



Two Year olds – A Protected Species?

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Starting Points

Two year olds are often misunderstood

Knowing what makes this a special year and how to support development is therefore key

‘Defends own possessions with determination’

‘ ‘Exceeding active, restless’

‘Little understanding of need to defer immediate wishes’

An Amazing Year

By the end of this year most children:

- Are communicating and talking well
- Enjoy connecting with other children and adults
- Are determined and curious learners supported by their increased physical skills
- Have developed many self-care skills
- Are starting to develop some level of self-regulation



I peck the soap
I peck the sink
I peck the loo.

But...

This development depends on the basics being in place:

- Strong attachment with parents and with practitioners
- Experiences of being co-regulated and consistency of approach
- Sufficient warm and sustained interactions
- Opportunities to play and explore at own pace and in own way
- Opportunities to develop self-care skills
- Sleep, diet and exercise

Settling in- a priority

- The significant changes in this year are linked to brain growth and development
- There can be long term effects if two year olds experience separation anxiety
 - Behaviours linked to insecurity at home e.g. clinginess and attention seeking
 - Delayed communication and language
 - Tantrums, aggression and lack of concentration
 - Difficulties with sleep, eating and toileting
 - Ongoing and future difficulties with transitions

Settling in Without Tears

The aim is to make a relationship with the child before 'real' separation takes place

A slide in- slide out model is used

1. Child plays with key person- parent is alongside
2. Child plays with key person – parent can move across the room and back

Visits to the setting

3. Child plays with key person – parent in and out of sight within room
4. Child plays with the key person – parent pops out of room to collect an object – 1 minute absence
5. Child plays with key person, parent pops out for 5 minutes and time is increased

Supporting parents

- Recognise that this is a challenging year for most parents
- Help parents know what expected development looks like for this age group
- Help parents understand what co-regulation is and isn't
- Actively signpost parents who are struggling e.g. sleep clinics,
- Give parents suggestions for setting up simple play opportunities at home

Simple play ideas

Play is repetitive, uses whole limb movements and feels satisfying. Real objects are better than small toys

- Transporting – moving objects from one place to another e.g. putting out two saucepans and some onions
- Opening and closing/ In and Out – boxes with lids, cupboards that can be opened
- Dropping and posting – tubes and cars or other objects
- Water play – expect water to be moved