



HOW TO...

care for families during the 2nd year of life

Sikunye seeks to equip and support churches to care for families in the First Thousand Days (FTD). This reflection is part of a series of workshops hosted by Sikunye, discussing how to support families in the different stages of FTD.

Listen to audio recording [here](#)

Watch the video recording [here](#)

what is happening in this 2nd year?

To truly 'see' mom, dad and caregiver, we need to understand what is happening in this busy 2nd year of life; juggling toddler, work, and many other demands. Young children in this stage are developing quickly, learning to walk, and talk. Learning the first few words starts to open a whole new world and ends a lot of guessing games, which can be exciting for parents. The more parents talk to their child, the more words they learn. Toddlers are learning confidence in their ability to communicate and be social, mimicking everything around them.



In this year, they are enjoying their increase in independence as they eagerly explore the world around them. At the same time, they are still very reliant on running back into moms' arms – needing a consistent, safe space to return to.

Often this time is referred to as the “terrible two's” (from before 18months). As much as the toddlers are testing out different behaviours and doing things that might feel exhausting and infuriating, they aren't “terrible” or “naughty”. In this stage they don't yet understand right from wrong or have the self-control to stop themselves from doing what they want, even if they've been told countless times what is and isn't okay. So, parents need to choose their battles and decide what is important to focus on and be consistent with.

This is the time to practice **positive parenting**. Making use of positive words, positive actions, and positive thoughts. It is a time to learn to remain calm, whilst loving their child as they push limits and test boundaries. Toddlers experience BIG emotions which they are still learning to put words to.

“Your child has made the transformation from the tiny stranger who came home with you from the hospital to a self-confident, opinionated person who takes up more space than any two adults combined.”

[Zero to Three \(2000\) The Magic of Everyday Moments: 12- 15 onths \(pg3\)](#)

coping with emotions

We can encourage mom to remember:

- Feelings are natural and normal
- We don't have to call feelings good/bad – but it is healthy to learn to cope with them
- There are many negative ways to deal with feelings (e.g. alcohol, drugs, harming yourself). It is important mom gets help if she is doing something to hurt herself or baby (look at our [Useful Contacts](#) resource)
- When a toddler is frustrated and throws a tantrum, it does not mean the child is being naughty – so remind mom that her child is good, and to find the reasons for why he/she is reacting this way.

Ask mom the “**coping with my emotions**” questions as a conversation starter:

- When have I felt like this?
- When I feel like this, where can I go where I feel safe?
- Who can I talk to about how I feel?
- When I feel like this, what can I do to comfort myself?

Remember: to see mom; where she is at, how she is coping. Are you listening to her and dad and not just throwing advice at them? Are you encouraging mom to look for positive ways of coping?

ideas for how church communities can support/help families in this stage

- Starting or **joining a mom's groups** or moms and tots' group: this peer support is helpful for mom to not feel alone, to hear from other moms how they are coping

and to build friendships. In these groups, moms can share ideas, experts can be invited in to speak about helpful topics to assist where moms are struggling. These can be safe, encouraging spaces for moms (and dads), as well as spaces where moms can share if they are not coping (refer to parents to a professional if they are not coping).



- Finding other ways to **equip and prepare families for this stage** (look at our [events & workshops](#) page for training opportunities)
- Finding ways to care for and **invest in the marriage relationship** like offering to babysit so that the couple can connect or start a couples' support group at church or run an expectant couple's courses.
- Assisting families to **create a daily routine** for the toddler and household. See movement guide - [A healthy 24-hour day](#) (screen time, movement and other advice for children based on age groups)
Encourage mom and dad in the busyness of the day to intentionally find **every day magical moments** with their child – even if it is 5min a day to keep the bond strong. These moments can be while doing chores around the house, feeding, bathing, getting dressed (<https://www.zerotothree.org/>). They can also be finding 5mins to sit the child on your lap to read a picture book. Toddlers are learning from their home environment and are needing love, eye-contact and undivided attention from those that matter most – mom and dad. The [Vroom App](#) – has lots of age-appropriate ideas for everyday activities and play.
- This week encourage mom to **plan one “adventure”** with baby - something fun, and out of the ordinary – like a picnic or making something together or going to visit the library or a walk in a new place. Ask her to tell you how it goes.
- **Pray** for and with parents in this season.

resources to care well for mom and dad

- Sikunye blog on journey with parents in this stage: [Toddler years \(12 – 24 months\)](#)
- [How to positively affirm and encourage mom and dad](#)
- [What if mom or dad are struggling? What can I do?](#)
- [Create a welcoming space](#) as a church.