

# Understanding Emotions



Children begin to learn about emotions through back-and-forth interactions with their caregivers. This begins at birth.



## The Take-Home

Children need to build strong relationships and practice communicating with others. Interactions with others support the emergence of emotion understanding, self-awareness, and self-regulation. These skills help children throughout life as they develop from a crying newborn to the emotionally-sensitive kindergartener.

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## Science Says

- Children use cues from other people to guide their emotions and behavior. This is especially true in new situations.
- Children even learn from interactions they're not directly involved in – they pick up on emotional states of others just from watching and listening.
- In their second year of life, children begin managing their own emotions or behaviors, called self-regulation. They often use others' reactions to guide their actions.



## Try it at Home

- Use dolls or stuffed animals for dramatic play. Enacting different scenarios teaches children about complex behaviors and emotions.
- Playing games like “Simon Says” helps children develop listening skills and self-control.
- Talk with your child about how he is feeling. Introduce new emotion words. Include words for neutral emotions, such as patient and calm. This will expand his understanding of emotions and will allow him to describe how he is feeling. It will also help him understand what you mean when you ask him to be patient in the future.