

how to hang out with your toddler

(WITHOUT HATING IT)

Hi, I'm Steph, and I don't love kids. I really enjoy my kids, and my friends' kids are cool 85% of the time, but I take a pass on kids in general. I want to make faces at a stranger's baby from across the Target aisle, but I rarely offer to babysit and I never want to help with VBS. Makes sense?

Here is the rub. I have two kids. They are three, and one and a half years old. That means I have SEVERAL more years to parent through before they're out of the little kid phase.

In the meantime, I have two tiny, busy humans to hang out with every single day. I'm always on the lookout for ways to do that well without playing games with no rules, mind numbing repetition, or continuous chasing. Here's how I do that.



TURN ON SOME MUSIC

This should not be music you care about. This is not the time for the latest album from your favorite artist. You'll just get annoyed when your kids are loudly demanding that you watch them do their non-trick for the eleventh time.

Pick something child-friendly that won't drive you crazy when the whole album plays three times in a row. At our house we use StoryBots, Slugs n' Bugs, and Ellie Holcomb for these times.



SIT ON THE FLOOR

This should be in the toy-centric part of your house. For us that's the living room rug, next to the toy box. Gather anything that will allow you to sit comfortably for half an hour — pillows, blankets, your phone, a water bottle — and sit.

Do not sit on the couch. Do not sit in a chair. Do not squat. You must be firmly seated, and it must be on the floor. Bonus points if you lay out a blanket or play mat. (This is not an ad, but if you want to take your floor-sitting situation up several levels, I highly recommend The Nugget.)

that's it.

THAT'S MY WHOLE LIST.

I know it seems simple, but the magic of these two things together is undeniable.

The music seems to do what TV does, but in reverse. Where a cartoon can hold my kids' attention to the degree that they can't meaningfully engage with anything else, music they enjoy seems to make them more engaged in whatever activity they choose to do. Without music, a struggle over who gets which lego might easily devolve into fits and fighting. With music, sharing, swapping, and taking a breath all come easier.

Sitting on the floor keeps your kids around you. Since you're so easily accessible they want to bring you books, show you toys, perform non-tricks, and climb in and out of your lap with abandon. They are entertained by your proximity alone.

If you sit on the couch they will inevitably run to a part of the house just out of sight and get into some contraband that necessitates your getting off the couch a million times to investigate. Save yourself the trouble.

Turn on some music. Sit on the floor.

hi there.

I'M STEPH.



Sometimes I don't like hanging out with toddlers.
But I always like making friends on the internet.

Connect with on Instagram @stephaniehcochrane

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