

## **How to Survive Parenting - Summing Up the First Two Years**

*By Mike Witzky*

In other articles I have discussed the first two years of a baby's development. There is a great deal of learning that occurs during the first two years for both the child and the parent. These years are very important because they prepare the child with the basics and set the stage for the next stage, the toddler years. If I were to sum up the two most important aspects of the first two years I would have to say: First, shower your baby with love and praise. A baby just can't be shown too much love and praise. Praise your baby for all of the little things they do and learn. We clap and cheer when our one-year-old grandchild accomplishes even the littlest feat. He will look up at us beaming with pride. Second, provide a stimulating environment. Hang a mobile in the crib, have simple toys that are colorful and make noise. You don't have to spend a lot of money for these things. Yard sales are great places to find these items and babies aren't hard on their toys. Used baby toys usually work just fine. Given a stimulating environment and be patient parents and babies will learn quickly.

As babies move from age one to age two you will begin to see the first stages of the baby becoming an individual. They begin the journey of testing the environment and separating from mom and dad by crawling and walking. At this juncture not only do babies begin to develop a sense of self, but their social world expands as they interact with a larger group of individuals.

The baby's sense of itself as separate from mom emerges gradually over the first few months. One of the clearest ways to see this is in the way a baby interacts with the mirror. Around the first year a baby will begin to note that the image in the mirror is her. Put a hat on her while she is looking in the mirror and she will reach to her head and take it off. A parent becomes less of a toy to the baby and more of a teacher, organizing the toddler's play to be safe, varied, educational and fun. A Harvard study concluded that, "Toddlers who are rich in environment and parental stimulation tend to become intelligent, and self-motivated 3-year-olds."

We will, over the next few articles, move into the play years from two to five years of age. During these years the child will learn to master play and develop motor skills that will increase their coordination and mastery over many new tasks. Parents will be challenged to keep up with this rapid developmental period with its many new challenges.

If you think your child may benefit from professional assistance, please go to the "*Find a Service Provider*" section of the BHG Web site <http://www.bhg.org> to locate a behavioral healthcare agency in your county.

### **About the author:**

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