As 12-month-old Mikey sits playing with toys a few feet from his mother, his attention is suddenly captured by a large wooden puzzle piece. It is a bright orange carrot with a cluster of emerald green leaves. Mikey grasps the wooden carrot with widened eyes. Then, in a smooth motion, he turns and extends the piece toward his mother. “Ya-ka!” he says with a broad smile. “Yes, sweetie, that’s a carrot,” Christine answers, smiling in return. “Do you like carrots?” “Ya-ka!” Mikey repeats happily.

A little more than a year later Mikey is with his mother at the university child study laboratory. Mikey has been presented with a series of problems to solve. The final problem is difficult. It requires him to weigh down a long board in order to lift candy through a hole in a Plexiglas box and hold the candy up long enough so he can get it (see photo on p. 284). Mikey attacks the problem eagerly, but it is beyond his cognitive abilities. He promptly calls upon Christine for help. She gives him clues and leads him step-by-step to see that he must weigh down the board with a large wooden block. Mikey cooperates with her suggestions and is ecstatic when he gets the candy. “I take it out!” he exclaims proudly.

Mikey has shown dazzling development in one year. At age 2, he is able not only to talk and solve quite challenging problems, but also to interact with others on a much more mature level than at age 1. The new social and emotional capacities that emerge during toddlerhood and the changes underlying them are a major subject of this chapter. We also explore how the quality of the parent-child relationship that formed during infancy paves the way for the adaptations the child makes during toddlerhood.

Developmentalists have increasingly recognized the importance of the toddler period. In the first 12 months, the regulation of excitement, emotions, and behavior is orchestrated by caregivers, though the infant plays an ever more active role. In the preschool period, children are expected to begin to regulate and control themselves. The toddler period is the transition during which control begins to be transferred from the parent to the child.

Toddlerhood is a period of other major developments as well. As you discovered in Chapter 7, important cognitive changes occur, especially the emergence of language and other forms of symbolic thought. There also are dramatic changes in the parent-child relationship. During toddlerhood, children move from almost complete dependence on their parents toward greater self-reliance. As toddlers become motivated to exert their own will, parents must learn to impose control when needed while still fostering independence and growth. Since this is also the period when children first develop a rudimentary sense of self, the way parents handle the issue of autonomy at this time can greatly influence children’s self-esteem and ultimately their capacity for flexible self-control.

In addition to moving toward greater self-reliance, toddlers start to acquire the rules, standards, and values of their society. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this important process is called socialization (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998; Maccoby, 1992). At first, socialization simply involves responding to the expectations parents and others in authority hold. In time, however, the child begins to internalize these standards—to incorporate them into the self (Grusec and Kuczynski, 1997). This second phase in the socialization process takes place in the preschool years and beyond, but it builds on experiences in toddlerhood (Kochanska and Thompson, 1997). Learning the rules within the family (or within the daycare setting) paves the way for more general respect for social order.

As children become more mobile, and as their learning of language opens up new means of communication, most parents in Western cultures greatly increase the demands they impose. Because children can now get into things and can understand the word no, parents start establishing rules. It has been reported that young toddlers (11 to 17 months) experience on average one prohibition from an adult every nine minutes (Power and Chapieski, 1986). At the same time, toddlers are weaned from the breast or bottle, and not long thereafter toilet training begins. In other words, during the toddler period, parents begin to expect compliance with social norms.

Socialization:
The process by which children acquire the rules, standards, and values of a culture.
To summarize, toddlers in Western culture face two important tasks:
To move from near-total dependence on their parents toward greater self-reliance, and
To begin complying with social rules and expectations.

Although children around the world confront these same two tasks, cultures vary in how the tasks are presented and how rapidly they are carried out (Rogoff et al., 1993). In some cultures—for example, in rural Filipino communities (Whiting and Edwards, 1988) and in Samoa (Mead, 1925/1939)—children are indulged fully until weaning and then rapidly socialized. In North America, the demands parents make regarding independence and compliance change gradually. Nevertheless, by about age 5, children are expected to do many things for themselves, to exert considerable control over their impulses, and to have a sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

In this chapter you will learn much more about the major developments of toddlerhood. We begin by exploring two views of how the process of socialization occurs. To provide a more detailed idea of what children this age are like, we then examine the major ways toddlers differ from infants: their increased autonomy from parents and competence in social interaction, their broader range of emotions, and their more sophisticated understanding of the self and others. Next we turn to parent-child relations during toddlerhood, focusing on the role parents play in encouraging toddlers’ development. This leads to a discussion of individual adaptations, the roots of personality in toddlers. For example, what causes one toddler to be eager and cooperative, while another is persistently prone to tantrums? Finally, we address the issue of parental neglect and abuse of toddlers; although abuse can be directed at children of any age, toddlers are particularly frequent victims.

Questions to Think About As You Read:

- How do the new behaviors and abilities of toddlers change their relationships with others?
- What can parents do to help their children successfully negotiate the developmental challenges of toddlerhood?

**TWO VIEWS OF SOCIALIZATION**

Traditionally, socialization has been thought of as a process in which rules and values are imposed on an unwilling child by parents and other adults—socialization from the *outside*. Early forms of both psychoanalytic and social learning theories adopted such a view. More recently, many developmentalists have argued for a perspective that might be called socialization from the *inside*. Barbara Rogoff (1990) uses the term *appropriation* to convey the idea that children naturally take on the rules and values of their culture as part of their participation in relationships with caregivers. Let’s look more closely at these two views of socialization.

**Socialization from the Outside**

In his early work, Freud saw the infant as a seething mass of biological drives and impulses. Society’s job was to curb these innate impulses and channel them in acceptable directions. If parents blocked the expression of biological drives to a moderate degree, the child would learn to redirect this energy toward socially desirable goals. The end result would be compliance with the parents’ wishes in order to maintain their love and nurturance. Freud called this redirecting of blocked biological drives *sublimation*. As long as the child was not excessively thwarted and overwhelmed by anxiety or anger, Freud believed, sublimation was a positive process.

Early social learning theorists shared Freud’s view that social rules and values are actively imposed on children as they grow older. Some early social learning theorists suggested that...
children comply with these standards to maintain closeness with parents, who have been associated with reducing hunger and meeting other basic needs. The most common theme in the traditional social learning view, however, was the direct teaching of acceptable behavior by means of selective rewards and punishments. According to this perspective, children are rewarded for good behavior and punished for bad behavior. As a result, they learn to behave in ways approved of by their parents and others around them.

Contemporary social learning theorists put less emphasis on the direct and purposeful teaching of appropriate behavior than their predecessors did (Bandura, 1992; Mischel and Mischel, 1983). Instead, they underscore the importance of imitation and vicarious rewards and punishments that a child observes (those the child sees others experiencing). In this view, children come to behave appropriately just by being exposed to desirable behavior in others whom they love or respect and by seeing those people socially rewarded for adhering to norms and values. Maggie, for instance, may observe Christine comforting a neighbor’s child who has fallen and hurt himself. When the child’s mother arrives, she thanks Christine profusely. From these observations Maggie learns a set of actions to be used with others in distress. She also learns that kindness is the right response in such a situation and that being kind may result in gratitude and praise. Note how modern social learning theorists emphasize the cognitions, or ideas and understanding, that Maggie acquires. They believe that once Maggie knows the behaviors considered appropriate in this situation, she will naturally tend to adopt them. Maggie, like all children, wants to be socially competent, and learning society’s rules is one way of acquiring such competence. Here you can see how modern social learning theory is leaning increasingly toward the view of socialization from within.

Socialization from the Inside
Mary Ainsworth has argued persuasively that socialization emanates from inside children (Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton, 1974). She believes that in the natural course of events children want to comply with their parents’ requests and expectations (see also Waters, Kondo-Ikemura, and Richters, 1990). This desire stems from our evolution as a group-living species. It is also encouraged by the social context in which children are embedded from birth (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998).
Malcolm, for example, has become a participant in smoothly operating relationships with his caregivers early in life. His behavior is organized around DeeDee, John, and Momma Jo, who represent bases of security for him. As a toddler, Malcolm naturally wants to maintain these close and harmonious relationships (Waters et al., 1990). There is no reason to assume he will routinely resist the adults in his family or they will have to force his compliance through punishment or threat of withholding love. Malcolm enjoys pleasing them and participating in partnerships with them. They have been reliable and responsive to him, and it makes sense that he wants to be responsive to them.

Ainsworth’s research showed that most children do behave this way. Children whose caregivers were consistently responsive to them were found to be compliant as early as 12 months of age and tended to be secure in their attachments (Ainsworth et al., 1974). This tendency is also seen at age 2 (Frankel and Bates, 1990; Matas, Arcend, and Sroufe, 1978).

Most toddlers are of course negativistic at times. Even those who have secure relationships with their parents will periodically oppose parental wishes and demand their own way, at times with great intensity. For this reason, the toddler period is often called the terrible twos. As Erik Erikson (1963) argued, some negativism is a natural outcome of the toddler’s expanding capabilities coupled with the movement toward greater self-reliance. When Mikey refuses to let Christine help him up the stairs, he is showing a normal desire to exercise his newfound skills and autonomy. Ainsworth’s point is simply that a motivation toward cooperation and compliance is as natural in toddlers as the thrust toward independence is. Toddlers generally are oppositional when the adult request is counter to their own goals, not when they are seeking assistance from a parent (Matas et al., 1978; Schneider-Rosen and Wenz-Gross, 1990). When a toddler seems dedicated to thwarting his or her parents and consistently opposes or ignores most parental requests, a problem in the parent-child relationship is likely. This is not simply something in the toddler’s nature. Later in this chapter you will read about several studies that demonstrate this point. But first let’s arrive at a better picture of toddlerhood by looking at some major developments in this important period.

**MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TODDLER PERIOD**

In addition to starting to acquire the rules and values of society, there are several other important social and emotional developments in toddlerhood:

* increased independence from parents and increased self-reliance;
* increased sociability and more mature forms of social interaction;
* increased awareness of the self and other people; and
* a broader range of emotional responses.

As you read about these important developments in the toddler period, notice how each helps to fundamentally change the nature of the child’s social relationships.

**Moving Toward Independence**

One of the most obvious developmental changes in the toddler period is a decline in physical closeness to and contact with caregivers. Mobile toddlers readily separate from their caregivers to play and to explore. The distance toddlers venture from parents can be quite substantial when they are the ones who initiate the separation (Rheingold and Eckerman, 1971). Occasionally, in the course of other activities, the toddler will return to the caregiver before going off again. But more often the child will merely show a toy or vocalize across a distance, as in our opening example of Mikey at age 1. As a young infant, Mikey needed physical contact to support his explorations, but he is now relying more on psychological contact (Sroufe, 1995). Psychological contact can be maintained by interactions that do not involve physical touching. Examples are exchanges of words, smiles, and looks. Note that Mikey’s secure attachment to his parents, in toddlerhood as well as
A CLOSER LOOK

THE ORGANIZATION OF BEHAVIOR

Research has revealed that it is not simply what toddlers do or even how often they show particular behaviors that is most revealing. Rather, it is the way behaviors are combined, the particular contexts in which they take place, the sequences in which they occur, and, especially, how they are organized with respect to caregivers that tell us the most about toddlers' functioning. Specific behaviors that are apparently the same may mean very different things at different times, in different circumstances, or in different combinations. And behaviors that outwardly appear very different from each other may have similar meanings or functions in different situations or at different ages. All of these factors must be considered in looking at the organization of behavior.

For example, in a classic study Inge Bretherton and Mary Ainsworth (1974) showed that young toddlers were quite interested in unfamiliar persons. They showed toys to them and even approached them with some frequency. This did not mean, however, that these toddlers saw strangers as equivalent to their caregivers or that 12-month-olds are not wary of strangers. After they approached the strangers, the children in this study almost always immediately retreated to their mothers. This sequence revealed the complexity of their social motivations; they found the strangers interesting, but also needed reassurance from their mothers after interacting with them. Simply observing that a toddler is wary or friendly toward a stranger does not reveal very much; to understand the significance of the toddler's behavior we would need to know how the stranger was behaving, whether the child's mother was present or not, and how the same child behaved toward other familiar and unfamiliar people in similar situations.

In another study, researchers looked at the play of 18-month-olds in two different conditions (Carr, Dabbs, and Carr, 1975). One was a typical playroom situation in which the caregiver sat in a chair watching the toddler. In the other, a screen was placed between the child and caregiver. The amount of play was greatly reduced in this circumstance. These toddlers vocalized a great deal to their mothers and occasionally looked around the screen to see them. Most interestingly, when the screen was not present, the toddlers did not in fact look at their mothers very often. The mere possibility of looking at them provided enough support to encourage play in children of this age.

Finally, in a very important study, Everett Waters (1978) demonstrated remarkable stability in patterns of attachment between 12 and 18 months. But it was not specific behaviors, such as contact seeking, vocalizing, crying, or looking at the mother, that were stable. For example, relationships that were secure remained secure, but toddlers manifested these differently than infants did. Most 12-month-olds were distressed by separations and strongly sought contact with their mothers upon reunion. They were readily comforted by this contact, which is why they were classified as secure. When these children were 18 months old, they were not nearly as distressed as they had been six months earlier, and they usually required only brief physical contact with their caregivers following brief separation. They manifested their security in the relationship primarily through positive greetings and active initiation of interaction. Even though there were great changes in specific behaviors across this time period, there was similarity in the quality of the behavioral organization with respect to the caregiver.

infancy, supports his explorations and mastery of the environment. But much more than in infancy, he is now able to draw support from cues across a distance, and this ability in turn makes it possible for him to be more independent (Enede, 1992). This is an example of how the underlying organization of a child's behavior with regard to the caregiver can remain consistent over time, even though specific behaviors may change (see the box above).

Compared with infants, toddlers also show less distress in a laboratory setting when caregivers briefly leave them, and they settle down more quickly when their caregiver returns (Sroufe, 1995). Apparently, by age 18 months, most children have acquired the expectation that contact with their caregiver will alleviate distress, making it possible for them to be comforted quickly. Moreover, when a caregiver prepares a toddler for separation by increasing interaction beforehand or by explaining the departure, the child is much less distressed (Lollis, 1990). Such efforts to reduce separation distress have little impact on infants, due in part to their cognitive and linguistic limitations.

At the same time toddlers are becoming more comfortable with separations from their caregivers, they are also actively experimenting with mastery over objects. Recall the incident in which 13-month-old Maggie explored the effects of throwing objects down the stairs. We pointed out that Maggie was not just repeating an action, but was actively experimenting
with cause and effect. Through active experimentation Maggie learns to integrate her various capabilities in new and purposeful ways. She also learns it is fun to explore and manipulate objects and the possibilities for exploration are endless. Maggie’s motivation to discover is fed by these experiences. Perhaps most important of all, she learns that she can do things, that she can be in charge. Charles Wener (1976) calls this executive competence. As toddlers like Maggie begin to understand they can use things for their own ends, they start to develop a sense of personal agency, of knowing they are autonomous forces in the world.

Executive competence does not apply only to objects. Toddlers are quite capable of using adults, especially caregivers, as props for problem solving and mastery (Matas et al., 1978). They look to them for help as well as for information, as Mikey does with Christine to solve the lever problem in our chapter opening. An analysis of the coping strategies used by toddlers in challenging situations showed that most of them involve turning to the caregiver for support and assistance (Parritz, 1989).

The Growth of Sociability
Supported by rapid cognitive advances, children become more sociable and competent in their interactions with adults and other children during the toddler period (Rubin, Bukowski, and Parker, 1998). Compared with infants, toddlers have a greatly expanded capacity to observe and interpret other people’s actions, to imitate others, and to maintain sequences of social interaction. They are also keenly interested in interacting with others, especially with peers.

Sharing Experiences
One characteristic behavior of toddlers is their constant effort to share objects they discover with others. Toddlers persistently point at things, talk about them, and bring them to others for inspection (Emde, 1992). Such behavior is important both because it illustrates the general sociability of toddlers and because it reveals an increased social awareness and rudimentary ability to take another person’s perspective. When Malcolm deliberately seeks out Momma Jo to show her some newfound treasure, he must understand that just because he sees the object, he cannot assume she sees it too, unless her attention is directed to it. Increased social awareness is also illustrated by the fact that toddlers smile much more often when another person is attentive to them than when no one is looking. This shows that they recognize that communication requires a receptive partner (Scanlon-Jones and Raag, 1989).

Related to the constant communication about discoveries is the toddler’s frequent sharing of positive emotions with caregivers, called affective sharing (Emde, 1992; Saarni, Mumme, and Campos, 1998; Stroufe, 1995). When Mikey turns, smiles exuberantly, and

Executive competence:
The child’s feeling that he or she is an autonomous force in the world, with the ability to influence the outcome of events.

Affective sharing:
The toddler’s sharing of positive emotions with the caregiver.
Part 3 Toddlerhood

extends the wooden puzzle piece toward his mother, happily exclaiming “Ya-ka!,” he is doing more than merely calling attention to an object; he is also sharing his pleasure. Toddlers show things to a variety of people, but automatic displays of newfound objects accompanied by happy smiles and vocalizations are directed almost exclusively to attachment figures.

Social Referencing

Another development in toddlers is the ability to use a caregiver’s facial expressions or tone of voice as a cue for how to deal with a novel situation. This reading of another person to guide one’s own behavior is called social referencing (Emde, 1992). In a typical study of social referencing, 12-month-olds were enticed across a low table to the edge of a thick sheet of glass raised a foot above the floor (Sorce, Emde, and Klinnert, 1983). As the child peered over the edge of this variation of the visual cliff (see Figure 4.5), the mother was instructed either to smile broadly at the child or to show exaggerated fear. Most of the children whose mothers smiled crossed over the glass, but none of the children whose mothers showed fear were willing to take this risk. The youngsters apparently took their cues about the safety of the glass from their mothers’ facial expressions.

Research shows that toddlers look to their caregivers as a social reference largely in ambiguous situations in which the right response is not clear (Rosen, Adamson, and Bakeman, 1992). In one experiment, Megan Gunnar showed children ages 12 to 13 months a pleasant, an ambiguous, or a frightening toy. She asked each child’s mother either to smile, suggesting the situation was positive, or to adopt a neutral face. As expected, a mother’s smile encouraged play with the ambiguous toy, but it had no effect on behavior toward the other two playthings. The children consistently avoided the frightening toy regardless of a smile from the mother, and they generally approached the pleasant toy even if the mother looked neutral (Gunnar and Stone, 1984).

You can see the role of ambiguity in social referencing in our story of Malcolm. When he and Momma Jo are accosted by the group of boys, Malcolm doesn’t know what to make of the situation at first. He therefore takes his cues from Momma Jo’s face and voice to interpret the encounter as a negative one. This responsiveness to caregivers’ emotional signals increases rapidly between the ages of 1 and 2 years (Emde, 1992; Walden and Baxter, 1989).

Interaction Between Toddlers

Part of moving out into the social world is the toddler’s increased interest in interacting with other young children (Rubin et al., 1998). In the period between 15 and 24 months, children develop the ability to behave in a complementary manner with a peer. This allows the emergence of games between toddlers, often rooted in imitation (Brownell, 1990; Eckerman et al., 1989). One toddler does something, the other repeats the action, and the imitation continues back and forth, much to the delight of both children. There is much more complexity and positive emotion in interactions between toddlers than in interactions between infants (Brownell, 1990). Moreover, 2-year-olds clearly distinguish among playmates, and they interact with familiar partners in more complex ways than with unfamiliar partners (Rubin et al., 1998).

Most of the interactions between young toddlers are centered on objects (both children playing with the same set of blocks, for example) (Bronson, 1981). But two young toddlers who are playing with the same object rarely focus on the same theme (one may be using the blocks to build a tower, while the other is building an unrelated road). At three years of age, shared themes among playmates become somewhat more prominent, and social pretend play, in contrast to solitary pretend play, emerges (Howes, Unger, and Seidner, 1989). Social pretend play involves children acting out interrelated roles, such as doctor and patient or teacher and student. These new developments reflect the fact that 3-year-olds are much more capable of coordinated play than 2-year-olds are (Rubin et al., 1998).

The foundations for peer relationships and friendships are laid down in toddler interactions and the caregiver-infant interactions that preceded them. However, toddlers cannot yet be said to form true continuing relationships or genuine friendships with peers. Not until later in the preschool period do children start to differentiate friends from playmates, showing more reciprocity and more positive emotions with friends (Rubin et al., 1998). Along
with this change will come the beginning of the concept of friend and an understanding that other people, their peers included, have rights as well as intentions (Smetana, 1989).

**Awareness of the Self and Others**

Although self-concept and a sense of identity evolve throughout life, knowledge of one’s own existence as a separate individual emerges clearly in the toddler period. Children at this age become aware that their own behaviors and intentions are distinct from those of others. In this sense, we can say awareness of self emerges during toddlerhood, hand in hand with a more mature understanding of other people’s selves.

**Awareness of Self**

Several lines of research suggest the existence of self-awareness in toddlers. First, self-awareness can be inferred from what we know about cognitive development. If toddlers can form mental representations of objects, they should be able to represent themselves mentally as people and actors.

Self-awareness in toddlers is also revealed by studies of children’s reactions to their images in a mirror. Using a procedure introduced by Gordon Gallup in research with chimpanzees, children were shown their faces in a mirror (Amsterdam, 1972). Then, unobtrusively, a dab of rouge was placed on each child’s face and the child was shown the mirror again. If the child reached directly to the spot of rouge, not in the reflection but on his or her own face, the child was assumed to know that he or she was the person in the mirror. This reaction was common by about 20 months of age and sometimes appeared by 18 months or a little earlier. Subsequent researchers have confirmed these findings. In one study, three-quarters of children between the ages of 21 and 24 months touched their rouge-marked noses when looking into a mirror, thus showing self-recognition. In contrast, only one-quarter of children ages 15 to 18 months and no children ages 9 to 12 months responded this way (Lewis and Brooks, 1978).

Self-recognition is closely tied to general cognitive development. The age at which a child with Down syndrome starts touching his or her rouge-marked nose when looking in a mirror is directly related to the child’s degree of mental retardation. The more severe the retardation, the more delayed the youngster is in showing this sign of self-awareness (Cicchetti and Beeghly, 1990).

The final indication of self-awareness in toddlers is the addition of “I” to their vocabularies, coupled with clear examples of self-assertion and will (e.g., Breger, 1974). “No! I
do it!” Mikey says emphatically, squirming to get down from Christine’s arms and climb the stairs by himself. During the toddler period children have a heightened awareness of their own intentions and often are determined to direct their own activity (Sander, 1975).

**Understanding of Others**

Closely related to the emergence of a sense of self is a changing understanding of others. One clever study illustrates advances in understanding desires of the self and desires of another. When an experimenter pretended to dislike crackers by showing a disgusted expression, but to love broccoli, 18- to 19-month-olds offered broccoli to them, even though they themselves much preferred crackers (Repacholi, cited in Saarni et al., 1998).

Dennie Wolf (1982) has suggested three major steps in the development of this understanding. In the first step, around age 1, children recognize that others can do things they cannot, but they do not yet grasp that others are agents in their own right. Wolf gives the example of a mother initiating a game of peekaboo by covering her face with her hands. Her 1-year-old son responds by covering his own face, and when he lifts his hands away, he is surprised to find his mother’s face is still covered. It is as if he has blurred the distinction between the two sets of hands and the two faces.

During their second year children reach step 2 in their understanding of others. Now they grasp the boundaries between their own actions and other people’s, which allows them to engage in genuine turn-taking. However, their grasp of the concept other is still limited. Rather than waiting for mother to remove her hands from her face, the toddler at this age may pull her hands away for her, as if the child does not yet have a mature grasp of the two independent roles involved in this game.

By the end of the second year, step 3 emerges: a genuine understanding that people are independent agents. At this stage, children come to realize that each actor in a social exchange is playing a role separate from the others. Now toddlers can finally play a real game of hide-and-seek. At a younger age they are likely to jump out of hiding before they are found, as if the distinction between hider and seeker is blurred in their minds. By age 2, waiting to be found may still be difficult for them, but at least they run in the opposite direction when the seeker comes near. This action implies that they recognize the separateness of people’s roles, intentions, and aims.

This new recognition underlies the battles of will that tend to arise during toddlerhood. It also underlies the compromises arrived at when parents set limits. In our story, Mikey goes to bed when his mother tells him, but he insists on climbing the stairs by himself. He understands that he and his mother have independent wishes. As a result, their social interactions are more sophisticated.

A more advanced understanding of others affects interactions with peers as well. During the second year, toddlers come to understand the possession rule: the idea that if someone else already has possession of an object that person has some claim on it. As a result, 24-month-olds try less often to take an object from a peer than do 18-month-olds, and they are more likely to negotiate over the object (Brownell and Brown, 1985). Twenty-four-month-olds are also more likely to relinquish an object when a peer who was playing with it earlier tries to take it away.

**Emotional Changes**

All the developments discussed so far are related to changes in the emotional capacities of toddlers (Saarni et al., 1998). A more mature awareness of other people, for example, is related to a new sensitivity to others’ feelings, just as a growing awareness of the self is related to the emergence of new emotions involving self-consciousness, such as shame. The emotional developments of toddlerhood also make possible a new level of relating to other people and play a key role in the child’s beginning acceptance of social rules and standards.

**Feelings, Social Sensitivity, and the Beginnings of Morality**

By the middle of the second year, toddlers show a sensitivity to social demands—understanding, for example, that certain activities are forbidden (Kochanska, 1993). They may
stop a forbidden behavior, hesitate, start and then stop, or, at times, engage in the behavior while looking at the caregiver. The beginnings of behavioral control, which follow the dawning awareness of standards for behavior, are considered a hallmark of the toddler period.

Such changes are guided by feelings available to toddlers (Saarni et al., 1998). For example, toddlers show an awareness of things that are not as they should be (Emde et al., 1991; Stipek, Recchia, and Mcclintic, 1992). This awareness is revealed in expressions of uncertainty or distress regarding a flawed object, or distress when an external standard is violated or cannot be met, as when they cannot do something they are told to do. Moreover, they begin to be sensitive to others who are in pain, for the first time approaching those who are distressed (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). This is an early sign of empathy.

At this stage, however, these emotional reactions remain quite primitive. They are usually undifferentiated—that is, similar regardless of the particular situation. The same reaction occurs when a parental rule is violated as when a performance standard is not met (as when peas persistently roll off a fork and onto the floor). These reactions reflect a generalized response to adult disapproval, best characterized as general arousal, often with a strong quality of uncertainty (Kochanska, 1993), and sometimes combining interest, upset, and amusement (e.g., Dunn and Munn, 1985).

By the end of the second year toddlers are responsive to negative emotional signals from others (Emde, 1992; Saarni et al., 1998). They also react with specific negative feelings to their own transgressions, showing distress or deviation anxiety when they are doing, or are about to do, something forbidden (Kochanska, 1993). In experiments involving staged mishaps (juice spilled on a new shirt, a broken doll), toddlers show a variety of negative emotions, along with verbalized concern and attempts at reparations (Cole, Barrett, and Zahn-Waxler, 1992). In more naturalistic research situations, they show spontaneous self-corrections when they catch themselves doing something bad, self-corrections that are often mediated by language (Londerville and Main, 1981). They might, for example, say “No, can’t” and get back down from a counter they had been told not to climb on. The standards involved in such situations are always externally imposed by adults, and the toddler’s adherence to them almost always requires an adult presence. Still, awareness that there are standards and sensitivity to the reactions of others represent the early beginnings of conscience and morality (Emde et al., 1991; Kochanska and Thompson, 1997).

**Changing Emotions and New Emotions**

During the toddler period some previously existing emotions are fundamentally changed. High levels of emotional arousal are now less likely to make a child behave in a disorganized way. As a result, toddlers become able to initiate and sustain raucous games. Mikey, for instance, can laugh uproariously while getting Frank to chase him, yet he is still able to keep running and decide where to flee.

Another factor underlying a fundamental change in existing emotions during the toddler period is the child’s increasingly mature ability to differentiate the self and others. Mikey is aware not only that Christine is a specific separate person (as he knew at age 10 months), but also that he too is a separate, independent agent with a will of his own. This awareness gives him new ways of expressing both anger and joy toward his caregivers. Now he may deliberately oppose Christine when he becomes angry, expressing his defiance as a way of asserting his independent will. He may also run up and hug her even when he isn’t upset, thereby showing his affection as a separate person toward her as a separate person. This is the prototype of love.

Important new emotions also arise during the toddler period, emotions that were totally absent in infancy. These include shame and what may be termed positive self-evaluation, a forerunner of pride. Shame is the sense of the self as exposed, vulnerable, and bad (Erikson, 1963). It is the toddler’s new understanding of the self that makes shame possible. But because the sense of self at this age is still quite fragile, a toddler who is punished (even for some very specific misdeed) is vulnerable to feeling that the entire self is dissolving. This is especially true when the punishment is harsh or degrading. By the same token, toddlers are capable of feeling an all-encompassing sense of pleasure with the self, a cockiness that is qualitatively different from anything they displayed as babies. When Momma Jo praises 2-year-old

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**Deviation anxiety:**
The distress toddlers experience over doing something forbidden.

**Shame:**
An emotion in which the self feels exposed, vulnerable, and bad.

**Positive self-evaluation:**
An emotion in toddlers that is the forerunner of pride.
Malcolm for putting on his own socks, his whole self seems to swell with joy. Later in the preschool period, when children begin to experience such emotional reactions in response to meeting standards they themselves have set, we see more genuine pride.

Michael Lewis calls the new emotions that emerge during the toddler period and the preschool years the **self-conscious emotions**, or secondary emotions, to distinguish them from the qualitatively different basic emotions of infancy, such as joy, fear, anger, and surprise (e.g., Lewis, 1992; Lewis, Alessandri, and Sullivan, 1992). Unlike the basic emotions, the self-conscious emotions require some objective sense of self (including a sense of the self as an agent or doer of things), as well as some understanding of standards for behavior. Lewis has found, for example, that toddlers who can recognize themselves in a mirror are much more likely to show embarrassment than those who can’t yet recognize their mirror image. Emotions such as embarrassment and shame, Lewis argues, clearly indicate an emerging sense of self, and at the same time they are critical for consolidating the self that is emerging. Experiencing connections between one’s own actions and the feelings they give rise to is central to a sense of self.

**PARENT-TODDLER RELATIONS**

All the developmental changes we have outlined dramatically influence the parent-child relationship. On the one hand, they offer parents new sources of pleasure and new avenues for communication with children. On the other hand, they create new demands and challenges for caregivers. In this section, we look at the parents’ role in the parent-toddler relationship. This sets the stage for discussing how the personalities and self-concepts of individual children begin to take shape in the toddler period.

**The Parents’ Tasks**

At every stage of development, parents must adjust their own behavior to meet the needs posed by their child’s current capacities and limitations. The rapid social, cognitive, and linguistic development of toddlerhood make this adjustment particularly challenging for parents of 1- to 3-year-olds. During the toddler period, parents face two major tasks:

- to support their child’s exploration of the world and
- to set appropriate limits for the child.

Parents carry out the first task by creating an arena in which children have space and support to develop. One way they do this is by participating in their toddlers’ efforts to communicate with language and to share joy and excitement when discovering new things. Mikey’s interactions with Frank and Christine provide good examples of this process. Frank and Christine respond to Mikey’s nonsense words as if they conveyed real meaning, and they express delight when Mikey shows them the simplest of objects. At the same time, they allow Mikey to try things on his own and push his capacities to the limit, always being available to help if he exceeds his resources. You can see this in the ways Christine handles the stair-climbing incident and helps Mikey solve the lever problem.

The second parental task, setting limits, is also critical to fostering toddlers’ development. Most developmentalists believe that providing toddlers with limits is just as important as providing them with encouragement to master new skills. If toddlers can be confident their parents will impose limits when needed, they can explore their capacities freely, testing how far they will reach. The limits reassure the toddler that parents will not let their impulses go too far. The limits therefore provide a kind of safety zone in which development can take place. One way parents set limits is through commands, comments, and questions, making use of the child’s growing comprehension of language (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998). A dramatic increase in the number of instructions from both parents occurs when the child is between 12 and 18 months old (Fagot and Kavanaugh, 1993). Toddlers have countless verbal experiences that help them learn to behave appropriately.
When a father asks, "Is that toothpaste supposed to be on the mirror?" and pauses to allow the child to answer, the child learns more than where the toothpaste goes. He or she also learns that there are constraints on behavior and that there are right and wrong things to do. In addition, as social learning theorists emphasize, toddlers learn a great deal about limits by watching parents praise, reprimand, and correct siblings (Dunn and Munn, 1986).

The support and limit-setting provided to toddlers by parents create a structure within which children can develop their abilities in all areas. In the areas of cognitive and language development, the process by which parents support the child in new tasks by offering developmentally appropriate guidance, hints, and advice is often called scaffolding (Bruner, 1975). We have already seen early examples of scaffolding in parents' structuring of social interactions with their infants (Chapter 6) and in the frequent questions typical of child-directed speech. Christine's structuring of the lever task for Mikey is another good example of scaffolding. Parental support of toddlers' exploration and problem solving can also be regarded as a process of guided self-regulation (Sroufe, 1995). During the toddler period, children become increasingly able to regulate themselves, with appropriate help and guidance from their caregivers.

Notice that what is important here is the parents' general approach toward the child, not specific child-rearing practices. For instance, there is no evidence that the specific age at which a child is weaned or toilet trained has a major impact on development (Maccoby, 1992); however, there is evidence that general quality of care, in particular the consistency with which parents set limits and provide guidance, does make a difference in how well a child fares (Crockenberg and Litman, 1990; Erikson, Egelant, and Sroufe, 1985; Frankel and Bates, 1990; Parke and Buriel, 1998; Thompson, 1998). In one study, researchers found that a combination of control and supportive guidance produced a maximum of child compliance without compromising the child's assertiveness (Crockenberg and Litman, 1990). Negative control alone led to defiance. This result supports the idea that "a young child's receptiveness to parental values is influenced not only by parental reactions to misbehavior but also by the broader emotional tone of their relationship" (Thompson, 1998, p. 81). What parents do to support and foster desirable behavior is at least as important as what they do to discourage undesirable behavior. In addition, the process of socialization from the inside—the toddler's desire to comply with parents' wishes and to accept their values and standards—is facilitated by warm, supportive family relationships.

**Changes in Caregiving During the Toddler Period**
Throughout the world the care of children often changes dramatically during the toddler period (Tronick, Morelli, and Ivey, 1992; Whiting and Edwards, 1988). In many cultures, when a child becomes mobile and stops nursing (often when a new baby is born), siblings,
sometimes quite young themselves, take on much of the responsibility for the toddler’s care and supervision. This practice is followed, for example, by the Efe foragers of central Africa (Tronick et al., 1992). In many cultures, such as that of the Gusii of East Africa, all adult kin, or even all adults in the community, assume a role in socializing children after infancy (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998; Whiting and Edwards, 1988).

Even in Western industrialized cultures, marked changes in caregiving occur during toddlerhood. One change that has been studied extensively is the father’s increasing involvement with the child. Fathers are much less involved with infants than mothers are, but this often changes somewhat during the toddler period, especially for boys (Lamb, 1997b; Parke and Buriel, 1998; Parke and Stearns, 1993). Fathers’ behavior with toddlers is often quite different from that of mothers. Fathers are less often involved in care and nurturance and more often involved in challenging toddlers and play (Lamb, 1997b). In a recent study in Germany (Grossmann and Grossmann, in press), such challenging by fathers in a playful context was related to the child’s later ability to cope well with negative feelings.

The playful style of fathers, which we illustrated with our description of Frank’s interaction with Mikey, is well suited to the child’s general orientation at this age. Since a major task for toddlers is to evolve new ways of relating to parents that are more in keeping with growing independence, the father’s input may be very helpful now. At the same time, the father’s increased involvement with and emotional support of the toddler may ease the beginnings of psychological separation from the mother. Thus, having two caregivers with somewhat different styles of interaction can have advantages for a young child.

INDIVIDUAL ADAPTATIONS: THE ROOTS OF PERSONALITY

As toddlers acquire more self-awareness and begin to experience a broader range of emotions, their individual developmental paths diverge even more than was the case in infancy. Some develop very positive attitudes and expectations about the self, while others view the self quite negatively. Some show proficiency at handling their emotions, while others tend to be overwhelmed by them. Such individual differences affect how others respond to individual children and how the children themselves respond to others, as well as to opportunities and challenges. These individual styles of responding, or patterns of adaptation, form the roots of personality.

Becoming a Separate Person

An important starting point for the development of individual adaptations in toddlerhood is what Margaret Mahler called the separation-individuation process (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975). This term refers to the child’s psychological separation from the caregiver, coupled with a growing awareness of being an individual. As children move away from the caregiver and experience doing things on their own, they increasingly realize they are independent and their actions are separate from the caregiver’s. The way the connection with the caregiver supports this progress toward greater autonomy and a sense of self has been beautifully described by the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard:

The loving mother teaches her child to walk alone. She is far enough from him so that she cannot actually support him but she holds out her arms to him. She imitates his movements, and if he totters, she swiftly bends as if to seize him, so that the child might believe that he is not walking alone. . . . Her face beckons like a reward, an encouragement. Thus, the child walks alone with his eyes fixed on his mother’s face, not on the difficulties in his way. He supports himself by the arms that do not hold him and constantly strives toward the refuge in his mother’s embrace, little suspecting that at the very same moment he is emphasizing his need of her, he is proving that he can do without her, because he is walking alone.

(1938, p. 85)
The separation-individuation process does not proceed with equal smoothness for every child. In Erikson's theory a major factor affecting how smoothly it unfolds is the way parents impose limits on the child. According to Erikson (1963), when a toddler's sense of self begins to emerge and the child confronts parental limits, there is the potential either to develop a positive sense of independence and competence or to feel shamed by parents and experience profound self-doubt. Thus, the defining issue for this stage in Erikson's theory is autonomy versus shame and doubt.

Another factor affecting how smoothly separation-individuation proceeds is the degree of basic trust the child has developed. When basic trust is strong, the toddler can seek autonomy and still feel secure. Louis Sander (1975) has described this way of reconciling toddlers' striving toward independence with their continuing need for closeness to and security from parents. He points out that toddlers do not exclusively try to achieve self-reliance. Instead, their strivings toward autonomy are balanced by bids for a continuing emotional partnership with the caregiver. The success of these bids has important psychological consequences. If toddlers know they can reclaim the former closeness with the caregiver—if they have confidence that the attachment relationship is secure and that care remains available—they will feel free to explore their capacities to the fullest (Schoore, 1994). Such confidence is a product of each child's history of interactions with the caregiver. The parent's reliability during infancy breeds a basic trust, which later enables the toddler to make initiatives toward independence.

You have seen this developmental process going well with both Mikey and Malcolm, and you can see evidence that it went well for Maggie as well. These toddlers have been able to become more autonomous while still maintaining psychological contact with their caregivers, as illustrated by Malcolm's behavior in the park with Momma Jo. Even when they do things against their parents' wishes and temporarily annoy them, they remain confident that closeness with the parents can be reclaimed. Their bids for independence do not threaten their strong emotional ties to their parents. Because their early attachment relationships were secure, they are certain of their parents' continued availability, readily reassured by them in times of stress, and accepting of the limits they have set. Like other toddlers who have had these positive experiences, Mikey and Malcolm are confident, eager, resourceful, and secure. Maggie's easy adjustment to Mikey's arrival when she was 2 and her willingness to join her parents in caring for him demonstrates her growing autonomy and her confidence in her closeness to her parents.

A more negative outcome is illustrated in our story of Meryl and can be seen in other toddlers who have experienced less secure relationships with their caregivers. When children are unduly anxious about the caregiver's availability, when autonomy is forced on them too early, or when their bids for independence are viewed negatively, self-reliance is compromised (Matas et al., 1978; Sroufe, 1995). This compromising of self-reliance can take many forms, including timidity and continued preoccupation with the caregiver, unrelenting power struggles, persistent angry interactions, lack of emotional interest in mastery, and general emotional detachment. We have described some of these reactions in Meryl.

The Influence of Parent-Child Relationships

The Attachment History

A number of studies support the view of toddler social and emotional development we have just described (Fox and Calkins, 1993; Frankel and Bates, 1990; Londerville and Main, 1981; Matas et al., 1978). These studies show a clear association between the quality of the infant-caregiver relationship and how well the child later functions as a toddler.

In one study (Matas et al., 1978), children whose attachment to their mothers had been assessed at ages 12 and 18 months were seen again at age 2 years. The researchers presented the children with a series of four problems that required the use of simple tools. The first two problems were relatively easy; one involved using a long stick to push a lure from inside a tube, for example. The final two problems were more difficult. The last was the one we described Mikey solving at the beginning of this chapter: holding down the end of
Toddlers with a history of secure attachment show enthusiasm and persistence in solving problems, such as this lever task.

a board with a large wooden block to get candy out of a deep box. This problem is beyond the capacity of almost all 2-year-olds, but in this study each child’s mother was present as a potential resource. The researchers looked at the quality of each toddler’s problem solving, including emotional responses, enthusiasm, and ability to face challenges without quickly becoming frustrated. They also looked at the child’s persistence and flexibility toward the task, and at his or her ability to call upon and accept the mother’s help when needed. At the same time, the researchers examined the timing and clarity of the mother’s clues and the degree of emotional support she provided.

The findings were striking. As a group, 2-year-olds who had been securely attached as infants (and therefore confident in their caregiver’s availability) were more enthusiastic in approaching the problems, showed more positive emotions and less frustration, were more persistent and flexible, and cooperated more with their mother to reach a solution. These differences were not related to earlier measures of temperament.

In contrast, many of the children who had experienced an insecure attachment during infancy showed a variety of maladaptive responses. Some were intermittently clingy and dependent or whiny and prone to tantrums, quickly becoming frustrated or embroiled in conflict with their mother while the problem to be solved faded into the background. This reaction was most common in children like Meryl with a history of anxious-resistant attachment. Other anxiously attached toddlers showed no enthusiasm or pleasure and little involvement in the problems. They either ignored or refused to act on their mother’s suggestions. (For instance, when a mother said “Get the block,” the child did get it but put it on the floor instead of on the board.) Such reactions were most common in children with a history of anxious-avoidant attachment.

**Ongoing Parental Support**

It would not be appropriate to say the quality of the infant-caregiver attachment caused the differences observed among the toddlers’ behavior in this study. More is involved in explaining toddlers’ adaptations than the attachment aspect of the child’s developmental history. Parental support and stimulation during the toddler period itself promote positive functioning (Frankel and Bates, 1990; Silverman and Ragusa, 1990; Wachs et al., 1993). When caregivers are emotionally available and provide consistent and clear guidance, their toddlers tend to be more eager, persistent, and resourceful.
Additionally, consistency in parental behavior across a child’s early years (Pianta, Egeland, and Erickson, 1989) makes it difficult to separate the impact of early parenting from that of later parenting (Lewis, 1997). Caregivers whose children were securely attached as infants were more likely to be supportive of their toddlers in the problem-solving situation just described (Sroufe, 1995). They tended to adjust their behavior depending on the particular demands of the situation and the child’s needs. These caregivers allowed their toddlers to proceed on their own until they approached the limits of their resources. Then they calmly increased the number of clues they offered and eventually gave direct assistance if the child signaled a need for it. In this way the parents anticipated frustration and took steps to prevent it. Research has shown that such anticipatory behavior is more effective with toddlers than waiting for full-blown problems to arise (Spiker, Ferguson, and Brooks-Gunn, 1993).

In sharp contrast to this pattern, caregivers of children with a history of anxious-avoidant attachment failed to increase the amount of help they offered as their toddlers struggled to solve the problems in the study. Many remained rather uninvolved throughout the child’s efforts, despite the increasing difficulty of the problems. The caregivers of children with a history of anxious-resistant attachment did increase the amount of help they gave, but that help became less and less appropriate and clear. Both caregiver and child became more frustrated and ineffective as the pressure of the situation mounted.

This failure to provide clear guidelines was very different from the actions of caregivers whose toddlers had been securely attached as infants. Such caregivers generally tend to be very clear in the help they give their children. In a parallel way, they are very clear in establishing limits, and they are firm in maintaining those limits once they are set. These differences in caregiver behavior during the toddler period are predictive of the child’s later functioning (Erickson et al., 1985; Spiker et al., 1993; Sroufe, 1995).

How Children Affect Their Own Adaptations

Some researchers believe that from the beginning children’s inborn tendencies heavily influence how their parents behave toward them (e.g., Scaife, 1992). In extreme cases this clearly happens. Such cases include children who are seriously ill and premature at birth (Plunkett et al., 1986), those who are born with drug addictions and other problems because their mothers abused drugs during pregnancy (Rodning, Beckwith, and Howard, 1989), or those who develop a chronic illness in their first year of life (Goldberg et al., 1996). As toddlers such children often show signs of maladaptation, such as lethargy and irritability. Early neurological damage may contribute to these outcomes. It is also possible that the serious developmental problems these children had as infants negatively affected the behavior of their caregivers, which in turn affected the children’s behavior even after the original problems had been treated.

What about children without serious developmental problems? To what extent do their characteristics affect their adaptations? Developmentalists are still debating this question. Research has established that during the toddler period various temperament characteristics (such as activity level, intensity of emotional responses, and degree of boldness or inhibition) become more stable and more consistent across situations (Matheny, 1989; Robinson et al., 1992; Rothbart and Bates, 1998; Ruff et al., 1990; Silverman and Ragusa, 1990). By the toddler period there is more agreement between parents and other observers in describing particular children. Brian Vaughn and his colleagues have suggested several interpretations for this finding (1992). Children’s behavior may simply be more clear, parents may have become better at describing their children, or the children may actually be shaped over time toward parental descriptions.

In contrast to what we saw in infancy, toddler temperament characteristics do tend to be fairly enduring and to predict similar behaviors at later ages. Toddlers who smile often and express many positive emotions, those who frequently whine and behave irritably, and those who are very timid and inhibited tend to show these same characteristics in the preschool and middle childhood years (Robinson et al., 1992; Rothbart and Bates, 1998).

During the toddler period a child’s behavior also becomes more coherent overall (Vaughn et al., 1992). For instance, security of attachment and temperament characteristics,
which are not related in infancy, are related by age 3. A securely attached older toddler tends to have many positive aspects of temperament, whereas the opposite tends to be true of an anxiously attached older toddler. It may be that by this age the attachment relationship has influenced the child’s stabilizing temperament, that temperamental differences influence attachment security at later ages, or both (Thompson, 1998).

Whatever the relation between attachment history and temperament, considering both together often gives a more complete picture of the child. Thus, toddlers who are behaviorally inhibited may generally have difficulty coping with challenges. However, this is much less the case if they are securely attached (Nachmias et al., 1996).

The clear and coherent differences in temperament that emerge among toddlers are an important part of the developmental picture. Children with different temperament characteristics may respond differently to the same situation, a phenomenon called organismic specificity (Wachs and Gruen, 1982). A toddler with a high activity level, for instance, may squirm vigorously when his mother tries to get him to sit in her lap and look at a book, whereas a more placid toddler may sit contentedly and listen to several stories being read (Gandour, 1989).

Such differences in toddlers’ responses can affect how caregivers perceive them and behave toward them. When toddlers are agreeable and compliant, caregivers tend to impose fewer limits, discipline less often, and give positive support more often. These adult responses, in turn, encourage further compliance and agreeableness in the child. Toddlers perceived as difficult, in contrast, may receive more harsh discipline from parents (Elder, Caspi, and Downey, 1986) and more negative responses in general (Rothbart and Bates, 1998; Wittmer and Honig, 1988). These responses may tend to foster the very difficulty to which they were reactions. Thus, whatever triggered the process to begin with—whether the parents’ behavior or the inborn characteristics of the child—there is a clear potential for positive or negative cycles by the toddler period. This is what is meant by the transactional model we introduced in Chapter 2 (Sameroff and Chandler, 1975). The child is influencing the parent at the same time the parent is influencing the child.

Negative cycles can take several forms. In one, toddlers who need more support and consistent handling (perhaps because of their attachment histories) are often those who are harder to care for and whose parents have more difficulty being consistent. As a result, the parents’ responses tend to perpetuate the difficult aspects of these children. In another type of negative cycle, toddlers are rather detached from their parents, and at the same time the parents are emotionally distant, making cooperative partnerships increasingly unlikely.

We have illustrated the first of these negative cycles in our description of the relationship between Karen and Meryl. Meryl frequently resists her mother’s wishes, throwing tantrums when Karen tries to insist, perhaps in part because of Karen’s inconsistency. As a result, Karen often backs down and lets Meryl have her way, just to keep the peace. Here Meryl’s behavior is clearly affecting her mother’s behavior, and the reverse is also true. By vacillating and failing to set firm limits, Karen is inadvertently promoting Meryl’s difficult behavior. And by being difficult, Meryl makes it hard for Karen to be consistent.

You can see an example of a more positive cycle in Mikey’s development. By age 2, Mikey’s tendency to be slow to warm up to new situations has diminished, due in part to Christine’s continuing support and assistance in managing his reactions to novelty. In turn, his increasing capacity for coping...
with unfamiliar situations makes him easier to care for and increases his positive interactions with Christine, with Frank, and with others in his life. Although he at first responds somewhat warily toward day care, he adjusts relatively quickly, thanks to support from Christine and the comfort of his Raggedy Ann doll.

**Individual Adaptations and the Broader Developmental Context**

The transactional model helps to show that parents are not solely responsible for the relationship that evolves with a child. Once a parent has started to respond to an infant in a certain way, the child’s reactions often work to maintain the parent’s style of caregiving. In addition, parent and child do not exist in a vacuum. They are surrounded by a larger social environment that includes other adults and children in the family, as well as people and institutions with which the family comes in contact, as portrayed in our discussion of Bronfenbrenner’s model in Chapter 2. This larger social environment can impose pressures and challenges or offer various kinds of support. Developmentalists increasingly stress the need to view child-caregiver interactions as partly a product of this broader social context (e.g., Bugental and Goodnow, 1998; National Research Council, 1993).

Developmentalists are becoming especially interested in how the quality of care children receive is influenced by the quality of relationships between adults in the family, the amount of stress the family experiences, and the various forms of social support available to parents (Belsky, 1988; Parke and Buriel, 1998). These factors interact, often aggravating or lessening one another’s effects. For instance, the loss of a job or a serious illness may produce enough stress to tax a parent’s capacity to emotionally support a child. However, if the parent has supportive relationships with other adults, that stress may be easier to cope with and its negative effects greatly reduced. Particularly important is the quality of parental relationships. For example, research shows that when a father is supportive of a mother, she is more affectionate and responsive toward their child (Belsky and Isabella, 1987; Easterbrooks and Emde, 1988). Without such psychological backing by the marital partner or someone else, a caregiver tends to take less pleasure in parenting and is more susceptible to its stresses.

The potential effects of stress on the quality of child care is illustrated in a study by Byron Egeland and his colleagues (Vaughn et al., 1979). These researchers found that the quality of a child’s attachment to the mother sometimes changed during the toddler period. A relationship classified as anxious when the child was 12 months of age might be classified as secure six months later, and vice versa. Significantly, a switch from an insecure to a secure attachment was linked to a reduction in disruptive life changes and stress experienced by the caregiver. This finding suggests that when parents have greater stability in their lives, they are better able to provide for the emotional needs of a child. It also suggests that a pattern of anxious attachment may be changed if circumstances change for the better. As is true at every phase of life, patterns of adaptation depend on current situations as well as developmental history.

**PARENTAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF TODDLERS**

More than 2 million cases of physical battering, sexual abuse, and gross neglect of children are reported in the United States each year (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1995; National Research Council, 1993; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). Although parents may mistreat a child of any age, abused and neglected children are most likely to be under the age of 3. This is partly because toddlers can be very challenging, with their frequent efforts to assert their independence, often in ways that inconvenience or frustrate adults, and their tendency during explorations to get into things they shouldn’t. An adult can easily misinterpret a toddler’s behavior as intentionally contrary or naughty, and some may conclude that increasingly severe punishment is needed to set the child right. Others, overwhelmed by the parenting task, may give up early and neglect their child. Toddlers, for their part, have