

the magic of everyday  
**moments**



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you by the  
Johnson & Johnson  
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And  
ZERO TO THREE®

**24-36** months

The Magic of Everyday Moments™: 0-4 Months

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**ZERO TO THREE** is a national nonprofit organization of renowned pediatricians, educators, researchers, and other child development experts who specialize in the first years of life.



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# The Magic of Everyday Moments

## *Loving and Learning Through Daily Activities*

If you are like most parents today, your greatest challenge is probably caring for your child while also taking care of yourself and your responsibilities. The competing demands on your time and energy make finding the time to connect with your child no small challenge. But daily activities, such as getting dressed and doing household chores and errands don't need to take time away from bonding with and enjoying your child. In fact, these everyday moments are rich opportunities to encourage your child's development by building her: **self-confidence; social, communication and thinking skills; and her capacity for self-control.** Most of all you build her desire to learn about her world.

The booklets in this series are not intended to be general guides to everything that is happening at each specific age. Instead, they focus on how, through interactions with your baby during everyday moments, you build a strong and close relationship—the foundation of your child's learning and her healthy growth and development.

If your child's development is delayed, you can adapt the information in this booklet to meet your child's individual needs. If you are at all concerned about your child's development, consult your pediatric health care provider.

**It's the special interplay between parent and child that makes everyday moments so meaningful.** The potential is limitless. The starting point is you.



## What's it like for you:

Your “baby” isn’t a baby anymore! He has ideas and opinions of his own. He can also do so much for himself—dress (or at least help), eat, and talk, talk, talk. While these accomplishments may delight you and make you feel proud, you may also feel a sense of sadness or loss, wondering where the time has gone.

This third year is a magical time as imagination is blossoming. Two-year-olds often spend a lot of time in the world of pretend. When you watch your child and join in (while letting him be the director) you will learn a lot about what he is thinking and feeling. He may make up stories where he is the dad who goes to work and you are the child left at home or in child care. He may be the king who gets everything he wants!

There may be some big adjustments ahead for both of you, as well. You might be considering pre-school. Learning to use the potty may be on the horizon. Perhaps there is a new baby coming into the picture. You may be concerned about how your toddler will adjust...or how you will handle two! These are all opportunities to help your child learn to cope with life’s changes.



# making friends

Helping your toddler to develop strong, healthy friendships provides him with the skill and joy of interacting with and getting along with others as he grows.

## If your toddler could talk:

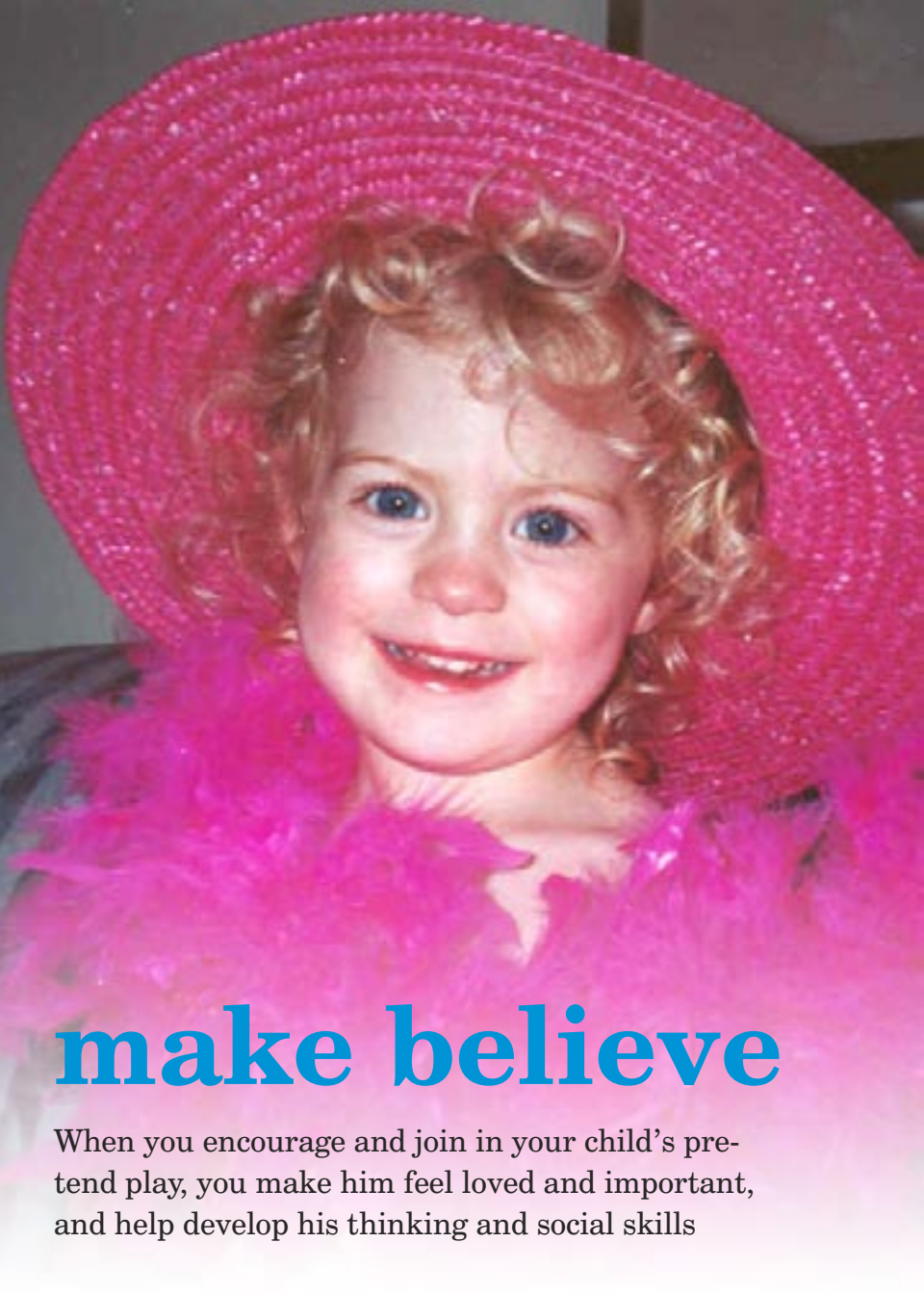
I love to watch and play with other children--especially kids my size. We may be at the park, on a "play-date," or just on the front stoop with the neighbors. I'm fascinated by how they look and what they do. Whether I stop and watch, play next to them, or join in, I learn a lot. I try to do what they do, like build a sand castle or ride the see-saw. I see them beg their moms and dads to stay longer when it's time to leave. I might try that, too! Making friends can be hard. I don't get this sharing thing. Why do I have to give up my pail or let someone else have a turn on the swing? And, when there is too much going on, it might get a little overwhelming for me. If I seem hesitant, you can help me ease into playing with another child. I'll feel safe and sure with you next to me.

## What your toddler is learning:

Friendships are an important part of our lives. Learning to get along with others and to build satisfying relationships begins early and takes time. Your toddler learns by watching and playing with other children. She practices skills by copying what she sees. This may also motivate her to try something new—the big slide, a new vegetable, or even sitting on the potty. Friendships also spark creativity as children make up games and stories together. Of course, this can be a rocky road. At this age, children are still learning to share and take turns. Even though your child may know the "right" thing to do, her emotions may still win out over her willpower. Your support and guidance will help her learn how to play fair and experience the joys of friendships. This lays the foundation for developing healthy relationships as she grows.

## What you can do:

- Provide opportunities for your child to play with others her age. Parks, libraries, and organized playgroups are all good places to find other kids. Follow her lead and give her the support you think she needs to make friends.
- Be prepared for frustrations if another child is on the swing or wants the bucket in the sandbox. Offer an alternative as your child learns to wait.



# make believe

When you encourage and join in your child's pretend play, you make him feel loved and important, and help develop his thinking and social skills

## If your toddler could talk:

I can be a firefighter or a daddy or a zookeeper. When I make-believe, the rules are all up to me. I can make anything happen. When you give me hats and clothes and boxes and containers, I make them part of my adventures and stories. I love it when you pretend with me. It lets me know you care about my ideas and about sharing in my fun. Let me be the director. I like to think up the characters and the story myself. I might surprise you with some of the fun things I dream up when I play.

## What your toddler is learning:

Many two- and three-year-olds can't get enough of playing pretend. They pretend anytime, anywhere. Whether they're on a trip to the store or taking a bath, their growing imaginations transport them to another place. Pretend play is much more than pure fun. It teaches children about symbols—that an object can represent something else. A doll can be a “real” baby. A block can be a phone. This kind of symbolic thinking fosters creativity and is important for learning later skills like reading and math. Pretend play can also help a child deal with difficult situations, like saying goodbye, or adjusting to a new baby in the family. He can work through some of these challenges by practicing and mastering them through play, especially when you join him. Your child becomes the daddy leaving his little boy (played by you!) to go to work. You help your child's stuffed tiger figure out ways to make friends in his new classroom. Keep in mind that two-year-olds cannot always separate pretend from reality. This is why they develop fears at this time. They will need your help and time to learn what's real and what's not.

## What you can do:

- Enter your child's pretend world and follow his lead. Ask questions like “Who should I be?” and “What do I do next?”
- Be a careful observer. Pretend play is a window into your child's thoughts and feelings. Is he acting out something that is scary, confusing, anxiety-producing, or something he enjoys?
- Create pretend scenarios for your child that you think he may be struggling with, like adjusting to a new caregiver. You can help him problem-solve through pretend.



## Reading Your Baby's Cues

What follows is a chart that describes what children are learning at this stage and what you can do to support the development of these new skills. You will see that the age ranges are broad. This is done intentionally because children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Whether a child reaches a milestone earlier or later within the normal timeframe is not significant.

# what to expect between 24 and 36 months:

## Oh Brother!

Or Sister! If your toddler was an only child, a new sibling might be on the way or already in the picture. This is a wonderful gift, but can also bring some challenges.

- Prepare your child with books about a new baby and having siblings.
- Let her help you care for the baby.
- Make special time for each of your children.

## I'm Scared!

Your toddler's imagination is blossoming, but he is often not sure about the difference between reality and fantasy. This may lead to new fears.

- Help him talk about his fears. Putting feelings into words can help him understand and feel in control of them. Knowing how he feels will also help you provide the reassurance he needs.
- Never belittle your child or his fears. This may lead to increased fearfulness.

## Let me try

Your toddler is becoming capable of doing more and more things by himself.

- Provide opportunities for him to do some things on his own--get dressed, brush his teeth, even use the potty and wash his hands.
- Have him use his skills to help around the house—putting away clothes, setting the table, or picking up leaves in the yard. This will help him feel important.

## I'm unique

Your child is beginning to notice similarities and differences among people.

- Help your child understand and appreciate his own culture and background, as well as those of others. Talk respectfully about others who are different from you.
- Expect some embarrassing moments when your child comments on a difference he notices. Use them as opportunities to explain, without judgment, that people are different in many ways – size, skin color, style of dress, etc.

# what you can do:



# what to expect between 24 and 36 months:

## Batteries not included (or necessary!)

You may be tempted to buy specialized toys, games, or videos, especially those that claim to make your baby smarter.

- Resist the urge to buy based on product claims.
- Choose toys that encourage imagination and that will “grow” with your child like books, play food, dolls, toy animals, and crayons.
- Remember—you are her favorite toy!

## Catch Me If You Can

Your child can do a lot with his body: run, jump, climb, spin, and now even play on riding toys and tricycles.

- Limit t.v. time and head outside. Take hikes, walk to the playground, or throw the ball.
- Talk about up, down, over, under, high, and low as you play. Go up and down the slide, climb over and run under the jungle gym,

## Now You're Talkin'

After waiting all this time for your child to talk, you may wonder when your 2-year-old will ever stop. She now uses longer sentences--and talks anytime, anywhere.

- Keep the conversation going. Talk about what you are doing together. Ask her about her thoughts and ideas. “What part did you like in the book?” “Why do you think the bear was sad?”
- Read books, sing songs, and play rhyming games with real and nonsense words. This helps develop language skills.

## Why?

“Why” may become one of her favorite new words because your curious toddler is learning about the logical connections between things. She begins to understand, “If I write with crayon on the walls, mommy take the crayon away!”

- When your child asks, “Why?” ask her for her ideas before you answer. This builds her thinking skills. It also helps you know how much information she needs. A simple response might be all that is necessary.
- Be patient with the many questions that come. Understanding the “why” of things is a big leap in your child’s thinking.

# what you can do:



## Reading Your Child's Cues

What follows is a chart that describes what children are learning at this stage and what you can do to support the development of these new skills. You will see that the age ranges are broad. This is done intentionally because children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Whether a child reaches a milestone earlier or later within the normal timeframe is not significant.

Building a strong and close relationship with you is the foundation of your child's learning and her healthy growth and development. If your child's development is delayed, you can adapt the information in this chart to meet your child's individual needs. If you are at all concerned about your child's development, consult a health care provider.

**Remember, everyday moments are rich bonding and learning opportunities. Enjoy the magic of these moments with your child.**

*Don't miss the other booklets in*  
**The Magic of Everyday Moments™ series:**



*For more information on early childhood development, go to:*

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