



Tots In Action: 30-36 Months¹

Millie Ferrer²

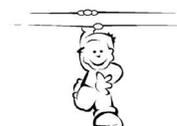


Hi! It's me Chris. Guess what? I'm almost three. As I approach my third birthday I understand my world a little better. I've made great progress in making my speech clearer. Every time you sing me a song, read me a story or help me repeat a nursery rhyme I improve in my language development.

Active exploration is the name of my game. Having safe areas to play in and numerous objects and toys to explore are important. However, the most important component is you. Exploring is more fun when I know you are there to help me feel secure. Please encourage me and give me reassurance in a very loving way. The time I spend with you is not only pleasurable for me but very valuable to my well-being. Here are some turning points in my development.

Physically

I'm constantly on the go. I can . . .



- walk up and down stairs, alternating feet.
- get into things and make wonderful messes.
- finger paint or paint with large brushes. I know it's messy but please let me create my first artistic masterpieces.
- walk on tiptoe like a pro.
- march to music.

Cognitively



At times my mind is a curious blend of fantasy and faulty reasoning. I can also be logical and mature in my thinking.

I . . .

1. This document is FCS 2130, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published: April 1998. Revised: April 2000. Reviewed March 2007 by Heidi Radunovich, Assistant Professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

2. Millie Ferrer, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Human Development, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Larry Arrington, Dean

- think the world revolves around me. I'm unable to see your point of view.
- may cry when my stuffed animal falls, thinking he's hurt.
- remember the past, imagine the future and deal with the present with more ease.
- sort objects by shape and color.
- can follow simple instructions. I know what "on," "in," and "under" means.

My language skills are more polished. My words and sentence structure are beginning to sound like yours. I like to talk to myself when I play. I have an imaginary friend. His name is Billy. We figure out how some things work together. I like explaining to him what we are doing.

Please continue to read to me every day. This will help me improve my listening skills as well as my language development.

Socially



Sharing is still something I don't understand very well. Having something that I call mine helps me to figure out who I am. See this as a positive sign of developing selfhood. This is my way of marking off boundaries between myself and others. Give me some reassurance that the toy is mine and then encourage compromise. For example, "Yes Chris, that's your toy, but in a little while can Sammy have a turn?" This is better than simply insisting I have to share. Other social skills that are typical for my age are:

I . . .

- can be kind and polite with other children at times.
- love to give orders and tell you exactly what to do.

- enjoy being around other special adults like aunts, uncles and grandparents.
- can take turns in games.

Emotionally

As my vocabulary expands, I'm beginning to use it more to express my own emotions. Sometimes I will react to a situation with frustration and anger. I may kick, bite or hit. Don't overreact. Don't try to scold, punish or reason with me. Tell me immediately and clearly I am not to behave this way. If you need to remove me from the situation, do so, if possible. Once you remove me, ignore me, but stay close. Once I'm calm, discuss the incident and the consequences of my actions (pain, bad feelings). Be patient; the good and loving relationship you have with me will help keep these angry times short. Other emotions I'm experiencing during this time are:

I...

- express affection openly.
- like bedtime rituals; I get upset when you change them.
- like when you talk to me about when I was a baby.

Parents' Corner

Being a good parent requires commitment, energy, and awareness of what we say and do. We all desire to have the best possible relationship with our children. This can be accomplished by shifting our thoughts to focusing on their positive traits. Some parents constantly criticize their children or think about what they don't like or what is missing in the relationship. Comparing our children to others and making judgements without really listening to what they have to say will crush their spirit. Unconditional love is accepting your children and being grateful for the gift you have received. It's about being there for them, by guiding and encouraging them to follow reasonable rules.

Studies show that children who are most agreeable and cooperative have parents who are warm and loving. They have firm rules and communicate

clearly what is expected of their children and expect reasonably high levels of behavior. We all want our children to grow up feeling they are capable and lovable. Some golden rules for relationship building are:

- Use more dos than don'ts. Stating the dos works much better than continually nagging on the don'ts. "Close the door softly, please."
- Use kind words to encourage and build up your child. Kind words give your child self-confidence and creates an atmosphere of love and respect.
- Communicate acceptance. When your child believes, he * is accepted just as he is, he will blossom. If you seek perfection in your child, it will only paralyze him. Giving him support will empower him and he will be able to enjoy and celebrate his childhood and school years.
- Let him enjoy spontaneous joyful play instead of having to learn his ABC's, colors and numbers. There will be plenty of time later on to learn these things.

Now recall the magic words "tender loving care." Be good to yourself and take time to be alone, to meditate, to sit quietly or go on an outing all by yourself. Spend time alone with friends and other family members as well. If you feel guilty, cancel the thought. A little guilt is better than a pile of resentment because you never have time for yourself. Being apart can refresh and revitalize your commitment to having a loving relationship with your child.

Reference List

Allen, K. Eileen, & L. Marotz (1994). *Developmental Profiles: Pre-birth Through Eight*. New York: Delmar Publishers Inc.

Berk, L.E. (1996). *Infants, Children, and Adolescents (2nd Ed.)*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Cline, Foster, & J. Fay (1990). *Parenting With Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*. Colorado: Pi on Press.

Ford, Judy (1995). *Wonderful Ways to Love a Child*. California: Conari Press.

Martin, Sally K. (1993). *Little Lives*. Cooperative Extension Service, Nevada.

Shelov, Steven P. (1994) *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. New York: Bantam Books.

Shimm, Patricia H., & K. Ballen (1995). *Parenting Your Toddler*. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

White, Burton L. (1994). *Raising a Happy, Unspoiled Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

*Tots In Action uses "he," "his" or "him" to represent toddlers of both genders to avoid confusion.