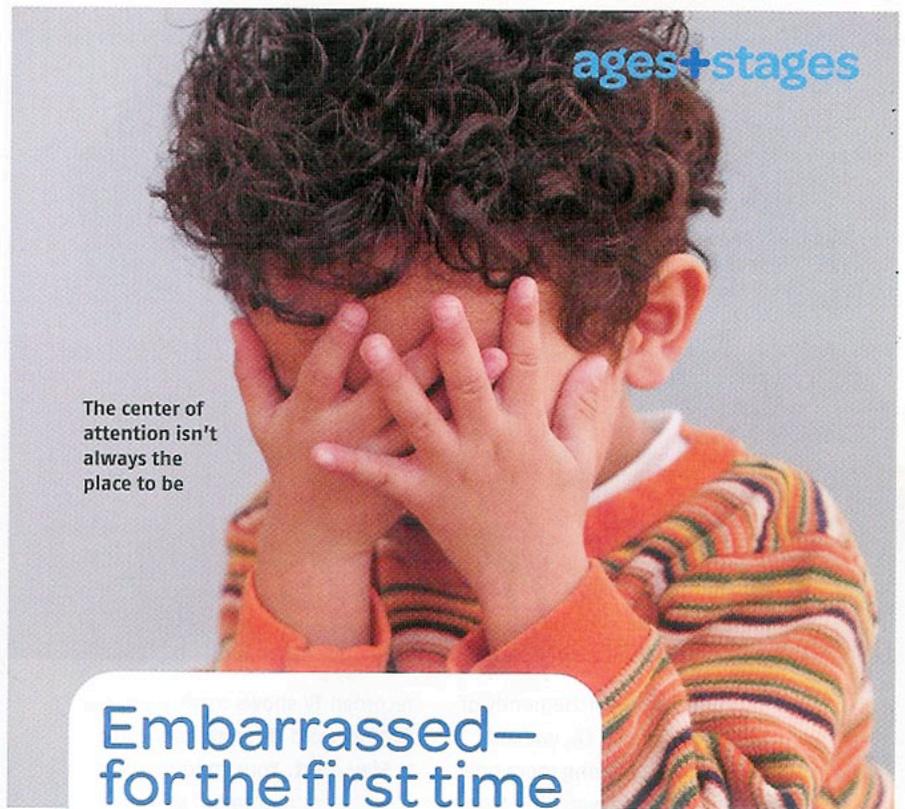


Parenting, October 2007



The center of attention isn't always the place to be

Embarrassed—for the first time

ages
2-3

A stinky diaper or spilled juice might make your toddler cry for a whole new reason these days: embarrassment. He might blush or cry, turn away, or even run off.

That's because around age 2½, as toddlers become less self-absorbed, they begin to worry about what others think of them, says Janice Zeman, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA.

Kids this age are starting to understand social norms—and they don't like the way it feels to be noticed or singled out because of a mistake or sometimes even for praise. It's disconcerting, and they can take embarrassment hard, especially because it's such a new emotion.

To soothe your mortified kid, tell him it's okay to feel embarrassed sometimes (it'll help him to have a word to put to the emotion). Remind him that you love him, perhaps tell him a story about a time you were embarrassed too, and then help him move on to something else. —ANNE FORD