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Social & Emotional Development in your Toddler

As your toddler matures, their social skills grow. They begin to recognise, exhibit and feel emotions. So far, for the most part, the only form of expression for all their feelings has been crying, but as a toddler they are now able to point or use words for what they want. As they begin to mingle with others their own age they may develop possessiveness of their loved ones and special toys. They are becoming more and more emotional and can swing from excited to frightened and often need you close for reassurance.

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At around 16 months they start to work out the outcomes and consequences of actions and begin to exhibit their own separate identity and develop their own personality traits.

By around 24 – 36 months your toddler develops their own set of friends and likes to be in their company. They may begin fantasy play and may start to become negative in their responses to anything – you may have heard them say the word ‘no’ once or twice.

Social connections help toddlers learn how to relate to others, develop trust and work through challenges. Your toddler is learning they are separate and have their own identity with feelings attached.

Your toddler is discovering new things and venturing further into the unknown and needs you around for reassurance and security. You may notice them looking back or running back for a quick cuddle. Your toddler becomes interested in other children of a similar age and wants to play along-side them watching their movements. Help your toddler with skills like taking it in turns and sharing. Start the process but don't expect them to be very good at it until after 3 years old.

Social and emotional development is individual and it is important to seek professional help early if you feel your toddler is delayed in developing socialising skills.

Some ways you can assist your toddler's social and emotional development:

- Take them to play groups with other toddlers but brace yourself – it may not be a relaxing time to chat with other mums;
- Give your toddler plenty of cuddles and loving eye contact;
- Encourage socialisation with other children of a similar age.

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