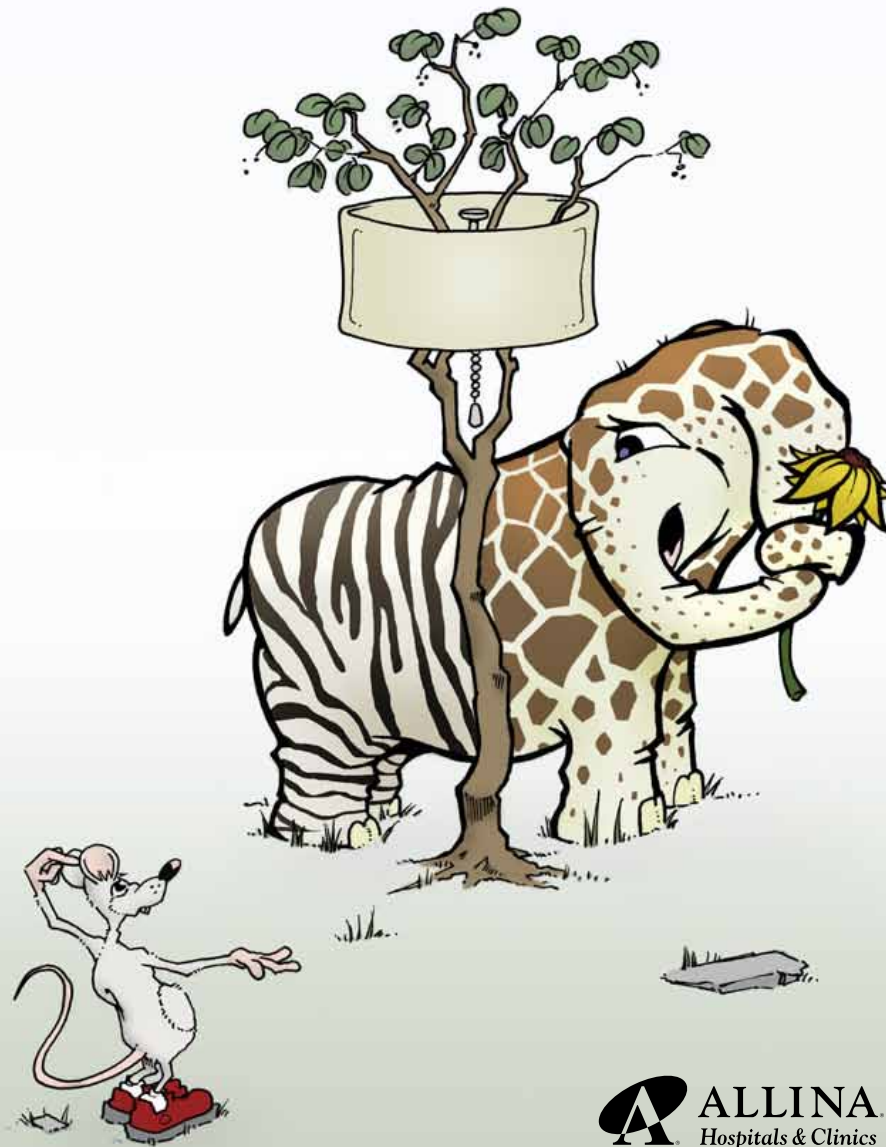


Facing Uncertainties



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Infants – 2 Years

Developmental Factors

Trust, Mistrust and the Beginning of Autonomy (Independence)

The dictionary defines trust as “reliance on the integrity, strength and ability of a person or thing; confidence.” In these early years, your infant or toddler is developing a sense of trust. So it is particularly important that you be honest, strong and strive to be confident – even when you are not feeling your best.

In the first two years of life, babies change and grow so rapidly. There is something new for you to notice from one moment to the next. Enjoying your child’s development can be the best medicine for keeping your mind off your worries and symptoms related to your illness or treatment. The warm, secure and stable environment you provide your infant or toddler will benefit you as well.

“Children know from a remarkably early age that things are being kept from them; that grown-ups participate in a world of mysteries.”

~ Anthony Hecht



What to Say

- For infants and toddlers, it is important to communicate security by being as present as possible for your child, keeping a positive tone in the home and by maintaining your child’s routines (e.g., mealtimes, playtimes, sleeptimes, etc.).
- Try to keep your focus on what is the same and what is positive, not what is different.
- Talk about the changes positively but be prepared for your child’s reactions. Let the feelings be cried about and talked about. Remain loving, supportive and firm.
- Offer stories about things that change, such as a caterpillar changing into a beautiful butterfly. Most importantly, try to be with your child each time a major change occurs. Providing comfort and structure will help ease the uncertainty of change.
- Make explanations short and simple.

- Death is not something that toddlers grasp very well. They may have some tears if it is talked about, but they will not fully understand its meaning. Reassuring them that they will always be cared for and loved is most important. This may well be harder for you than for your children.

What to Do

- Add small positive things to make any changes more interesting and desirable. Toddlers and infants will adapt to new routines when they are added alongside things that are still being done in the old normal.
- Comfort, comfort, comfort. Use every possible comforting idea— food, toys, music, baths — all the things your infant or toddler finds calming.
- Allow sadness and uncertainty to be expressed in tears or as tantrums. Recognize the need for the emotions to come out; then keep the comfort coming.
- Make or buy something that is particularly soothing — a special blanket, doll, stuffed animal or book.
- Record your voice reading stories that your child can listen to at bedtime or when you cannot be present to read.
- Put together a little box of treasures that can be carried with your child. Collect items that are special to your child and include something personal of yours.
- Think of who you want to be important in your child's life if there are big changes coming or if you may die. Try to have that person present as often as possible to help facilitate bonding.
- Cry together – and be tough together. Sometimes parents need to cry with their children, be held, soothed and touched by their children.



What to Observe

Changes in behavior for children, adolescents and adults during stressful times are normal. These changes may include regression or returning to less mature behaviors. Some behaviors which may occur include:

- Not sleeping well
- Wanting to nurse or drink from a bottle more than normal
- Becoming irritable
- Crawling rather than walking
- Not eating
- Lack of interest in play
- Lack of expression of feelings or eye contact
- Listlessness

It is important to pay attention to any behavior that is out of character for your child, especially if the behavior appears more intense or frequent, or if you intuitively sense that something is wrong. This is the time to consult a professional such as your physician or pediatrician, a child development specialist, or counselor.

