



crying and laughing

**The Emotional Development
of Infants and Toddlers**

Donna Wittmer, PhD, and Deanna W. Clauson

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Introduction

This book is for educational professionals who strive each day to facilitate and ensure infants' and toddlers' optimal emotional development and learning. It is for those professionals and families who want to learn more about emotional competence—the ability to understand, express, and manage emotions—that develops in the first three years of life. This book is for classroom teachers, family child-care providers, Head Start teachers and support staff, early intervention personnel, and parents and families who experience each day how important emotional competence is to the health and well-being of young children. We often refer to infant and toddler professionals as *teachers*, but know that we are talking about all professionals who strive each day to create opportunities for young children to flourish.

The book is organized around ten keys that early childhood professionals and families can use to support infant and toddler emotional development and learning. These keys will help you understand the power of emotions, the importance of emotional development and learning, the stages of emotional development, the many emotions that children ages birth to three express, and caring strategies that you can use to nurture very young children's emotional development and learning. We call these practical ideas *keys* because they open doors for you to help infants and toddlers develop and thrive emotionally. They open doors to the hearts and minds of young children.

When you put these keys to use, they are the foundation for helping children develop emotional competence. The approach outlined in this book is based on our observations in many child-care and learning programs, interviews with infant and toddler teachers, and many exciting research findings on emotional development. We offer knowledge and skills that will enable you to be compassionate infant and toddler professionals who provide the emotional nourishment that young children need. Within each key, we recognize the vital importance of partnering with families to enhance children's well-being. Each key also emphasizes the importance of teachers' culturally sensitive practices with children and in relationships with families.

It is you, the infant and toddler professionals, who know that a great start in life is vital for a child. You are the ones who listen to young children and understand their need to be seen and heard. You know that supporting emotional development in the early years creates a strong foundation that provides important life skills and resiliency. We hope this book enables and empowers you with the knowledge and tools you need to support emotionally healthy young children.



With loving care,
young children

flourish



The ability to understand, express, and manage emotions begins to develop in the first three years of life. Infants and toddlers need caring adults to help them learn this emotional competence. By supporting their development in the early years, you create a strong foundation that will give young children important life skills and resilience.

The authors of the acclaimed book *From Biting to Hugging: Understanding Social Development in Infants and Toddlers* bring educators another go-to infant and toddler resource in *Crying and Laughing: The Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers*. As you delve into the stages of emotional development in very young children, you'll learn how to understand, nurture, and support them—and, importantly, how to bridge the home and child-care connection.

Learn crucial skills for creating a safe and nurturing environment for infants and toddlers in your care:

- Understand how young children's emotions develop
- Create responsive and nurturing teacher-child interactions
- Develop children's healthy emotional competence
- Help children manage strong emotions
- Reduce children's emotional stress
- Foster family engagement
- Care for yourself



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