



# Parenting Revolution

Toddler Edition



peoplecare.GLOBAL

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Toddler Edition

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## INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

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### BACKGROUND

The Parenting Revolution (Toddler Edition) has been developed by a team of experts in Clinical Psychology. Instructional concepts are based on empirical research across diverse academic disciplines. The strategies presented in this program are supported by clinical research.

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### GETTING STARTED

The Parenting Revolution (Toddler Edition) is intended for completion by parents of children between 1-3 years of age. Research suggests that learning is best consolidated through 'talking'. As such, after watching the video sessions, it's recommended you also talk through and complete relevant workbook activities together with a spouse, grandparent, friend or mother's group. Feel free to pause the video at any time, to reflect on or discuss key points. Activity worksheets provide a summary of key points and serve to reinforce lessons.

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### DISCLAIMER

All information, assessment or activity presented in this Parenting Revolution (Toddler Edition) program is intended for information purposes only. **While the Parenting Revolution may provide you with practical tools that will empower yourself and your family, this educational program DOES NOT constitute advice, therapy or counselling. Instead, the aim of this program is (i) to equip you with practical knowledge, skills and resources, and (ii) empower you with parenting strategies.** Content is provided in good faith as to its accuracy and reflects the research, observations, opinions, views and understanding of the authors at one point in time.

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# Social and Emotional Skills

## ACTIVITY SHEET



Learning social and emotional skills is an essential component of healthy development during the toddler years. As your toddler begins to recognise their own feelings and gradually understands that other people's emotions are different to their own, they lay the foundation for empathy development. At the same time as your toddler is learning how to behave in socially and emotionally appropriate ways, they are also learning how to assert their independence and communicate their needs and desires. This developmental combination can result in a rollercoaster of behavioural expression. Get ready for the ride.



### PROGRAM DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

#### This Toddler Edition of the Parenting Revolution is designed for you to:

- (a) develop effective ways to help you and your toddler and family thrive
- (b) understand developmental stages and how to practically use this knowledge to your advantage
- (c) bolster your own resilience by pre-empting challenges and managing stress

# Get Ready, Get Set...

In addition to learning independence, your toddler is learning how to recognise and manage feelings, develop relationships, make decisions and problem-solve. Each of these areas can be complicated (even adults struggle)! Yet of all the social and emotional skills they could learn, researchers have identified 5 that are most crucial. These core life skills not only serve as the foundation for positive wellbeing and mental health in early childhood, but well into you're your toddlers future.

## 01 SELF-AWARENESS

Your toddler's ability to recognise their own emotions and understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

## 02 SELF-MANAGEMENT

Your toddler's ability to regulate or exercise control over their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

## 03 SOCIAL AWARENESS

Your toddler's ability to consider how other people might be thinking and feeling.

## 04 RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Your toddler's ability to build and maintain healthy interpersonal connections.

## 05 DECISION-MAKING

Your toddler's ability to make positive choices and to consider the impact their choices may have on other people.

# Skill Activation

The activation of social and emotional skills serves as the foundation upon which the rest of your toddler's life will be built. These skills are central to relationship formation, academic functioning, mental health and wellbeing and career orientation, just to name a few. However, social and emotional skill activation is also important for their immediate future.



Rate your toddler's current social and emotional skill readiness in each domain: ✓

DOMAIN	Still got a way to go	Making progress	Getting ready	Quite Ready
<b>SCHOOL/ACADEMIC LEARNING</b> Ability to separate from parents, play with peers, sit quietly and receive instruction from a teacher.				
<b>MAKE AND MAINTAIN FRIENDSHIPS</b> Ability to befriend peers, share toys, respect boundaries, collaborate and resolve conflict.				
<b>EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE</b> Ability to regulate emotions when excited and self-soothe (or bounce back) when things don't go their way.				
<b>COMMUNICATING THEIR NEEDS</b> Ability to convey concerns, desires or displeasure in socially appropriate ways (using both words and actions).				
<b>SELF-REGULATION OF BEHAVIOUR</b> Ability to follow instruction, display appropriate insight/response to danger, and demonstrate self-control.				
<b>EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT</b> Ability to put self in another's shoes, consider things from their perspective and feel what they are feeling.				

**Q:** Which domain is your toddler **excelling** the most in? Why do you think this is?

**Q:** Which domain is your toddler **struggling** the most in? Why do you think this is?

# You are your toddler's most influential teacher.

Social and emotional skills tend to develop naturally through social modelling (watching the people around them) and direct experience (social interaction and play). However, toddlers also benefit from guidance and assistance (direct instruction and teaching). Therefore, be intentional about fostering social and emotional skills in the following ways:

## **MODELLING:**

**More is caught than taught**

## **EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:**

**Discover feelings**

## **COLLABORATE:**

**Complete tasks together**

## **INTERACT:**

**Encourage social play**



# More is Caught than Taught

Your toddler is constantly watching and learning from you. You may have the very best lessons to teach them, but if your own relationships are fraught with conflict or hostility they'll quickly adopt this as a blueprint for their own social interactions. Moreover, if your child rarely sees you expressing emotion, or frequently witnesses you expressing your emotions in unhealthy ways, they'll likely struggle to express their own feelings in functional ways.



## How would you best describe your own social and emotional functioning? ✓

(choose one response for each category)

### SELF-AWARENESS

I'm good at recognising when I'm overtired, stressed or hormonal, and engage adequate self-care to manage emotions and protect relationships.

I'm often unaware of how my thoughts influence my feelings and behaviours until I've reacted negatively (typically saying or doing something I later regret).

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

When dealing with difficult circumstances, I make choices that renew my mind and modify my mood – helping me respond to my circumstances with wisdom.

Once I have been upset, it takes me a while to calm myself down. I will often ruminate in my mind for hours on end, rehearsing what happened.

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

I'm good at recognising how others might think or feel. I adjust what I do and say to be considerate and try to understand the perspectives of others.

I'm often unaware of (or don't care) how others might think or feel. I won't change what I say or do just to appease someone. If they don't like it, it's their problem.

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

I am good at meeting new people, making new friends and maintaining relationships. When we disagree, I'd rather win a friend than win the argument.

I feel awkward meeting new people, struggle to make friends and find it tiring having to maintain relationships. I'd rather win an argument than win a friend.

### DECISION-MAKING

When making decisions, I am careful to consider how my choices will impact me (both now and in the future) as well as how my choices may impact on others.

I wrestle between what feels right and what I know to be right. I often let my feelings be my guide but end up hurting others or getting myself in trouble.



# Personal Evaluation



## Rate your own level of SOCIAL FUNCTIONING. ✓

How well do you believe you...	Not So Well	Making Progress	Getting There	Doing Well
take interest in others?				
stand up for yourself (assertive)?				
resolve conflict?				
deal with difficult people?				
communicate your needs/desires?				
relinquish your need to 'be right'?				
maintain unity and harmony?				

## Rate your current level of EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING. ✓

How well do you believe you...	Not So Well	Making Progress	Getting There	Doing Well
celebrate the good times?				
respond when things don't go to plan?				
face your fears?				
maintain a positive outlook?				
manage frustration levels?				
relinquish your need to 'be right'?				
problem solve when facing difficulty?				

**IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO IMPROVE YOUR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS. AS YOU TAKE INTENTIONAL STEPS TO LEARN AND GROW, SO TOO WILL YOUR TODDLER.**

**Q:** What's the best social/relational example you believe you're currently setting for your child?

**Q:** What's the best emotional example you believe you're currently setting for your child?



**Q:** What's one social skill that you believe you could improve on and intentionally model to your toddler?

**Q:** What's one emotion that you believe you could manage better and intentionally model to your toddler?



# 'Face' the Feeling

Being able to identify and name feelings is an important skill. The earlier toddlers learn this skill, the easier it is to help them regulate big feelings when they arrive. Getting familiar with feelings can be fun. Feelings faces are a helpful way to educate your toddler about not only how they may be feeling, but also, how others may be feeling.



Use the feelings faces and question guide below to help your toddler become familiar:



ANXIOUS



BORED



COLD



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



DISAPPOINTED



DISGUSTED



EXHAUSTED



HAPPY



HOT



HYSTERICAL



INTERESTED



LONELY



SATISFIED



SURPRISED



THOUGHTFUL

## POINT TO A SPECIFIC FEELING FACES AND ASK:

- What emotion is this face feeling?
- How do you know he/she is feeling that way?
- What might have made him/her feel that way?
- What does it feel like in your body when you feel that way?
- What kinds of things make you feel that way?
- What helps you to feel better when you're feeling that way?

# Dealing with BIG Feelings

For toddlers, intense emotions can be confusing uncomfortable and even daunting. When your toddler experiences big feelings (such as sadness, frustration, anxiety and fear), they often need support and assistance from someone older and wiser to help them regulate (calm down) and organise (make sense of) their emotions. The more emotional support you provide in the early years, the better your toddler will eventually become at regulating their own emotions.



Help identify and name feelings	Protect your toddler from facing their fears
Show how to express feelings positively	Condone meltdowns and tantrums
Model empathy and compassion	Shame toddler for their feelings
Provide support and reassurance	Minimise or dismiss feelings as 'trivial'
Teach how to self-soothe and calm down	Say "you shouldn't be feeling that way"
Talk about the importance of emotions	Ignore aggressive or violent reactions

**If your toddler is experiencing big emotions, here's a simple guide to help support them:**

## LEVEL DOWN

Get down to your toddler's level. This may involve crouching or sitting down with them so that you're 'in their space' or so that you can 'see eye to eye'.

## CALM DOWN

Help your toddler regulate their own emotion. Ideas include taking slow breaths, refocusing their attention, listening to calming music, singing a song, reach for a comfort toy (teddy or blanket) and having a drink of water.

## NAME THE FEELING

Help your toddler identify and name the emotion they're contending with. If they don't yet have proficient language skills, name the emotion for them or prompt them with clues. For example,

"it seems like you're feeling angry, is that right?" You can also draw feelings or use visual aids (e.g., feeling cards, books, posters)

## VALIDATE THE FEELING

Even if you disapprove with or don't understand why your toddler is so upset, communicate that their feelings are valid and important. For example, "I'm so sorry you're feeling sad"; "That must have been really scary for you"; "I can see why you feel so mad."

## LEARN AND LOOK FORWARD

Once your toddler has calmed down, you can proactively problem-solve with them about how to handle the situation differently next time. Give multi-choice answers for them to choose from and rehearse (role-play) appropriate responses.

# Complete Tasks Together

Young children tend to be overly enthusiastic about doing any task they see mummy or daddy doing (even mundane household tasks). Rather than just setting your toddler up with some toys while you get the housework done, get them involved! Naturally, it may not be as efficient, but by getting your child involved they learn how to follow instructions, work together and make decisions.



Use the feelings faces and question guide below to help your toddler become familiar:

## TASK 1:

What role could your toddler play?

How could you make it fun?

What could possibly go wrong?

What solutions could be established in advance?

## TASK 2:

What role could your toddler play?

How could you make it fun?

What could possibly go wrong?

What solutions could be established in advance?

**WHEREVER POSSIBLE, GET YOUR TODDLER INVOLVED IN MAKING DECISIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN MAKING DINNER, PUT FOUR VEGETABLE OPTIONS ON THE BENCH AND ASK YOUR TODDLER TO CHOOSE TWO FOR YOU TO COOK. BY INVOLVING YOUR TODDLER, YOU'RE NOT ONLY TEACHING THEM TO BE DECISIVE, YOU'RE ALSO MAXIMISING THE LIKELIHOOD THEY'LL EAT THEIR DINNER (BECAUSE THEY HAVE A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP).**

# It's a win-win!

# Social Play

Prior to age two, children tend to play independently (known as “solitary play”). However, during the toddler years children start to become more aware of, and take an interest in, other children around them. Interacting and playing with other children is a process that often requires a transition through various stages. As social awareness and emotional resilience skills mature, children engage in social play.

PARALLEL PLAY 1 year of age	ONLOOKER PLAY 2 years of age	ASSOCIATIVE PLAY 3 years of age	SOCIAL PLAY 4 years of age
Playing adjacent to each other but not ‘with’ one another. Children have no influence on each other’s behaviour	Observing the play of others (often from the sidelines or at a distance) but not getting directly involved.	As social awareness develops, toddlers interact with those who have similar goals (e.g., building a tower with blocks)	Sharing toys or ideas, playing together both cooperatively and competitively with one another

For your toddler to transition well through the various stages of play, it is important they get plenty of opportunities to interact with peers. Organise some play dates with other children and look for opportunities to integrate your child into group settings (e.g., parents’ group; church crèche; play dates, playground or park play).

**IN ORDER FOR YOUR TODDLER TO PRACTICE COOPERATING, SHARING AND PROBLEM SOLVING, LEAVE THEM BE IN THE STATE OF PLAY. TRY NOT TO INTERVENE OR FORCE FRIENDSHIPS. TODDLERS LEARN BEST WHEN GIVEN THE TIME AND SPACE TO FIGURE IT OUT ON THEIR OWN.**



**NOTE:**

Of course, if your child does need your help or seeks reassurance, be ready and willing to jump in and lend a hand. Social interactions and play dates will present plenty of teaching opportunities where you can talk to your child about empathy (awareness of other people’s feelings), kindness (importance of sharing), and problem-solving (making good decisions).