relate to your baby, talk to a doctor, nurse, social worker or other professional. They may be able to help you deal with your feelings so that you can respond to your baby in ways that will build a secure attachment.

Attachment is a connection that lasts a lifetime.



Babies' first feelings begin as needs. Babies depend on us to meet their needs. But they can't tell you in words what they need. They let you know what they need by:

- **Crying**
- **Making small sounds**
- **Laughing**

Crying

Babies cry a lot in their first weeks and months. Crying is their only way to tell you what they need.

Crying can mean:

- *"I'm hungry!"*
- *"I'm wet!"*
- *"I'm cold!"*
- *"I'm hot!"*
- *"I have a sore tummy!"*
- *"My throat hurts!"*
- *"I need cuddling!"*
- *"I want to be carried!"*
- *"Help me calm down!"*

Crying can mean all of these and many other things!

Babies never cry to make you mad or drive you crazy. They cry because they are trying to tell you what they need.



Responding to Your Baby

- **Go to your baby when he cries.** By going to your baby when he cries, you are teaching him to love and trust you. You are telling him that you will be there when he needs you.

There is another good reason to go to your baby as soon as he starts crying. Babies whose parents respond quickly actually **cry less** after a while than babies whose parents let them “cry it out.”

- **Do your best to figure out what your baby needs.** Is your baby hungry? Does his diaper need changing? Is he too hot or too cold? Is he bored or lonely?

- **Hold, hug, kiss, touch and snuggle your baby.** Your gentle touch lets your baby know that you are close by and that you love him.
- **Remember, nobody's perfect.** You won't always be able to go to your baby the minute he cries. You won't always be able to figure out what your baby needs. You won't always be able to calm your baby. You can only do your best.
- **Keep trying. Always respond to your baby's cries. You can't spoil a baby. Even if the baby can't stop crying, he still needs to be held and comforted. He needs to know that he's not alone.**



Responding to Your Baby

- **Take a break if you need to.**
Sometimes, no matter what you do, your baby will just keep crying. You've fed and changed him. You're sure he's not too hot or cold. You've hugged him, sung to him, rocked him, and walked him. But he just keeps crying.

This can be very frustrating. You can feel desperate and angry. When you feel this way, put your baby safely in his crib and take a break. Step outside for a minute. Take a few deep breaths. Call a friend or family member for help. Leaving your baby alone in his crib until you calm down is okay, but you should never leave a baby alone for more than a few minutes.

- **NEVER shake or hit your baby.**
Shaking or hitting can hurt or kill a baby. Shaking or hitting a baby won't teach him not to cry. It will teach him not to trust you.

Shaking your baby is very dangerous. When a baby is shaken, his head jerks back and forth. Inside his skull, his brain becomes bruised and bleeds. This can kill him or cause brain damage that will last a lifetime.

Remember: Your baby is not crying to annoy you. **NEVER** punish a baby for crying.



Soft Sounds

Babies don't cry all the time! They coo and gurgle and make other soft little sounds.

These are a baby's way of telling you she is happy and content.



Responding to Your Baby

When your baby is happy and content:

- Talk to her.
- Sing to her.
- Show her toys.
- Smile at her.
- Play with her.
- Sit quietly and touch her gently.

When you love your baby, you are teaching her how to love.

Laughter

As your baby gets older, he will begin to smile and laugh. Smiles and laughter tell you that your baby is feeling happy and playful.

Responding to Your Baby

- Smile back when your baby smiles.
- Laugh when your baby laughs.
- Look for things that make your baby laugh. Does he giggle when you kiss his toes? Does he laugh when you tickle his tummy?

Smiling and laughing with your baby teaches him that you like being with him. These happy moments make the attachment between you stronger.

When you laugh with your baby, you are teaching him how to be happy.



Between 6 and 12 months, babies are learning more about letting you know how they feel.

They still cry, but not as much. They are beginning to understand their own feelings and this makes them easier to soothe.

The soft sounds they used to make are turning into babbling. These babbles are the sounds babies make when they are beginning to learn to talk.

Babies develop at different rates, but sometime around their first birthday, most babies say their first words.



Crying

Your baby will still cry when she's hungry, or wet, or tired, or uncomfortable. But now she'll have some new feelings that can lead to crying.

- **Teething:** At this age, babies begin getting their first teeth. Most babies find this painful. Sometimes a teething baby will cry and cry and there will be nothing you can do to comfort her.

Talk to your doctor about how to soothe teething pain. **But even if your baby keeps crying, he still needs to be held and comforted. He needs to have you near.**

- **Fear:** Sometime between 6 and 12 months, your baby will be old enough to notice that sometimes you go away and leave her alone. But she is not yet old enough to know that you are still close by. She doesn't know you're coming back.

These feelings are very scary for a baby. Your baby is helpless. She can't get up and look for you when you go away.

She depends on you for everything and needs to learn that when you leave, you will always come back.

Comforting a frightened baby teaches her to trust you.



Responding to your baby

- **Go to your baby when she cries.** Don't leave your baby to "cry it out." The longer she cries, the more afraid she'll become and the more she'll cry. Go to her as soon as you can. Your baby will learn that when you go away, you always come back.
- **Don't give up.** Even if your baby keeps crying, she still needs to be comforted. She needs to feel that you are near.
- **Comfort your baby when she's afraid.** This will teach your baby that she can depend on you and trust you. When you respond to your baby's fears with comfort, you are showing her that her feelings are important. You are teaching her that she matters to you.
- **Never shake or spank your baby.** Spanking a baby won't teach her not to cry. It will only frighten her and make her cry more. It teaches your baby that she can't trust you not to hurt her.

- **Take a break if you need to.** Sometimes your baby will just keep crying no matter what you do. If you feel yourself becoming angry and frustrated by your baby's crying, put your baby safely in her crib and take a break for a few minutes. Call a friend or relative for help if you feel you might lose control.

Spanking or shaking can hurt or kill a baby.



Babbling

When your baby is a few months old, he will begin to make sounds like “ba” and “da.” Babbling is the first step in learning to speak.

When he makes these sounds, your baby is saying that he wants to talk to you and that he wants you to talk to him.

Responding to Your Baby

- **Talk back when your baby babbles to you.** When your baby babbles, he needs to know that you hear him. When you respond, he feels good inside. You are teaching him that when he speaks, you will listen. He is learning that what he

says is important to you, even if you don't always understand what he means.

- **Talk to your baby while you play.** Your baby is becoming more outgoing and loves to play with you. When you play peek-a-boo, he will laugh. When you sing or talk to your baby, he will babble back. When your baby repeats the sounds you make, he is beginning to learn to speak.
- **Read to your baby.** When you cuddle together with a book, you are showing your baby that words and good feelings go together. Your baby loves to hear your voice. Reading to your baby will give him the chance to hear new words and sounds.

When you respond to your baby's babbles, you are teaching him to share his feelings and to feel good about himself.



First Words

By the end of her first year, your baby will begin to use words.

This is an exciting time for you and your baby! She is learning new ways to tell you how she feels and what she thinks.

The two of you are beginning a conversation that will last a lifetime.



Responding to Your Baby

- **Talk to your baby.** Your voice is her best teacher. When you talk to your baby, you are teaching her new words and new ways to express her feelings.
- **Encourage your baby to speak.** Make talking fun. Show her that you want to understand what she is saying. This will give her a reason to keep trying. She will also learn that she can trust you to listen to her.
- **Never make fun of your baby's efforts.** Her first words might sound funny but learning to speak is not easy. Respect her efforts. Don't make fun of her or correct her. Keep talking to her so that she hears words over and over. In time, she will get them right.

When you listen and respond to your baby's first words, you are teaching her that what she has to say is important.

Some big changes take place between your toddler's first and second birthday. Toddlers are learning to talk and to walk. They are busy exploring and learning about their world. They want to see, touch and taste everything.

Parents are busy trying to keep them safe. This can lead to some trying times as children start to say "No!" and to have tantrums to let off some of their frustration.



Talking

Between ages 1 and 2, children learn many new words. They can say their name and can name familiar objects and people. They can speak in short sentences.

They are also beginning to understand more words. They can even understand simple directions.

Responding to Your Toddler

- **Be a good listener.** Pay attention to what your toddler is saying. Ask questions if you don't understand what he's trying to say.
- **Talk to your toddler.** Repeat the names of everyday objects – apple, dog, truck. Tell him what you're doing – "Now I'm washing the cup." "Let's go to the park and play."
- **Read to your toddler.** Point to pictures and talk about them. "This is an elephant. Isn't it big?" Encourage him to name things and ask questions.

Talking and listening to toddlers will help them to learn to speak and to listen to others.

Walking

When toddlers begin to walk, they have their first feelings of independence. They suddenly can go where they want to go. They are touching many things for the very first time. They feel excited and joyful about their new freedom.

Toddlers need to touch and explore everything around them. This is how they learn about their world. But many things can hurt them.



Keeping Your Toddler Safe

- Put away dangerous or valuable objects until your child is older.
- Watch your child closely.
- Use words like “hot”, “sharp” and “ouch” to help him learn about danger.
- Distract his attention with safe toys.
- Never slap your toddler’s hands or spank him. Slapping him will teach him to be afraid of you and the world around him. He will feel that he cannot trust his world to keep him safe.

Give your child a safe place to explore. Show him that he can trust you and the world around him to keep him safe. Never slap or spank a child for exploring his world.

Saying “No!”

Many parents find that their child's first word, and favourite word, is “No!”

When your toddler starts to say, “No!” she might be telling you that she needs to decide some things for herself. She might not want to wear a hat. She might not want to eat her vegetables.

Or she might be telling you that she is afraid. She might not want to be alone at bedtime. She might not want to be held by a person she doesn't know.

For a toddler, “No!” can mean many things. It can mean:

- I want to do this myself!
- I don't like it!
- I want to finish what I'm doing!
- I need to choose for myself!
- I'm scared!
- I don't want to do that!



Responding to Your Toddler

For toddlers, saying “No” is an important part of learning to be independent and think for themselves. Toddlers have likes and dislikes but they can't always explain what they want or how they feel. Sometimes the only thing they can think of is to say, “No!”

When your toddler says “No!”:

- **Don't lose your temper.** Toddlers don't understand how other people feel. When your child says, “No!” he is not defying you. He is not trying to make you mad. Yelling and spanking will just make him more frustrated and angry.
- **Try to figure out why your child is saying “No.”**

Is it because he needs to feel independent and make some choices for himself?

- **Give him choices:** When you give a toddler some control by letting him make safe choices, he won't need to say “No!” as often. Be sure that you are okay with either choice and that

both choices are safe. “Do you want to wear your green socks or your blue socks?” “Do you want to have peas or carrots?” “Which hat would you like to wear?”

- **Give him toys for playing grown-up:** Toy phone, toy tools, kitchen tools like, pots, pans and wooden spoons



Is it because he's having fun and doesn't want to stop what he's doing?

When a toddler is interrupted while he's having a good time, he is likely to say "No!" To make it easier for him:

- **Give him some warning.** "I know you're having fun on the swings, but we have to go home soon." "In a few minutes we have to leave for the store."
- **Give him something to look forward to.** "When we get home, you can help me put the groceries away."

Never spank your toddler for saying "No!" It will just make him more frustrated and teach him that he can't trust you. Help him grow and learn by letting him make some of his own decisions.



Tantrums

A lot of frustration builds up inside a toddler every day. They are stopped from doing what they want to do. They are told, “No!” They are moved from place to place. They are interrupted while they’re having fun.

Toddlers can’t explain how they feel. Sometimes they just have to let out their frustration in the only way they can. They have a tantrum. They cry and yell and stamp their feet.

Responding to Your Toddler

- **Give your child time to get control of her feelings.** When your child has a tantrum, it means that she has lost control of her feelings. She can’t stop her tantrum and this frightens her. She is overwhelmed. Yelling and spanking will only frighten her more.

She needs you to:

- Stay close by.
- Be calm and patient.
- Keep her safe.

Don’t try to stop the tantrum or reason with your child. She cannot listen when she is this upset.

When the tantrum is over, talk to your child about feelings. Give her names for feelings. Say, “You were mad.” “You were frustrated.” Show your child how to handle angry feelings without yelling or hitting.



- **Stay in control of your own feelings.** Tantrums can be very difficult for parents, especially when they happen in a public place. You might feel frustrated, angry, embarrassed, helpless or out of control.

When you feel this way, it's easy to want to respond by yelling, spanking or other punishments. But punishment is likely to make the tantrum worse.

Instead, take 10 deep breaths. Remember that your child is not trying to make you angry. Be a good role model. Show your toddler that you can control your own frustration. Show her that you will be calm when she feels out of control.

Help your child learn to control her feelings by controlling yours.

Never spank your child for having a tantrum. Teach her about feelings and how to handle them.

As toddlers grow, they get better at understanding their own feelings. They also get better at talking about them. They begin to understand that other people have feelings, too.

Children can be afraid of many things at this age. They can also feel shy with other people.

Fear

Toddlers often become afraid of things that they weren't afraid of when they were younger. This happens because they understand more about the things that can hurt them. As their understanding grows, their fears grow, too.

Sometimes fear can look like misbehaviour. For example, a child might be refusing to go to bed because he's scared of the dark.

Small children have big imaginations. They often believe that frightening things like monsters are real.



Responding to Your Child

- Show your child that you respect and care about his feelings.
 - Say, “It won’t hurt you, but I can see you’re scared.”
 - Stay close to him until he feels safe.
 - Give him something comforting– a stuffed animal, blanket, night-light, soft music.
 - Show him that there is nothing to be afraid of. For example, check his closet with him at bedtime to show him that there’s nothing scary inside.
- When your child is afraid:
 - Don’t get angry.
 - Don’t make fun of him.
 - Don’t call him a baby.
 - Don’t tell him he’s being silly.
 - Don’t force him to do things that frighten him.
 - Don’t scare him as a joke.

Never spank a child for being afraid. Spanking will only increase his fear. He needs to know that you understand how he feels.

Shyness

Even toddlers who used to be very outgoing can become shy with strangers or people they don't see often. They might not want to talk to people they don't know.

This change happens because they understand more about relationships. They know what "strangers" are but they don't yet know which strangers can be trusted.

Older toddlers might also refuse to be held by grandparents or to kiss aunts and uncles or other relatives. They want to decide for themselves who can touch them.

It's very important for children to learn that when they say "no" to being touched, people will listen. They need to know that they have a right to control their own body.

Responding to Your Child

- **Show your child that you understand how she feels.** Your child needs to feel safe. She needs to be able to count on you to support her when she is feeling uncomfortable.
 - Let her know you're near. Hold her hand, pick her up, or put your hand on her shoulder.
 - Prepare her for new situations. Tell her where you're going, who will be there and what will happen.
 - Explain who the "strangers" are before she meets them.
 - Shift attention away from your child to give her time to get used to the new experience.

- **When your child is shy with other people:**
 - Don't call her "shy."
 - Don't ask her why she is acting that way.
 - Don't nag, push or get impatient.
 - Don't try to make her talk.
 - Don't force her to hug or kiss anyone.
- **Give her time to develop confidence.**

The more you push children to talk and be out-going, the more anxious they become. They will feel even less confident around people they don't know well. Let your child know that you understand how she feels and won't push her to do things she doesn't want to do. This will help her feel less pressured. As she grows, she will become more confident.

Never punish your child for acting shy. Punishment will make her even shyer and less confident.



Empathy

Empathy means being able to understand what other people are feeling.

A toddler doesn't know that other people have feelings that might be different from his own. He can't put himself in another person's shoes.

Toddlers learn how other people feel by talking about feelings. They learn to understand and respect other people's feelings when their own feelings are respected and understood.

Responding to Your Child

- **Try to understand what your child is feeling.** When you try to understand your child's feelings, you show him that his feelings matter. You show that you respect his feelings, even if they're different from yours. This gives him confidence to talk about how he feels. He learns to trust that you will support him.
- Help your child put his feelings into words. Let him know that other people have those feelings too.
- **Accept your child's feelings,** even when he's upset or angry.
 - Don't ask "What's the big deal?"
 - Don't get angry.
 - Don't tell him that it's not important.
 - Don't embarrass him.
 - Don't punish him.

- **Be a good role model.**

Show your child that you can act in ways that respect other people's feelings. Let your child see that you handle your own fears, frustrations, and anger in positive ways. These can include:

- Taking deep breaths.
- Going to another place to calm down.
- Taking a break from a frustrating activity.
- Saying, "I know I can do this if I stop and think."

- **Help your child understand other people's feelings.**

- Talk about the feelings of people in books and videos.
- Talk about what facial expressions mean. Does he look happy? Does that person look sad?
- Act out feelings with puppets and stuffed animals.

Your child needs your support and understanding to learn to understand and care about others.



Children grow and learn a lot about their world and the people who live in it during the years between 3 and 5. As your child becomes a preschooler, he gets better at:

- handling frustration
- accepting limits
- taking turns
- doing what you ask him to do
- getting dressed
- using and understanding language
- caring about other people's feelings

As your child grows, he needs to know that you recognize his growing abilities. He will want to be treated in a more grown-up way.

You can build your child's confidence and help him to understand other people's feelings by answering his questions, explaining things to him, and letting him help you.

Your child needs your understanding, support and love to keep learning and growing.



Answering Questions

Preschoolers are very curious. They ask many questions. They want to know how things work. They ask, “Why?” “Why?” “Why?”

Asking questions is how children learn about their world. By answering their questions, you teach them that what they say is important. This gives them the confidence to keep learning. It builds their self-esteem.

Responding to Your Child

- **Take your child's questions seriously.** This shows that you respect her ideas. It makes her feel good about herself and teaches her to respect other people's ideas. It also encourages her to enjoy learning.

It is important to listen to your child and to answer her questions. She loves to learn and you are her teacher. When you answer her questions, she learns that her ideas matter.

- **Help your child find answers.** No parent has all the answers! Tell your child when you don't know the answer and help her find it in a book or by asking someone who might know the answer. This teaches two important lessons—that it is okay not to know everything and that it can be fun to look for answers.

- **Be patient.** Some days it seems like the questions never stop! You might feel like you just can't handle one more. When this happens, tell your child that you're tired right now, but that it's a good question and you'll help her find the answer later.
 - Don't say, "Stop asking questions."
 - Don't tell her she's annoying you.
 - Don't tell her that she's asking dumb questions.

Answering your child's questions will give her the confidence she needs to keep asking questions and to continue to learn as she gets older.

Showing respect for her questions builds her self-esteem.



Explaining

As they grow, children want to understand why we do things in certain ways. When we explain, we make it easier for them to understand. Explanations show respect for your child's ability to learn.

It is much easier for children to follow rules when they know the reasons for them. Sometimes they break rules simply because they don't understand. When you help your child to understand, you give him a chance to do it right. This builds his confidence and self-esteem.

Until children are about 3 years old, they are too young to follow rules.

Responding to Your Child

- **Make as few rules as possible.** Decide what is truly important.
 - Make the rule simple and clear.
"You can't ride your bike in the street."
 - Explain to your child why the rule is important.
"You can't ride your bike in the street because a car might hit you and hurt you."
 - Explain what will happen if he breaks the rule. Make sure this consequence is fair and logical. Consequences should be about teaching, not about getting even with him for breaking the rule.
"If you ride in the street, you won't be allowed to ride your bike for the rest of the day."

- **When your child breaks a rule, teach him and explain to him.**
 - Get down to your child's eye level.
 - Look at him to be sure he's paying attention.
 - Speak firmly, but not angrily.
 - Repeat the rule.
 - Explain again why the rule matters.
 - Follow through with the consequence.
 - Let your child know that he will be given another chance to do it right.
 - Show respect for his feelings.
 - **When your child breaks a rule, don't spank him, yell at him or tell him he's bad.** This will not teach him how to behave. It will not teach him why the rule matters. It will only hurt him and embarrass him. Children cannot learn when they feel hurt and embarrassed.
 - **When your child breaks a rule, don't force him to go to his room or sit on a chair.** Young children can be very frightened by being left alone. They need to be active and to be where they feel safe.
 - **When your child breaks a rule and you are upset and angry, take some time to cool down.** Put your hands behind your back, count to 10, and wait until you feel calmer. Then you and your child can talk about your feelings in a respectful way.
 - **When your child succeeds, recognize his efforts.** He needs to know when he has done well. By praising him, you teach him that he is capable. This makes him want to try even harder next time.
- Show your child a better way to handle frustration than fighting or yelling.**

Helping

Preschoolers are learning new skills every day. They need to show you what they can do and they want to help you do grown-up jobs.

When you let your children help you, you are showing them that you have confidence in them. You are helping them to feel good about themselves and to feel like an important member of the family.

Responding to Your Child

- **Give your child many chances to help you.** When you let your child help, she feels respected. When you show confidence in her, she feels proud and confident. She will want to learn how to do more things.



- If your child wants to help you with an unsafe job, explain that she's not quite old enough for this job. Find another way that she can help you.
- **Support your child's efforts.** Children need to believe that they can learn and do many things. This gives them the confidence they need to try new things. They will know that they are able to learn.

When your child wants to help:

- Explain what you're doing and show her how to do it.
- Don't expect too much. Remember that most things take practice.
- Praise her for trying. Tell her that she did well, even if it's not perfect.
- When your child builds or makes something that isn't perfect, leave it alone without "fixing" it. If you must fix it for safety reasons, explain why you are fixing it.

- **Focus on what your child does right.**
 - Don't say that she might do it wrong.
 - Don't tell her that she'll break something.
 - Don't tell her that she's just a little kid.
 - Don't send her away.
 - Don't tell her that she did it wrong.
 - Don't do it all over again yourself.
 - Don't punish her if she does it wrong.

Focusing on mistakes will make her want to give up. Your child will get the message that she can't do anything right. She will lose confidence in herself.

Helping gives your child a chance to learn new skills. It gives you a chance to show your child that you think she is important and able to do many things.

38 YOUR FEELINGS

Parents have lives, feelings and needs of their own.

Sometimes parents' lives can be stressful and difficult. There's never enough time, never enough money. You may face parenting alone or living with relatives. You may find yourself starting a new relationship and trying to blend two families together.



Sometimes parents' feelings can be hard to control. Living with small children can leave you feeling angry and frustrated at times. Hard times can leave you feeling depressed and hopeless.

If you feel so angry you are afraid you might hurt your child:

- Make sure your child is safe.
- Take a few minutes for yourself, then calmly talk to your child.
- Call someone who will understand.

Parents have needs too. You need to:

- Eat well.
- Get enough rest.
- Be active.
- Learn and do new things.
- Have fun.
- Find time to be alone every day, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Talk to and be with other adults.
- Meet your needs for love and sex.

You need to take care of yourself so that you can take care of your children.

What is Child Abuse?

It is child abuse when someone hurts a child on purpose. It is also child abuse when a parent or caregiver doesn't protect a child in their care.

Child abuse can be:

Physical abuse, which includes hitting, cutting, burning, biting, choking and shaking.

Sexual abuse, which happens when an adult or youth uses a child for sexual purposes. It includes rape, incest, touching or playing with a child's private parts, or having a child touch another person's private parts

Neglect, which means not giving a child the love and care he or she needs to grow and be healthy. Children are neglected when they aren't given enough food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness or medical care.

Emotional Abuse, which happens when a caregiver often shames, belittles, frightens or embarrasses a child.

Emotional Abuse

What is Emotional Abuse?

It is emotional abuse when a caregiver doesn't meet a child's basic needs for love and security.

Emotional abuse can be:

- screaming at the child
- telling the child he won't be loved if he acts in a certain way
- calling the child names ("dumb," "bad," "stupid," "loser")
- expecting the child to do things that he or she is not able to do
- purposely embarrassing the child in front of others
- letting the child see or hear violence in the family

Emotional abuse is the most common kind of child abuse. Even when it doesn't hurt the child's body, emotional abuse hurts the spirit. It can make a child feel worthless, anxious, angry or violent. It harms the child's ability to love and care for others.

Emotional abuse always damages the child's relationship with the abuser. A child who is emotionally abused will fear, mistrust and resent the abuser.



What Should I Do if I Think a Child Is Being Abused?

Parents, other family members, people who live with you, sitters, and other care-givers might abuse children.

If you think a child is being abused, you must report your concerns to someone who can help the child. Depending on where you live, this could be:

- Children's Aid Society
- child welfare authorities
- community service centre
- social services department
- public health nurse
- community health representative
- police

The reason for reporting child abuse is to help the child. If you have reason to think a child is being abused and it turns out you were wrong, you will not get into trouble for making the report.

42 IS IT WORTH IT?

It takes hard work and hard thinking to be a good parent. Parenthood is always harder than anyone thinks it will be. Children learn by trying and doing and trying again. So do parents.

Nobody's Perfect.

Trust your own judgment. Believe that you can be a good parent to your children. When you like yourself and trust yourself, you make it easier for your children to like and trust themselves. This makes it easier for you to teach them and for them to learn from you.

And being a parent is worth it. The more you put into being a parent, the more you'll get out of it – in love and in the good feeling of a job well done.





Department of Justice Canada
and Public Health Agency of Canada

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et Agence de santé publique du Canada

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