



Why Is My Toddler Fearful?

Why is my child suddenly fearful?

Toddlers show their fears at times of rapid growth, when they are mastering new skills that make them more independent. At times, their fears are overwhelming. Sometimes what was familiar yesterday may be scary today. Suddenly toddlers become afraid of the dark, of noises, or of animals as they learn to walk and move away from your protection. If your child is showing fear of dogs, showing her a nice dog may not lessen her fears.

What can I do?

- Take the time to introduce a new person or situation to your toddler. This tells him that this new person is okay to play or interact with. "This is Sherry. She came to visit us today." Prepare children for changes in your routine as you begin your day.
- Accept toddlers' fears. Give them words and other ways to express their fears, so that you help them learn to handle their fears. "You feel scared of the dog's barking." Never belittle their fears ("I know it feels scary when it thunders. I'll stay with you so you will feel safe."). To your child, this fear is very real.
- Stay calm when your child shows you that he is afraid. Your own attitude and presence are comforting and important to him.
- When your child seems fearful, don't push her into the activity. You might help her by joining the activity yourself or by introducing her to another child who is already participating. You know your child's temperament and how she reacts to new situations. If she is a "slow-to-warm-up" baby, give her the time to adjust to the new setting.
- When an infant or a young toddler seems fearful, you may be able to distract her to another activity or toy.

My child was afraid of

It helped when we

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