

# PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

We have learned that certain characteristics are typical of certain ages, but these are only guides and not set rules. Each child grows in his own way. One child may progress "slower" than another and still he is perfectly healthy and within the range of development appropriate for his age.

1. **Growth is a personal matter.** Each child grows in his own personal manner. He should be permitted to grow at his own rate. If you expect too much of him he does even less than he is able to do. If there is one thing a two year old child cannot do is to be four. Instead of comparing him to others and finding fault, accept him. Instead of nudging and pushing - - nurture him.

2. **Growth comes from within.** We can encourage or we can hinder but the energy and the drive force that pushes a child to grow, is carried inside him. He desperately wants to grow and has the power within to do it. Our job is to clear the track, guide him with loving acceptance and then relax and enjoy!

3. **Growth is gradual and orderly but uneven.** A child is gradually and continually moving toward maturity. We cannot and must not hurry him. Before he can run he must walk, before he can share, he must fully possess. He can never truly be an adult if he was not first fully a child. His growth may be likened to a spiral, bursting forward at a dizzying rate of speed, reaching the top and then maybe falling back, gathering strength, building reserves to make the steep climb again and always moving forward.

4. **Growth has certain characteristics common at particular stages:**

**Birth to two years: "Can I trust you?"** Most of us feel pretty secure with babies, it's the children that drive us wild! Infancy is often called the age of trust. The infant is completely dependent on others to provide his needs. If they are met, he learns to trust his environment. He needs tender loving care. Talk to him, play with him, he's perfectly delightful - - don't worry about spoiling. Research has shown that it's the child who hasn't gotten enough attention or gets attention only when the adult feels like giving it that displays what we have called "spoiled" behavior. Encourage him to try things for himself when he is ready, but remember that he wants to grow, you don't need to push him!

**The two year old: "Will you let me be me?"** The two year old typically is full of "no" and noise. He's curious, which is fortunate because he has a lot to learn. He's very possessive which makes him rather a poor playmate. Forcing him to share is useless because forced sharing is not sharing at all. He snatches and grabs, pushes, slaps, hits, pinches, bites and resorts to any other available under-hand method of getting his own way. This means he needs supervision when he is playing with others, and one child at a time is about all he can handle. He's changeable. He may scream for a cracker and not eat it when you give it to him; he may clamor for a toy and indifferently toss it aside when he gets it; he is all "me do" one minute and "you do" the next. Making a choice is agony for him and he can dawdle forever. He needs the security of limits but he needs freedom, too. He must have an opportunity to develop his will and not always expect defeat.

**The three year old: "Will you notice me?"** The three year old is fairly peaceful. He generally tries to please, he can accept suggestions much better than the two year old, and he can make choices. The three year old is much more "civilized" than the two year old. He likes approval and will seek adult attention and sympathy. The ability to share and take turns appears. He plays well with one or two children, and even when conflicts occur he is often able to handle them without adult help. He still enjoys solitary play a great deal of the time. He is boastful. He can show extreme jealousy of a new baby and often reverts to baby behavior when tired. He is beginning to be imaginative and loves to talk.

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