

# Understanding the Spirit of a Two Year Old

Handout

September 23, 2009

Presented By:  
Kelly Collins, MA



Sponsored by NIH Child Care Board & ORS/Division of Amenities  
and Transportation Services.



## Understanding the Spirit of a Two Year Old

Presented by: Kelly Collins, MA  
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### Items for Discussion

- Making sense of your Two-Year-Old
- Strategies for promoting creativity and independence
- Tools for managing challenges

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### The "Spirit" of a Two-Year-Old

- How would you describe the spirit of your toddler?
- How are they different from age one?
- What has changed about your relationship with your child?

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### **Two Year Old Characteristics**

- **Begin to use words to express feelings, needs, desires**
- **Easily frustrated with being unable to express themselves or get what they want**
- **Yearn to be individuals yet needs parental support and guidance on many levels**
- **Need a healthy and consistent routine in order to thrive**

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### **Toddler Temperament**

- **Expressions of temperament can be modified based on experience**

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### **Foundation for Parents:**

- **Patience and a sense of humor**
- **Support system and strong coping skill**
- **Awareness of toddler's surroundings**
- **Ability to observe growth and creativity**

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### **Learning New Things (Vygotsky)**

- Development is a process
- Parents help children learn new tasks by building on knowledge they already have
- Look for readiness to try new things
- Make timely interventions to give children hands-on experience

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### **Promoting Creativity (Healy)**

“...very highly creative and successful people in the long run are adults who can still adopt a playful attitude toward ideas.

...spontaneous, self-generated play has tremendous potential to actually enhance brain development and increase kids' intelligence and academic ability.“

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### **Promoting Creativity**

- Join preschoolers in pretending to be other people and things
- Encourage use of the same toy in different ways
- Help them to recreate experiences through drawing, painting or storytelling
- Provide supplies, e.g., materials for problem-solving, a variety of expressive materials
- Give them opportunities to plan activities, for example, what they will do after dinner

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**Fostering Independence**

- Create safe situations for exploration
- Allow the child to have time alone
- Encourage developmentally appropriate decision making
- Offer praise (in praise or discipline, focus on their behavior not their character)

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**Examples:**

- Provide age-appropriate toys so that he can learn to play by himself for short periods of time.
- Provide a step-stool so that your toddler can reach the bathroom sink.
- Allow him to have a say in which clothes he will wearing each day, even if this is limited to basic color selection.
- Give her the choice about which story to read or which song to sing.

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**Fostering Independence**

- What other activities can we introduce to our toddlers to encourage independent thinking and behaviors?

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## Language Development

- **Expanding their use of words is important to toddlers becoming more independent**
- **Parents can support language development in many ways, for examples:**
  - **Read aloud to children every day.** Encourage toddlers to look at books with large pictures and sturdy pages. Simple story lines are best. Tell stories using their name and their things.
  - **Repeat rhymes and simple songs**

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## Language Development (cont.)

- **Add new information, such as adjectives, to what a child is saying.** "Yes that's a dog, a big, fluffy dog."
- **Let her hear the correct word order, but don't demand that she imitate you.** If she says "more juice," say "Sarah wants more apple juice."
- **Encourage verbal skills by giving simple directions** like "Close the door, please" or "Would you pick up the doll?"

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## Temper Tantrums

- **Remain calm in tone and actions**
- **Do not hit or yell as this will only escalate the tantrum**
- **Place your hand gently on your child's arm or shoulder and talk in a soothing voice, giving direct eye contact**
- **Give clear expectations and consequences**
- **Follow through with consequences**
- **Remember that unreasonable expectations can turn into inappropriate behavior**

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## Resources

- [www.cfwtufts.edu](http://www.cfwtufts.edu)
- Expert reviewed sites on children and families. The WebGuide is a directory that evaluates, describes and provides links to hundreds of sites containing child development research and practical advice.
- <http://www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopment/>
- Information about games, child development, child fitness, books and toys. Includes expert advice and resources.
- <http://www.nccc.org/Child.Dev/ages.stages.2y.html>
- National Network for Child Care
- Articles and resources for parents.

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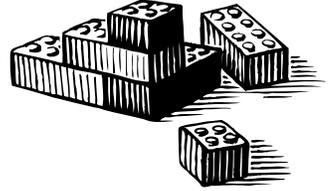
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# Age Appropriate Toys for Your Two Year Old



- Large blocks
- Pegboards
- Large doll (larger than Barbie) and bottle
- Stuffed animals
- Craft supplies, such as blunt scissors, large crayons
- Puzzles, shape sorters, stacking toys
- Water and sand toys
- Large cars and trucks
- Make believe toys, for examples: telephone, dishes, food, kitchen



## Emotions and Moods:

- Begin to experience a range of emotion
- Lots of moods! Their moods fluctuate quickly from happy to excited to curious to angry
- Begin to understand that their feelings & behaviors are connected to a bigger picture
- Pick up on moods around them
- Begin to engage in emotional dialogue

## Development of Self:

There is a set of secondary emotions that appear at approximately age 2, which is when a child becomes a little more self-conscious.

- More self-conscious. Experience feelings of shame, guilt, and pride
- Between 2-5 years, children differentiate themselves from their parents
- Separation anxiety surfaces; need for closeness vs. desire for independence

## What You Will See:

- Want to walk by themselves; do not want to be carried or ride in the stroller
- Want to make decisions about many things
- Want to show independence some times and stick close to parents at certain times
- When they feel “safe” they explore and assert themselves

This seminar was presented by

**Kelly Collins, MA**

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Kelly Collins holds a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Marymount University and B.S. degree in Business from Virginia Tech. For over 15 years, Kelly has worked with both public and private sector organizations to educate, counsel, and support employees and their families regarding personal and professional development issues. She has worked in several Department of Defense facilities in addition to working for several years at Potomac Ridge Psychiatric Hospital.

For the past five years, Kelly has worked with corporate employee assistance programs to meet the work/family and mental health needs of employees and their families. Her responsibilities have included program development, training, and project management.

Kelly delivers seminars on a range of topics from stress management to personal development to effective communication. She draws from her professional education and training, and her personal experience as a mother of two and a resident of Montgomery County, MD.

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