

Inspiring Terrific Toddlers

Promoting Development to Reduce Challenges



What can you do to help them?



Environment

- Safe, prepared, uncluttered space
- Age-appropriate, rotating materials
- Visuals (photos, schedules) for guidance
- Reflect diversity and culture
- Calm areas + space for safe movement
- Clear limits and expectations

Supporting Communication Skills

- Use visuals, gestures, sign language
- Books, songs, puppets, storytelling
- Model language; allow time to respond
- 1:1 interactions; validate feelings
- Support home language
- Partner with families

Supporting Development

- Observe and follow child's interests
- Individualize and scaffold learning
- Adapt materials to maintain engagement
- Collaborate with families
- Support cultural and language needs
- Recognize and share progress

When Children Are Overwhelmed

- Reduce stimulation (noise, light, group size)
- Offer rest, comfort, and quiet space
- Provide sensory activities or fresh air
- Meet basic needs (rest, food, water)
- Stay flexible and communicate with families

Calming Strategies

- Breathing and movement
- Offer choice of quiet space
- Use fidgets/weighted items
- Give space; check in supportively
- Identify and reduce stress triggers

Building Self-Regulation

- Teach and name emotions
- Provide calming tools (fidgets, weighted items, timers)
- Offer quiet space and breaks
- Use simple supports (first/then, counting, breathing)
- Model behavior and guide problem-solving
- Include sensory play and purposeful tasks



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Independence & Responsibility

- Offer choices (clothes, activities, participation)
- Encourage independence with guided support
- Assign small jobs (snack helper, passing items, cleanup)
- Involve children in routines (setting tables, sharing materials)

Emotional Regulation

- Teach calming strategies: breathing (flower/candle, rainbow, balloon)
- Use tools: calming cube, sensory bottles, poppers
- Practice recognizing emotions (visuals, facial expressions)
- Provide comfort and support when overwhelmed



Communication & Connection

- Use picture visuals for toddlers to express needs
- Model simple phrases: "Help please," "Turn please"
- Get at child's level; stay calm and empathetic
- Validate feelings and offer positive affirmations
- Build daily 1:1 connection time

Environment & Routines

- Consistent daily routines to build security
- Safe space to express emotions
- Calm-down area for stress/overwhelm
- Create engaging, safe environments for exploration
- Use music and songs for transitions (cleanup, meals, circle time)



Social Skills & Play

- Practice sharing and turn-taking
- Guide play (pretend games, group activities)
- Encourage peer interaction through structured fun
- Keep learning playful—be silly, engaging, and responsive

Engagement & Learning

- Follow children's interests ("guided discovery")
- Use interactive songs, movement, and storytelling
- Create fun routines (name songs, interactive story time)
- Design safe physical challenges (e.g., low climbers)

