

Toddlers *on the Move*

Parenting Wisdom
for Ages 12-36 Months



Dr. Scott Turansky
and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN
with Tess Worrell



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To obtain a complete resource list or have Dr. Scott Turansky and
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The Adventures of Toddlerhood

If you're reading this book, your child is likely moving from infancy into the next stage of development. The toddler stage, from about 12 months to 36 months, provides huge opportunities to teach and train your child. Brain development is happening rapidly. Both large muscles and small muscles are gaining more coordination on a daily basis. Toddlers learn to crawl, walk, jump, and run. They learn to feed themselves, use the bathroom, and sleep in a bed. Your young child will learn to come when you call, play with more cooperation, communicate more, and begin to learn what sharing means in practical terms.

Toddlers learn about God as you model and practice prayer, read the Bible, and tell exciting Bible stories. The toddler years are a time when your relationship with your child can grow quite close. The routines of correction, following instructions, and accepting no as an answer develop now, and setting good patterns at this stage in the process will help your child well into the next stages of development.

In short, the toddler years are an exciting time of rapid growth. To parent well, you must make the shift, the

parenting shift that corresponds to your toddler's development. If you continue to parent your toddler like you did in the previous stage of infancy, then you'll run into conflict, frustration will increase, and challenges will get worse.

Sharon's son David was 25 months old. He had obviously learned the word "no." He seemed out of control, running away when she called him, throwing temper tantrums when he didn't get his way, and screaming when Mom tried any form of correction. Sharon loved David immensely, although more recently her frustration with her son was testing those positive feelings.

Sharon hadn't made the shift. In infancy children develop the heart qualities of trust and security. That's why parents allow a young infant to set the schedule for feeding and respond to most cries. They know that parenting responsiveness in the early months of a child's life is what's needed. In toddlerhood children need to develop two other heart qualities: self-control and responsiveness to authority. They learn that others often set the schedule and how to share time and resources with others. In order for children to effectively move into the next stage, parents have to change the way they parent. If they continue to relate the way they did earlier, then those early methods often lack the necessary ingredients to meet the developmental needs of the child in this stage.

Sharon needed to bring some new parenting tools to her toolbox. She continued to play with and encourage her son in fun ways, and she also began to set firm limits, teach her son to come when called, and develop routines for instruction and correction. She put limits on her son's choices and practiced relating in new ways. It wasn't long before David began to make significant changes. He still

had a lot of energy, but Mom was able to bring some structure into their relationship.

That's just what David needed. The new structure provided the security and boundaries necessary to develop confidence and have a foundation upon which to explore. Although Sharon still had occasional challenges with her son, she now described the process much differently. "It used to be that we had occasional good times in the midst of mostly bad days. Now we have mostly good days with occasional problems and I feel like I now have the tools to address them."

This book is about developing tools in order to parent your toddler effectively. Most importantly, you'll learn to develop a heart-based approach that takes your child's uniqueness into account. Every child is different, but God has given each person a heart. If you'll spend time parenting from a heart-based approach, good things will happen in your child's life.

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." The question parents often wrestle with is, "What is 'the way he should go' that's mentioned in that passage?" In order to move children from where they are right now to where they need to go you'll want to have your eyes on three different factors all at the same time. First, you'll want to know your child. Second, you'll want to know where it is you're going in the whole parenting process by considering goals and objectives. Then, you'll need to know what's developmentally appropriate as you chart the course to get from where you are to where you need to be. That is the goal of this book. We've written it to equip you to understand how best to relate to your child so that you can most

effectively move your toddler through this stage to the next one while enjoying the process yourself.

So, take your time. Revisit applicable chapters when they are most needed. As you do the hard work of making parenting shifts, your toddler will benefit and so will you.



How to Pray for Your Child

Parents desire to do the very best for their children and that leads them to seek the best advice, pay for the best schooling, and purchase the best equipment. So often they wonder, “What more can we do for our children?” While all of these activities have their appropriate places, in all the doing for your children don’t overlook a key role that, in many ways, only you as a parent can fill. Take time to pray for your child.

People read the Old Testament through many lenses, each offering a unique insight into the message God has for his people. One of the most helpful lenses is to read the Old Testament through the lens of family dynamics. For example, in the Old Testament you can view God, as a father, caring for his children, the Israelites. As the story of the Old Testament unfolds you see God nurturing, training, disciplining, and loving them, often through the prophets and judges he sent to lead them.

These accounts offer huge insights for parenting. After particularly bad behavior on the part of the Israelites, they come to Samuel the prophet and beg for God’s forgiveness. His response is a beautiful example of what we,

as parents, need to remember. “Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.” (1 Samuel 12:23) Much of this toddler book focuses on teaching your children what is good and right. This chapter focuses on praying for them.

Samuel's statement reveals an important truth. Parents have a significant responsibility to pray for their kids. In fact, Samuel even says that it would be a sin to fail to pray for them. Passages throughout the New Testament likewise recognize that only God can open people to receive his truths and empower them to walk in his ways. Paul says in Ephesians 1:18, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” And in Colossians 1:9 he says, “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Both Old and New Testaments illustrate the importance of praying, and yet when it comes to their children many parents simply don't know where to begin.

If praying is awkward for you, you can begin with prayers included in the Bible. They offer eloquent requests for God's intervention in the life of believers. By praying these prayers on behalf of your children, you're guided toward God's priorities for your children's lives. Furthermore, you're in the blessed position of praying the very will of God, and you become acquainted with what God longs to do in your heart as well. Paul's letters almost always include a prayer for the particular group to whom he's writing and provide wonderful models for your own

prayers. You can pray the verse directly back to God, and may even want to insert your child's name. Take this passage in Ephesians 3:14-19, for example. You might pray it back to God this way. (Note some of the words have been changed from the actual text to make it more personal for you.)

For this reason I kneel before you Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth derives its name. I pray that out of Your glorious riches, You may strengthen (child's name) with power so that Christ might dwell in (child's name)'s heart through faith. And I pray that being rooted and established in love, (child's name) may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that (child's name) may be filled to the measure of the fullness of Christ.

This prayer not only asks God to work in your child's heart, but it also reminds parents where to focus their efforts, rooting and establishing their children in love, providing opportunities for kids to rely on God's power, and promoting the fullness of Christ in their lives. Other prayers of Paul you might consider are the ones in Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-12. Psalms and Proverbs also are especially helpful. You might even create your own prayer book of passages of scripture that you can use to pray for your children.

Also keep in mind that there is power in praying with others. Praying as a couple or finding a friend to pray with for your children can energize your prayer life in a way that solitary prayer may not, especially if you're trying to begin a discipline of prayer.

At the same time, don't feel you need extraordinary

expertise to pray for your children. Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Grab a cup of coffee, find a quiet spot, and take time each day to talk to God about what's on your heart for each child. Then, listen for what's on God's heart for your child. While you certainly want to pray for your children's salvation and growing commitment to follow God as well as for your ability to model godly traits, at the same time you can pray for insights as to how to teach your child to stop biting, to be more cooperative at mealtime, or for the ability of your child to sleep through the night. As you lay your requests before God, you develop a pattern of praying that not only draws your children to God, but it also does a work inside you as well. As you follow the model of Samuel above, keep in mind that as you focus on teaching what is good and right, it's also important to pray.



Planning the Toddler Transitions

“**T**iming is everything.” When raising children, this old saying provides huge wisdom. The best parenting efforts often hinge as much on the word “when” as on other words such as “what” or “how.” Knowing when to expect your toddler to be able to use a cup, move from the crib, or give up the pacifier enables you to plan for strategic transitions and to be ready when they come.

This chapter offers a general guideline for knowing when to expect certain developmental milestones. Details for making the transitions work effectively are available in the next chapter. Keep in mind as you read these paragraphs, however, that your toddler is one-of-a-kind, an incredibly unique gift from God, and he loves your child deeply. Matthew 10:29-31 says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” God knows and cares about everything in our lives, including those in toddlerhood.

Timetables offer general expectations, but children de-

velop at vastly different rates. Don't be concerned if your child moves into a stage early or needs a little more time. You must become a student of your child, learning unique tendencies, strengths, and bents. As these timetables offer insight, use them, but don't become overly stressed by deviations. Allow your child to unfold at an individualized pace. Here are some general guidelines for your consideration.

Most physicians recommend that children move from bottle to cup between a year and eighteen months. This helps protect both baby and adult teeth and less fluid opens tummy room for the more nutritious foods a growing body needs. Removing the bottle may also prevent ear infections. If your toddler hasn't made the move, you'll want to begin this process fairly quickly as it's often easier to persuade an eighteen-month-old than a two-year-old.

Breastfeeding moms have more leeway as to when to wean since the side effects of bottles aren't as likely with breastfeeding. The best time is when mom and baby are comfortable with the transition. At around nine months, fourteen months, and two years, children hit developmental milestones that may make them less interested in nursing which allows a smooth transition to cup or bottle. If your child is older than six months, you might want to choose to go straight to a cup rather than to a bottle to avert another weaning experience.

Some moms nurse until the child is four or five years old. One of the drawbacks of waiting that long, however, is that the child is old enough to make a public announcement or pull on mom's top. Should you continue nursing into this stage, you'll want to clearly communicate to your child when feeding is appropriate.

The move from a crib is an important one. Cribs pro-

vide a safe, contained place both for sleeping and quiet rest times up to age three or even older, unless you must pass the crib on to an arriving baby. Should you need to transition your toddler out of the crib for baby's use, do so fairly early in the pregnancy to avoid feelings of jealousy toward the baby. Toddlers are ready to move to a bigger bed if they've begun climbing out of the crib in the morning or after nap or if they've simply grown too big for the crib.

Relinquishing a pacifier is an important developmental step. Since it is generally considered safe for baby teeth, parents have wide latitude to act on their instincts as to the best timing for their child to give it up. Indulge the toddler's desire for his pacifier if you deem it a helpful security object, or take it away if the pacifier is proving more hindrance than help.

As children reach the one-year mark, many readily give up a pacifier as they become more engaged in trying a variety of foods or more actively playing with toys. Other children, however, become more reliant on the security of the pacifier as they move through the huge variety of changes that take place during toddlerhood. If your child needs this link to infancy in order to tackle the challenges of toddlerhood, you might want to allow the pacifier for a few additional months. Keeping the pacifier too long often runs the risk of a habit that might carry on for years.

Another transition involves dropping off the afternoon nap. Toddlers need about thirteen hours of sleep per day with one to three hours coming in the afternoon. Your child may be ready to transition away from a nap if you notice a difficulty falling asleep at either bedtime or in the afternoon. Crabbiness in the afternoon likely means that a little shut-eye is still necessary.

Many toddlers go through a stage where they don't need a nap every day, but benefit from three to four naps per week. An easy transition to this is to establish a rest time each afternoon. Tell your toddler that sleep isn't necessary but rest is, and that the timer's ring is an indication that it's okay to get up. Setting the timer for a half hour to an hour is quite reasonable for most children. A stack of picture books or a stuffed animal may be helpful to keep your child in place, and many times the playtime ends up with a nap anyway. Your toddler's rest time serves the double purpose of providing a needed break for you.

Again let's remember that every child is unique and God knows your child the best. Luke 12:7 reminds us that "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Those words not only describe God's infinite knowledge but they also illustrate his great care. As you continue to do your job as a parent you can be confident that God is also very involved in your life and that of your toddler as well.



Weaning Involves More Than Just a Bottle

How do I transition my nursing-loving daughter to a cup? How do I get my little guy to give up his pacifier? How do we move to a bigger bed now that the new baby is on the way? Before parenthood, you may have laughed at adults who focused on such trivial issues. Now that it's your little one who must transition, you understand the hurdles. How do you help your toddler make the move?

Weaning baby from bottle or breast may be one of the most emotionally charged events of toddlerhood—both for you and your child. The intimacy of cuddling indelibly bonds parent and child while at the same time providing for a significant need. Nothing so clearly marks the end of infancy as moving from feeding your child to your child feeding himself. The move from bottle to cup usually takes place between twelve and eighteen months, while nursing moms have a little more leeway. A few tips can make the process easier.

It's usually best to take the weaning process slowly.

The cold-turkey approach is often quite painful and usually isn't necessary. Babies explore and connect with their world mostly through their mouths. Thus, security, nurturance, and emotional connection are highly associated with feeding times. An abrupt approach may get the job done, but also may introduce insecurity or disrupt connections. Create a weaning scenario where your toddler associates security and connection with other aspects of your relationship such as cuddling in the rocker, reading at night, and singing lullabies as you gradually remove the bottle or breast. Looking for ways to naturally move beyond oral to other senses makes your toddler more ready to connect in other ways. If you can go at your child's pace, then things usually tend to move along reasonably.

When adding the cup, introduce it one meal at a time. The easiest meal to replace is lunch. Put the good stuff in the cup (formula, juice, etc.) while putting only water in the bottle. As your toddler consistently uses the cup at lunch, add a dinner cup, then mid-morning and so on, leaving the bedtime bottle or nursing to drop off last. As you decide to reduce the evening bottle you may want to continue to dilute the milk or formula with water, making the nutritional benefit less and less. For nursing moms, reducing one feeding at a time also helps avoid engorged breasts and excessive leakage, making the process more physically as well as emotionally comfortable.

Some children use a pacifier while others won't touch the thing. Helping a child abandon the pacifier can be a challenging process for some. Matt couldn't believe his ears. After trying every trick in the book without success, his three-year-old, Kent, had just dropped his pacifier in the toilet while going to the bathroom. Looking into Matt's

eyes he said, “Uh-oh.”

“Oh, buddy. That’s really dirty now—I guess we’ll have to flush it.”

“Bye-bye, paci,” said Kent. He pulled up his pants and skipped out of the bathroom.

After all the struggle, how could it be so easy? They had tried a friend’s suggestion of clipping the end of the pacifier, only to have Kent cry until they bought another one. They coated it with a flavoring Kent didn’t like, but he simply sucked until the flavoring dissipated. He liked his pacifier so much that he had learned to talk clearly while it was in his mouth. When it seemed Kent might pack his pacifier for college, a simple drop in the toilet was the end?

Many parents worry about their child’s love of the pacifier. Will it hurt his teeth? Will it impede his speaking? Will he ever go without it? Because babies explore the world through their mouths, devices that create oral pleasure offer huge security. The comfort the pacifier brought in infancy remains strong into the toddler years. Though the data is inconclusive, most dentists believe pacifiers are safe for teeth. So, you can follow your instincts as to when to remove it.

When you decide it’s time, you’ll need to gear your technique toward your child’s personality. Some children do best if you begin by having them leave the pacifier in bed. They can use it to fall asleep or they can go in to suck on it during the day if they need a quick fix, but they learn to go through the activities of the day without it.

Others do best with a pacifier-graduation day. Pick a day, but stay away from emotionally charged days such as a birthday or holiday as the excitement surrounding those can make the toddler need the pacifier more. Look forward

to the day and regularly discuss how that will be the day to give up the pacifier. Have a big party, and then pack the pacifier in a box and mail it to a needy child in Africa.

For other children, simply waiting for the normal course of life events to remove the pacifier such as losing it on vacation, leaving it at Grandma's, or dropping it in the toilet can create the easiest transition. You may try several approaches before finding one that works for you. Fear not. Your child won't take his pacifier to college. You'll find an approach that works. In the meantime, the pacifier is a relatively harmless means for self-comfort and security.

Another common weaning experience is the move from the crib to a bed. If your toddler has grown too big for his crib, begins climbing out after a nap or in the morning, or you need the crib for another baby, moving to a bigger bed can be both exciting and scary for your toddler. Here are some suggestions to ease the transition.

You might want to begin by dropping the side of the crib so that your child gets used to an opening at the side of the bed. You may also involve your toddler in getting the new bed ready. Toddler beds closely mimic the size of a crib, fit neatly into crowded bedrooms, and often utilize the same mattress as a crib, making an easy transition both for the toddler and for the parents' wallets. Toddler beds usually come with a railing for the side. If you want to go straight to a bigger bed, you can also purchase railings for these to protect from rolling out, making your child and you feel safer.

To ease the transition to a new bed you might allow your toddler to pick out new sheets, paint, and wall hangings to create a sleeping space. Ownership of the process creates excitement for the new bed that may balance against any

fear or sense of loss of the crib.

As you transition to a new bed be careful to maintain the same bedtime routine. This helps the new situation feel familiar. Be aware that if you try to smooth the transition by lying down with your toddler, you may create expectations that this will continue. It may be better to sit on the side of the bed and rub your child's back.

Transitions such as these are all about comfort. The pacifier is a soothing tool. The bottle at night is comforting. The bed provides a place of rest, both physically and mentally. Some transitions are harder than others for anyone and we all need comfort at times. David wrote Psalm 131 and compared our relationship with God to a weaned child, emphasizing the ability to grow in receiving comfort from God himself. Verse 2 says, "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me." There are lots of ways to receive comfort and even we, as adults, are learning to enjoy the comfort that God provides. As you care for your child during the weaning process, you'll be teaching your toddler very important lessons about receiving comfort that will carry on in other areas as well.



Knowing What to Expect

As parents seek to teach their children and guide their learning, they often face the danger of two extremes. They either adopt an overachieving mindset that forces the child toward accomplishments far beyond abilities, or they lazily park the toddler in front of a television, forfeiting many learning opportunities. The toddler years are a time for very rapid brain development. In some ways these young children are like little sponges. As they soak up the world around them, they begin to form an understanding of how the world works.

It's best to create an environment where you and your child explore the world as active participants. Engage your little one in a variety of activities every day. Enjoy the fun of common activities and then introduce others. As you sing, dance, read, build blocks, climb jungle gyms, and roll on the floor with your toddler, you'll see skills develop naturally and at a good pace.

To avoid pushing your little one too far too fast, you'll want to take into account developmental skills and abilities. Remember that any list of such activities can only serve as a guide. Every child is unique. Use typical growth

experiences as a baseline for evaluating where your child is on the developmental map. If your daughter is operating far ahead of these guidelines, enjoy her progress and offer incrementally more challenging activities to hone her skills. If your son seems to be a bit behind, offer opportunities to practice in those areas. The real danger of the “You can teach your baby to read” advertisements is that, if your baby doesn’t learn to read, you may consider her defective. Your child will likely excel in some areas and lag a little in others. Use differences as an indicator of preferences and as a helpful insight into who your little one is becoming. Enjoy the uniqueness. Don’t panic over where your child falls on the chart.

Even worse than pushing too early, however, is ignoring the amazing potential of the toddler years. Using television as a continual babysitter creates in your toddler’s mind the belief that the world is a maze of activity to watch passively. Instead, create a routine that encourages your toddler to actively engage, explore, and enjoy the world. Use a variety of multi-focus toys such as blocks, pots and pans, paper and crayons, dolls, and stuffed animals, as opposed to toys that merely beep and light up. Thus you’ll create a learning environment where your toddler’s imagination thrives. As you limit passive entertainment and foster active exploration, your child will naturally gravitate toward interests and develop strengths.

Here are some typical milestones to keep in mind as you chart your child’s progress through the toddler years.

Gross motor skills describe the use of large muscles in the trunk, legs, and arms. For example, you can generally expect a child to stand alone by 12 months, walk by 12-15 months, crawl up and down steps by 14-16 months, walk

backwards and up steps with help at about 16-18 months, throw a ball overhand and kick a ball forward at about 18-24 months, and jump in place by about 24 months.

Fine motor skills describe the use of small muscles in the hands and fingers. Your toddler will be able to use them to manipulate things like a spoon or to play with smaller pieces in games and toys. A toddler can usually make a tower of three one-inch cubes by around 15 months, scribble by 15-18 months, and use a spoon and drink from a cup by about 24 months.

Language development is forming rapidly during this time. Children usually have two to three words they can use (other than Mama or Dada) at 12-15 months, can understand and follow simple commands (“bring to Mommy”) at 14-16 months, and name pictures of items and animals at 18-24 months. They can also point to named body parts at 18-24 months, begin to say their own names at 22-24 months, and form two or three word sentences at 16-24 months.

A toddler’s social development involves relational tasks. A child can usually indicate some needs by pointing at 12-15 months, look for help when in trouble by 18 months, and help to undress and put things away by 18-24 months. Your toddler will also likely listen to stories when shown pictures, can talk about immediate experiences by 24 months, and can engage in pretend play and simple games by 24-30 months.

Spiritual development consists of learning trust and becoming aware of the Bible and spiritual activities such as prayer and worship. During the toddler years you’ll see your child call out to parents when help is needed, feel

safe when a parent is present, and learn to use trust in a parent as a basis for exploration. Toddlers also recognize words like “pray” and “Bible” and cooperate with and imitate parents in prayer, worship, and interest in God’s Word.

It’s important to realize that every child is unique and special. Although you may use growth charts and developmental indicators as milestones, you’ll want to remember what Psalm 139:1-3 teaches, that God knows each child and the particular bents, skills, needs, and challenges that will be faced. “O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.”

As you spend time with your child you’ll learn where your child is on the developmental ladder and how to move forward. When given the opportune environment, toddlers explore their worlds. You encourage, correct, guide, and teach along the way in order to influence your child along life’s path. Your leadership is important. Some parents believe that a child is like a flower and that just providing water and nutrients will produce a flourishing plant. It’s in the toddler years that you realize that a child is more like a garden where weeds and flowers grow up together. God uses parents to mold the hearts of their kids, and along with God’s grace, they work to remove the weeds, find the strengths, and encourage progress toward a fruitful life.

Every person is born with a sin nature. That means that children have a magnetic pull toward sin. Although the ultimate solution is salvation, your godly influence now will set the stage for your child to understand God’s love, right and wrong, the humility to learn from mistakes, and the confidence to make wise choices. Spiritual development is

interwoven into the daily activities of a young child's life. Foundational truths of trust, love, following instructions, and responding to authority all set the stage for continued growth on a heart level. Your work as a parent is strategic and it doesn't start later. It starts right now.