



September
2010
Page 1

"Nurturing First Steps Toward the Cross"

How do preschoolers handle stress?

Preschoolers experience loss, fear, and unfamiliar situations much differently than adults. Each preschooler develops at their own pace. If you understand how your preschooler thinks about their world, you'll be better able to help them deal with difficult events. Here are some things to look for as your child grows socially and emotionally.

Your preschooler may be learning to:

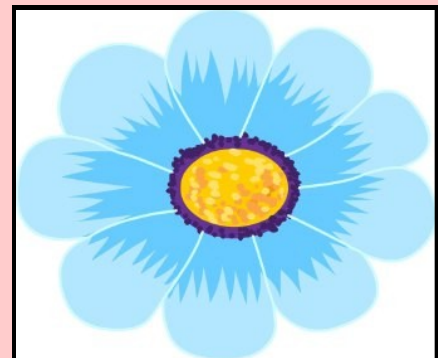
- Use words to show feelings
- Control situations by talking about them
- Handle frustration and wait for things
- Make friends and get along with others
- Understand that some actions are okay and others are not
- Seek comfort from you to feel safe
- Rely on you to help him develop self-esteem
- Use play to work through problems and try out different solutions
- Rely on routines to feel secure and confident
- Complete tasks and feel pride in her abilities
- Explore new situations and take risks

These "everyday" situations or changes may concern or upset your preschooler:

- New baby at home
- New preschool teacher or babysitter
- Being separated from people who care for him
- New daycare, nursery, or elementary school
- Changes to daily routines
- Giving up or losing a favorite blanket or toy
- Moving into a new bed, bedroom, or home

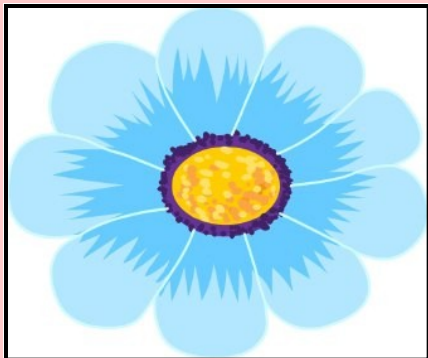
Preschoolers often display their concerns through their actions rather than words. Here are some things you may need to watch for:

- Unusual clinging
- Fear of being alone or without you
- More frequent tantrums or angry outbursts
- Hitting or biting
- Wetting the bed or sucking thumb again
- Eating more or less than usual
- Sleeplessness or restless
- More frequent crying
- Fewer smiles, less laughter
- Won't try anything new
- Bothered by sudden or loud noises
- Trips, falls, or drops things a lot
- Less open or outgoing than usual



Just for parents....

Page 2
(Continued)



Keep in mind that these behaviors may appear in all children at one time or another. If they are ongoing or frequent, however, they can be signs of stress. Take advantage of everyday moments to find out what's on your child's mind; you can use your daily routine to guide your child through challenging circumstances. Here are some ideas:

Family time. The physical and emotional closeness of eating a meal or playing a game together helps your preschooler feel safer. Use this time to ask questions such as, "What were the best and worst parts of your day?"

Chores. Letting him help with chores can make you both proud of his achievements. A new responsibility like sorting laundry can make him feel more confident. Take this opportunity to use socks as hand puppets to role play and ask questions such as, "What makes you happy or upset?"

Traveling. Whether you're traveling around the block or around the world, help your child recognize the accomplishments of people from different cultures or backgrounds. Talk about how people are different in some ways but the same in others. Try simple statements such as, "Everyone has feelings just like you."

Story time. While reading stories together, point out a character who handles a situation positively. Ask your child, "What would you have done?"

