



PARENT *handout*

Using Books to Explore Your Child's Emotions

Sometimes toddlers and preschoolers get stressed out. Your child will, too. Maybe it will be because of a new baby. He may be afraid of something. Or he could be frustrated about a new skill like using the toilet.

Books can be a way for your child to understand and cope with his day-to-day experiences. They help him recognize his feelings and learn the words for them.

Your child is starting to feel complicated emotions, like shame. He may be frustrated sometimes. He wants to have more independence, and his life has many rules that keep him from doing what he wants to do when he wants to do it.

His life may also be changing a lot. He may have a new brother or sister who takes up a lot of your time. Or he may be starting at a child care center or preschool. Learning to use the toilet instead of wearing a diaper is a huge change for him. So is sleeping in a big bed.

There are many, many books about all of these subjects. It may be helpful to go

to the library or bookstore without your child so you can thoughtfully choose the ones that reflect your family's values.

How to help

When you read, talk about the situations the characters are going through. "What are they feeling? Happy? Sad? Angry?"

Ask your child if he feels that way sometimes. Was he sad when he had an accident when using the potty?

This is a great time to talk about ways of solving problems and coping with emotions. Children's books often present both positive and negative solutions before coming to a happy outcome. For example, a story may start with a problem. Characters may try one solution that makes it worse. Then they may come up with one that works.



Titles to try

The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler (differences)
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn (going to school)
The Invisible String by Patrice Karst (separation)

Two Homes by Claire Masurel (divorce)
Dog Heaven and Cat Heaven by Cynthia Rylant (death)



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What's happening in your child's brain

Emotional intelligence

At this age, your child is developing important skills. One is emotional intelligence, the ability to link his feelings to his thoughts and actions, and to see how his thoughts and actions affect others.

- > **What you can do:** Read books about people who are different from him.

Resiliency

Another developing skill is resiliency. This ability helps him keep going when the going gets tough. He learns to keep trying to solve his problems, even when his first idea didn't work out.

- > **What you can do:** Read books about problems and solutions.

Anticipation and memory

Your child is getting better at anticipating what will happen in the future and remembering things from the past. If something sad happened, he may worry that it will happen again.

- > **What you can do:** Read books about children whose lives are like his.

Imagination

Your child's imagination is taking him to exciting new places. Most of the time this is a lot of fun! But other times he may imagine scary things, especially if he sees them on TV or in movies. He may be afraid they will happen to him.

- > **What you can do:** Read books about common childhood fears.