

TIPS TO MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Hold, kiss, and cuddle. Provide lots of loving attention and touch.

Respond to them. Answer your baby in a loving voice when they make a sound or movement.

Play together. Hold your baby close, smile, and make silly sounds or faces. Play games like “peek-a-boo.” Take a break if they seem overwhelmed or look away.

Comfort them. Comfort your baby when they get fussy or cry. They might be tired, hungry, or uncomfortable. Try rocking them or singing a calming song. It will take time to learn what works best.

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Snuggle up. Hug and cuddle with your toddler so they feel safe and loved.

Encourage them. Encourage and support your child when they try new things.

Involve them. Invite them to help with household tasks, like handing you clothes for the laundry.

Talk about feelings. Name your child’s feelings and what caused them. Let them know that all feelings are OK, and that you are there for them when they are happy or upset.

Offer choices. Offer choices like what to wear or eat, but give a limited number of options. “It’s time for a snack. Do you want an apple or grapes?”

Set basic limits. Use simple rules consistently. Focus on things that really matter, like safety. For a younger toddler: put a calm “No” in front of the thing you don’t want your child to do and redirect them to another activity. For older toddler: give a simple explanation for the rule and what they could do instead. Praise good behavior.

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Put your love into words. Tell your child something specific that you love about them. What makes them special? What do you admire or enjoy most about them?

Describe feelings. Talk to your child about their and other people’s feelings. Let them know that all feelings are OK. See if they can name their feelings in different situations.

Talk about kindness. Describe what makes a good friend, like helping others, taking turns, and sharing.

Share strategies. When your child needs help managing strong feelings or getting along with others, you can help them come up with strategies like taking a deep breath or taking turns. Praise them when they use a good strategy.

Explain rules. Help your child understand how certain rules allow everyone to work together and stay safe—like using “inside voices” or putting things away after using them.

Have a Routine

Have consistent times and ways of doing daily activities like feeding, bathing, reading, and bedtime. Routines help babies and young children feel safe and know what to expect. They also help adults manage stress.

Take Care of Yourself

When life gets stressful, it’s important to take care of yourself so you can be there for your child. Try to find time—even a few minutes—for healthy activities that help you feel calm. Be forgiving with yourself. Ask for help when you need it, and talk to your doctor if you often feel sad or stressed. All parents and caregivers need help.

TIPS TO



TALK, SING, AND POINT

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Talk to them. Include your baby in everyday routines by talking to them during activities like changing and bathing. Describe what you are doing.

Use a playful voice. Smile and look into your baby's eyes. Exaggerate the sounds of words. Notice which ways of talking keep their attention.

Follow their interests. Talk about the things your baby looks at or reaches for. Name them and describe their features.

Go back and forth. When your baby makes a sound, show excitement on your face and in your voice. Respond with words. See how long you can keep the "conversation" going back and forth.

Sing. Your baby's favorite songs might be ones that repeat words or have rhyming sounds.

Point to objects. Point to objects and name them—especially things that interest your baby like body parts and familiar objects.

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Step by step. As you go about daily activities, talk about the steps involved. "First, we wash our hands with soap and water. Then we dry off with a towel."

Use your hands. Name and talk about the things your child points to. Encourage your child to point ("Where is the ball?").

Listen and respond. Show your toddler that you are interested in what they have to say. Respond to their gestures and comments. If you aren't sure what they mean, make your best guess.

Expand on what they say. For example, if they point to a dog and say, "Da," you can reply, "Yes, dog. That's a dog. It's brown and soft."

Ask questions. Get your toddler to think. Ask questions that start with "Who," "What," or "Why." For example, "Why do you think the boy is sad?" Show interest in their answers.

Sing. Sing songs and recite nursery rhymes from your childhood, from books, or make up new ones. Your toddler may especially enjoy the ones with rhyming sounds or hand motions. Try singing the same song whenever it's time for a special activity like bath time.

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Ask questions. Ask your child questions about things that interest them. Show interest in their answers and follow-up to keep the conversation going. See if you can go back and forth 2-3 times on the same topic.

Review the day. Ask your child about their "high" and "low" for the day. What moments stood out to them?

Expand on what they say. When your child mentions something, expand on what they say and introduce new words related to that topic.

Fill in the blank. When you sing your child's favorite songs, leave out words for them to fill in. Or you can say the wrong word and see if they catch you.

All about me. Help your child learn their full name, address, and phone number. You can teach it to the tune of one of their favorite songs.

Use Any Language

All languages help children's development. It's great if your child grows up speaking more than one language! Speak to your child in whatever language you are most comfortable.

TIPS TO 2 3 COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Move to the beat. Tap your baby's tummy or clap their hands together to the rhythm of a song. Or rock them as you sing a lullaby.

Count. For example, count and wiggle each of their toes. Or count as you gently bounce them in your lap.

Compare objects. Help your baby explore things that are the same and different. Let them shake containers that make different sounds. Or give them different types of fabrics to touch (like smooth and scratchy). Talk about the differences.

Fill up and dump out. For example, use a container to scoop and dump water in the bathtub. Use words like "in," "out," "full," and "empty."

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Compare sizes and amounts. Your toddler may be interested which things are "big" or "little." You can also talk to them about whether they want "more" or "less."

Count sets of objects. Point to each object as you count and say how many there are in total. "One, two, three, four—there are four strawberries." Split the objects into two groups and count each.

Look for shapes. Name and describe shapes. "That window is a square with four sides." As they get older, see if your child can find and name shapes around them.

Match and sort. Match and sort objects by their features like color, shape, size, or what they do. For example, sort blocks by color as you put them away.

Build. Encourage your toddler to stack blocks or objects like plastic cups. Talk about what they're doing using position words like "below" or "above."

Clap in a pattern. See if your toddler is interested in clapping along or dancing with you.

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Count around town. Count and find numbers in your community! You can count the sidewalk squares or look for numbers on signs.

Add and subtract. Count with your child using your fingers. Fold down one finger and count how many are left. Hold up a few fingers on the other hand and count how many you have now.

Grocery helper. The next time you go to the store with your child, give them a job. Use "size words" when you ask them to help you. Say, "We need three large potatoes" or "Can you find two small red onions?"

Puzzle play. Do a puzzle (you can make one by drawing a picture and cutting it into a few pieces). If your child needs help, give hints using position words like "below" or "above."

Make patterns. Make a movement pattern game. Take a step, then a hop, then a step, then a hop. Let your child choose the next movement to add.

Match and sort. Match and sort objects by their features like color, shape, size, or what they do. For example, your child can help sort the silverware when you put it away.



TIPS TO EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Tummy time. Babies should sleep on their backs, but during the day while awake, make sure your baby gets supervised "tummy time." Place a few interesting toys in front of them to make it more fun.

Give objects to handle. Provide objects with different colors, shapes, and textures for your baby to explore. Try everyday items from your home and nature, like tissue paper or a pinecone.

Follow their interests. Notice what your baby looks at or reaches for. If you can, bring the object closer so they can explore it. Describe how it looks and feels.

Play peek-a-boo. Hide your face with your hands and then open them up to show a big smile. You can also hide objects under a towel or blanket.

Mirror play. Sit in front of a mirror together and make silly faces. Point to and label different body parts.

Let them move around. Let your baby explore their surroundings by reaching, rolling, scooting, and crawling. Make sure they are safe.

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Go outside. Observe your surroundings—what do you hear, see, feel, smell? When your child shows interest in something, stop to talk about it.

Roll a ball back and forth. You can say "My turn/your turn" as you roll it. Your child might enjoy throwing or kicking the ball.

Make art. Your toddler will enjoy scribbling with a crayon or chalk. They can also experiment with folding or tearing paper.

Mystery bag. Play guessing games. For example, put a few objects in a bag and have your child guess what's inside without looking. They can feel, smell, and shake the bag.

Act it out. Toddlers will start to imitate grown-up activities, like putting a doll to sleep or giving it a shot. You can play along or talk about what they're doing

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Move like animals. Invite your child to move like different animals. Can they hop like a frog? Flap like a bird? Slither like a snake? Help them burn off some energy and have fun.

Make a plan. Help your child make a plan before they play pretend. Ask them who or what they want to be and what they need to play that role. You can offer ideas but make sure your child feels in control.

Family portrait. Have your child draw a family picture using crayons, pencils, or markers. Talk about their creation.

Play a game of Simon Says. Give your child a pose or action to do. Then they have to stay still and quiet until you give them another direction. "Simon Says: pat your head... Simon Says: stomp your feet." After they get the hang of it, let them be Simon!

Think like scientists. Encourage your child to make predictions. "I wonder what will happen if you mix the red and green paint?" Then see if their prediction comes true.

Let Them Problem-Solve

If your child is concentrating on something, stand back and see what they can figure out by themselves. If they get stuck, give just enough help so they keep going and don't give up.

TIPS TO



READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

With Your Infant (0-12 months)

Read regularly. Your baby won't understand for a while, but that's fine. They will hear your voice, see the pictures, and develop good feelings about books.

Baby books. Board books with hard covers and thick pages are made especially for babies. Choose books that are short and have simple, bright pictures.

Snuggle up. Hold your baby in your lap so they feel cozy and can see the pictures.

Involve them. They might want to hold the book, turn the pages, or pat the pictures. They might even chew on the book. It's all learning!

Describe the pictures. It's not important to read all—or any—of the words. Point to and talk about the pictures. Name the things your child shows interest in.

Follow their lead. When they start to lose interest, try another book, or stop. Short periods of reading will work best.

With Your Toddler (12-36 months)

Warm up. Before opening the book, check out the cover. Read the title. Look at the picture. What does your child think the story about?

Change your voice. Try different voices for different characters.

Name that. Name and talk about the things your child points to. See if they can point to objects you name. "Can you find the elephant?"

Ask questions. "What is in the box?" or "Why is the girl happy?" Respond to your child's comments and questions. Show your interest in their ideas.

Don't be too serious. Your child may want to turn the page before you finish reading it. If they can't sit still for the whole book, that's ok.

Re-read. Toddlers learn through repetition, so it is normal when they want to read a favorite book over and over. Notice how proud they feel when they master the story. But try for variety too, because new books offer new things to see and learn.

With Your Preschooler (36-60 months)

Ask questions that don't have "yes" or "no" answers. "What do you think will happen next?" "Why is he sad?" After asking, give your child time to think and respond.

Pause for new words. Pause to talk about words your child doesn't know. "That's a 'beetle.' It's a type of bug."

Talk about feelings. When you read a story together, point to a person in the book and ask, "How is he feeling?" When your child responds, ask if they have a guess about why. They can look for clues in the pictures.

Look for letters. Out in public? Find items with labels, like a TRASH CAN, and encourage your child to identify the letters they know and sound out the word.

Switch roles. Pick a book that you and your child have read several times. This time, have them "read" the story to you. They can describe what is happening in the pictures.

Make it Routine

Try to read together every day. Before bed is a great time to read, but choose a time of day that works for your family.