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AGES & STAGES

Emotional Development: 1 Year Olds

Throughout her second year, your child will swing back and forth constantly between fierce independence and clinging to you. Now that she can walk and do things for herself physically, she has the power to move away from you and test her new skills. But at the same time, she's not yet entirely comfortable with the idea that she's an individual, separate from you and everyone else in the world. Especially when she's tired, sick, or scared, she'll want you there to comfort her and fend off loneliness.



It's impossible to predict when she'll turn her back on you and when she'll come running for shelter. She may seem to change from one moment to the next, or she may seem mature and independent for several whole days before suddenly regressing. You may feel mixed reactions to this, as well: While there are moments when it feels wonderful to have your baby back, there are bound to be other times when her fussing and whining is the last thing you need. Some people call this period the first adolescence. It reflects some of your child's mixed feelings about growing up and leaving you, and it's absolutely normal. Remember that the best way to help her regain her composure is to give her attention and reassurance when she needs it. Snapping at her to "act like a big girl" will only make her feel and act more insecure and needy.

Brief separations from you may help your toddler become more independent. She'll still suffer some separation anxiety and perhaps put up a fuss when you leave her—even if it's just for a few minutes. But the protest will be brief. Chances are, you may be more upset by these separations than she is, but try not to let her know that. If she believes her fussing has a chance of getting you to stay, she'll continue to fuss with similar occasions in the future. As tempting as it might be to quietly "sneak" away, she might actually become more clingy because she then never knows when you're going to disappear next. Instead, leave her with a kiss and a promise to return. And when you do come back, greet her enthusiastically and devote your full attention to her for a while before moving on to other chores or business. When your child understands that you always return and continue to love her, she'll feel more secure.

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