

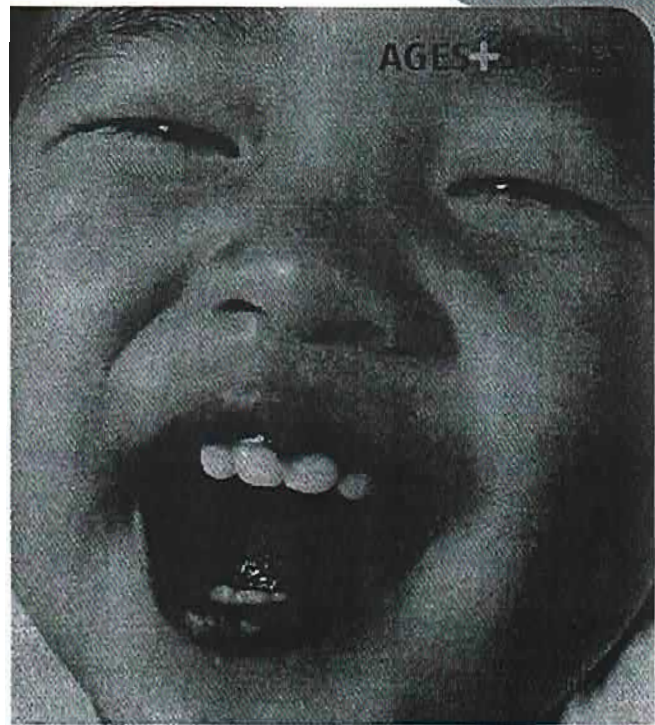
Learning about feelings

AGES 1-2 Don't be surprised if your the-world-revolves-around-me 2-year-old starts to look distressed when another kid cries, or to rub your arm when you feel blue. Recognizing other people's emotions is your child's first step to developing empathy, says Debbie Glasser, Ph.D., founder of NewsForParents.org, an online source for new research on kids and families. Ways you can help him along and lay the groundwork for things such as sharing and apologizing:

- **Name emotions**—even when you're not sure your child understands completely. You might say, "You have a big smile on your face. You must be happy to see me!" This'll help develop his "feelings vocabulary," says Glasser.
- **Don't dismiss your child's feelings.** Saying things like "You're not scared. Everything's all right" can be confusing, and it won't help him learn how to feel better.
- **Tell him that all emotions are fine.** It's what you do with them that matters. For instance, "It's okay to be mad that

Ethan ate your cookie, but it's not okay to hit him."
 ■ **Point out how other people feel.** Characters in books are good for this: "The dog in the story looks sad because someone took

his favorite bone."
 ■ **Don't worry if he forgets that other people have feelings, too.** It'll be years before he fully develops empathy.
 —LINDA FORMICHELLI



Speaking her own language

Nonsense words

Dori Kaplan, 3, gleefully extends a fistful of seashells to her mom. "Want some ficky?" she proudly asks. "She can say 'shells,' but they're 'ficky' to her," says her mom, Debbie, of Foster City, CA.

Toddlers who make up words are like

- babies who babble. They're trying out sounds—and learning from them. Your role:
- **Don't worry about correcting her.** There's no need to repeat back the right word—she knows what it is, says Lois Cook, a speech-language pathologist in Mt. Kisco, NY. Getting creative helps her better understand how real words work.
- **Play along.** It's more important for her to experience the give-and-take of a conversation than to stick to words actually found in Webster's.
- **Help her be clear.** You may need to point out when her words are confusing to other people. Say, "Your aunt didn't know what you meant when you said 'ficky.' What can you say so she'll understand?"
- **Enjoy it while it lasts.** Jot her favorite nonsense words down in her baby book: By the time she heads to kindergarten, they'll be all but forgotten.

—JEANNETTE MONINGER