

I SEE YOU

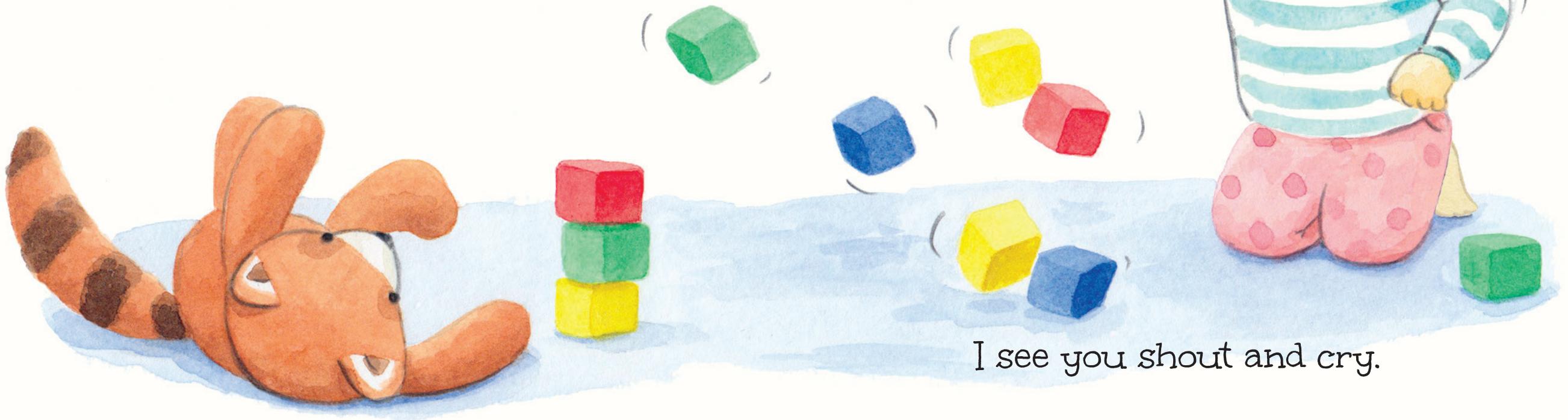


TRY

free spirit
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Grab, stack,
wobble, crash.



I see you shout and cry.

Grab, stack. Up it goes!
You take another try.



Bus goes here.

Bunny there.



I see you sort
your toys.



FOUR TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Sawubona is the Zulu word for “hello.” It literally means *I see you*. When I first learned this, I instantly thought about the relationship between parents and children—or between any caregiver and the little ones they love.

Everyone needs to be *seen*—especially toddlers, who crave the loving attention of the adults in their lives. When we say “I see you” to toddlers, whether by our words or by our actions, what we are really saying is: “I’m paying attention to you. You are important to me. I like you just the way you are.”

Here are four ways you can communicate “I see you try” to the young children in your life.

1. Acknowledge the Effort

Young children don’t learn new skills without making a lot of mistakes! Babies are going to fall down when learning to crawl or walk, toddlers are going to get messy when learning to feed themselves, and young children are going to tumble when learning to jump and spin. It’s great to celebrate accomplishments, but it’s also important to acknowledge the effort it takes. This might sound like, “Buttoning your coat is tricky! I’m so proud of you for trying,” or, “Look at you holding a big-kid cup! A little spill is no big deal.”

2. Foster a Growth Mindset

There’s a big difference between the phrases “I can’t do it!” and “I can’t do it yet.” Adding the word *yet* helps toddlers know that their efforts will pay off eventually. So when you hear a toddler say, “I can’t,” show them how to reframe that frustration: “You can’t do it yet, and that’s okay. If you keep trying, I know you’ll get there.” Eventually, toddlers will develop the self-confidence to say, “It might be hard, but I can figure this out!”

One way to build a growth mindset is to use descriptive praise. Instead of saying “wow” or “good job,” describe what you see toddlers do. This gives them information for the future.

3. Tell Toddlers Stories About Their Growth

Young children love stories, especially stories about themselves. So remind toddlers of their own stories of growth! What are the things they can do now that they couldn’t do a few months ago? Put away their clothes? Share with a new sibling? Say when they are frustrated? Walk or run or jump? Tell them their growth story: “I remember when you didn’t know how to walk. Every day you would crawl across the floor to get to your toys. Then one day, you pulled yourself up . . .”

4. Show Them That You Are Still Learning Too

One of the best ways to help toddlers learn to try again is to let them see you try and to talk with them about what worked and what didn’t. Did you try to ice-skate and fall down? Did you make a new recipe three times before getting it right? Are you learning a new skill at work? Talk about it! You can even ask for their advice on what to do when you struggle: “I haven’t been ice-skating in a long time, so I might fall down. What should I do if I fall down?”

When we notice all the ways toddlers try, we give them the courage and confidence to persevere toward their goals.

