



Illustration by  
Billy Nuñez, age 16

# PLAYING IS HOW TODDLERS LEARN

## RAISING A TODDLER CAN BE CHILD'S PLAY

- Play is how your toddler explores and learns about the world. Support and encourage this play.
- Allow your child lots of time to play.
- Match your child's interests with play activities.
- Take care of yourself—playing with your toddler can take a lot of your energy. When you are having fun, your child is having fun too!

**P**laying and pretending allow your child to learn and grow.

### Play is how young children start to get ready for school.

- They learn how to feel comfortable being with other children, and how to be a good friend.
- Play gets children ready for learning—paying attention to adults, playing nicely with others, and feeling comfortable being away from their parents.
- Pretend play is one way children learn about difficult feelings like anger and fear.

**TIP:** Make the places in your home where you spend a lot of time safe places where your child can play and be supervised easily. Give your child **lots of time** to explore with things like water, sand, boxes, or any other safe item that your child finds interesting.

**TIP:** Provide simple and safe items, like plastic cups and plates, pots and pans, books, blocks, play tools, and crayons. This way, your child can **copy your actions and work**. Items should be stored in a safe place or in a container where children can easily see and get to them.

**TIP:** Describe what's going on to your child:

- "I see you drew a brown circle."
- "What a long jump you made!"

**TIP:** Ask questions.

- "How did you make this yummy soup?"
- "What will happen next?"

**TIP:** Find items that match your child's interests. If your child likes to watch ants crawl along the sidewalk, read a book about insects!

**TIP:** Visit special places related to your child's interests. You can start with a visit to your local library. You will get ideas for future play.

When you let your child guide the activities, you get a window into the delightful world of a toddler—a world where everything is new and full of possibility.

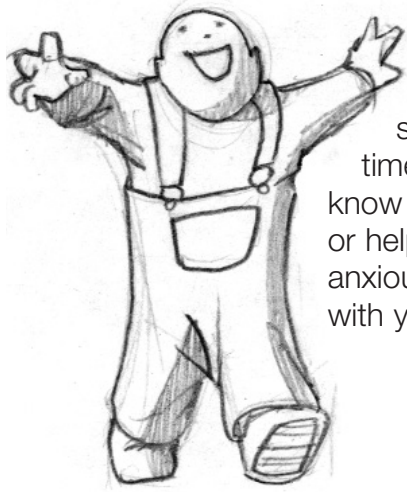
## CHILD'S PLAY CAN BE HARD WORK FOR PARENTS

Playing with your child takes a lot of time and energy. When you are tired, your toddler will know it. Find time for yourself. Maybe your family can help out, or perhaps a friend



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will watch your child for a few hours. You will come back with more energy and joy. If you are having fun, chances are your child is having fun, and learning, too.



If you find yourself losing patience, it's a sign that you need some time for yourself! Let people know when you need support or help. If you feel bored or anxious a lot of the time, talk with your pediatrician.

### It helps to find company for you and your child.

- Many libraries have story hours.
- Community centers and YMCAs often have play groups.
- Find a popular playground where you can meet other parents with young children.
- Child care provides an opportunity for your child to meet others.

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