

# Children's development

There are a number of important things to know about children's development. Brain growth and thinking abilities are a result of children's age and stage of maturity. Young children tend to:

- be self-focused — they view everything from their own perspective. This can mean they believe things happen *because* of them. They might have difficulty understanding that a parent's emotion — such as anger — is not caused by or directed towards them
- have trouble seeing another person's point of view
- have difficulty consistently understanding the concept of sharing
- often believe what others tell them, for example, that they are bad/shy/silly/naughty
- have trouble understanding that some things are permanent — such as death or parents separating
- often misinterpret words due to their limited knowledge and language skills
- have difficulty with the concept of time — they might not be able to monitor what five minutes or an hour means. Concepts such as next week or next year are often meaningless to them
- use worse behaviour when they are tired, sick or hungry
- are increasing in their desire for and ability to negotiate friendships.

Parents can sometimes feel that their child is **manipulating** them. But at this age and stage, children do not yet understand that they might be able to *make* other people do things. They are simply expressing their emotional and physical needs — sometimes in very vocal or annoying ways!

Children at this stage of development require:

- consistency — especially between different parents/carers
- clear boundaries and family rules – such as no hitting, no hurting, no name calling
- routines — so they can predict what happens at different times
- stability.

