

Stage of Exploration: 18 months to 3 years - Who are you? and What is this?

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February 20, 2023



Coach Myrna--February 20, 2023

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With a secure attachment and connection to parents, the child's energy turns to exploring the world around them. This stage is all about answering the questions, "Who are you?" and "What is this?" An important developmental part of this stage is learning that they are a distinct being, separate from their parents.

The ability for the child to take this step is rooted in the strong bond the child has already established with their parents. Throughout our lives, connection and attachment are essential elements for happiness. We never

outgrow the need to belong.

Many label this stage as "the terrible twos" and sometimes parents see it as the age of aggression or the era of **NO!** For the young child, this is an essential stage to establish themselves and their own power. Child begins a love affair with the world, emerging from the protective parents' cocoon eager to explore and discover all that is around them.

It is a time of balance for the parent--letting them go but not too much. Boundaries need to be set, both to protect the child from any physical harm and to increase the comfort of the parent. As with any stage, if the parent finds that they have a strong react to their child's compulsion to explore, it may be that they have some wounding around their own exploration stage and now, have the opportunity to discover and healing along with their child.

What the child needs:

- Parents need to begin letting go but not too much—allow exploration within safety
- They need boundaries that protect the child (and support the parents' feelings of them being safe)
- This is a time of pushing away from the parent but still wanting them nearby-presence.
- They need encouragement, presence but opportunities to explore and discover.
- As a preschool and kindergarten teacher, I often had to help parents understand that young child need to be allowed to get dirty--exploring the outdoors, mud, fingerpainting and more. This exploration is much more important that keeping clean and looking tidy.

If you would like some support in your parenting, check out the next parenting

small group online that I will be offering on Thursday evenings beginning March 2: www.coachmyrna.org/7gifts.html

To purchase my book on
Amazon: www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09L7KS5VH

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.