

Toddlers — 3 Years Old

Children of this age are almost as open to the world as the newest babies are. Their consciousness streams out into the world and they ARE the dog, the tree, the train, the lake. And the whole world streams right back into them.

So we need to take great care in what we expose them to — do we want them to be Spiderman or a Teletubbie? Or would we rather like them to learn what it means to be a human being?

With a bit of planning and forethought, we can create an environment that is worthy of imitation, that holds and gives form to the child's need for activity and which nurtures her senses.

The number one ingredient is time — we need the time to be able to integrate a child of this age into our lives and time to SLOW DOWN. Exploring mud puddles, floating sticks down a brook, taking all of the pots and pans out of the cupboards and examining them — these are the things little children of this age need to do and they need unrushed, unstressed, unscheduled time to just do it.

The rosebud has not opened very far. The child is able to separate a bit, to leave you briefly and then to come back. It's a vital time in the rosebud's development and a parent's job is to create the form for the rosebud to follow, to give it a template, as it were, to build upon. And so when I talk about "integrating our children into our lives" I'm opening things up for grave misunderstanding. The point is to create a healthy busy-but-relaxed productive home-based life — and to include children in it as much as possible. It does not mean dragging our toddlers to the mall, to this, that and the other place, to constantly be changing our schedules and to basically act like we're still wild and crazy young adults — just with a small other that needs to come along.

Life with a toddler — 3 year old means:

- Long unhurried walks every day, taking the same route, seeing the same things.
- Baking, helping with cooking and cleaning, being involved through song and rhyme as we care for the house and yard.
- Regular mealtimes, naptimes and bedtimes with the same routine, same verse and the same simple, repetitive story for weeks on end!

So it means ... repetition. Do the same things over and over and over again. Little children thrive on this and it is so healthy for them, building up their experience and grounding them, instead of developing the nervous stimulation-hungry children often created by our