

How can we help our toddlers and young children adjust when a new baby arrives?



Bringing a new baby home is a big change for everyone, and for toddlers and young children it can bring a lot of mixed emotions. They may be excited and loving one minute and angry, clingy, or unsettled the next. These reactions are completely normal as they adjust to sharing your attention and find their new place in the family.

Here are some ways to support your child during this transition:

- Spend time talking about what will change and reassure them you will always love them. Reading books about becoming a big brother or sister can help start meaningful conversations.
- Avoid big transitions like toilet training, moving to bed or a different bedroom around the time baby is due.
- Make the first meeting special, by giving your older child lots of love and attention when they first meet their new sibling.
- Prioritise one to one time, even a few minutes spent reading a book, sharing a cuddle, or playing together can help your child feel connected and secure.
- Where possible keep routines familiar, predictability can help children feel safe during this time of big change.
- Involve them, they might enjoy getting the nappy, choosing an outfit, or singing to the baby. If they're not interested that's okay too!
- Notice the positive moments and praise your child for gentle, caring and helpful behaviours around the baby.
- Be patient if your child suddenly wants more help, becomes clingier, regresses with sleep or toilet training, this can be their way of saying "I need you too".
- Make space for big feelings. Children can experience jealousy, frustration, sadness, worry, and excitement all in the same day. Helping them name and express these emotions is important.
- Share caregiving responsibilities, sometimes older children naturally spend more time with one parent while the newborn requires extra attention from the other. Where possible ensure both children receive care, connection and quality time with each parent.

*Welcoming a new baby is a huge transition but with connection, reassurance, patience, and plenty of one to one moments we can help our children feel secure while they navigate these changes. Sometimes the behaviour we see is simply a child asking, **"Do I still Matter?"** and connection can be the answer.*