

# Q&A

OUR EXPERT ANSWERS  
YOUR QUESTIONS



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Email your question for our experts to: [letters@yourbaby.co.za](mailto:letters@yourbaby.co.za). Please note that experts unfortunately cannot respond to each question personally. The answers provided on these pages should not replace the advice of your doctor.



## SENSITIVE LITTLE SOUL

**Q.** My three year old is a very shy and sensitive little person who does not make friends easily. She will be starting playschool next year and I am feeling anxious about it. I'm worried she will be bullied. Is there anything preventative we can start to exercise now to get her to be a little more robust, so to speak? And how will I know if she is being bullied?

**A.** Alicia says: Whether a child is introverted or extroverted, starting playschool marks a change in their lives. There are external and internal strategies you can implement to help your child easily transition to playschool. Help make it an easy change.

With permission, take your child to the playschool a few times before the new school year begins. Familiarise your child with the classroom and play area, associating these areas with fun!

If possible, introduce your child to next year's teacher, helping build a relationship of trust to facilitate a seamless transition later.

Likewise, introduce your child to children her age at the playschool—ask parents for play dates, gradually increasing the number of children she 'knows' so that your child can get used to several different children, building up the capacity to cope with the group, giving your child a better chance to adjust to being in a room with lots of people, many of whom are now familiar.

Helping your child process emotions and creating an internal mental structure of feeling strong can go a long way in boosting your child's confidence and social skills.

Your support empowers your child. Express your love and be there to help.

Listen carefully. Show that you accept your child as they are, helping

them to accept themselves. Give them the message that it's okay to be who they are, by reframing the behavioural response from 'you are shy' to 'you are behaving shyly.'

Remove the label, and the child can feel their various emotions without having to be their emotions.

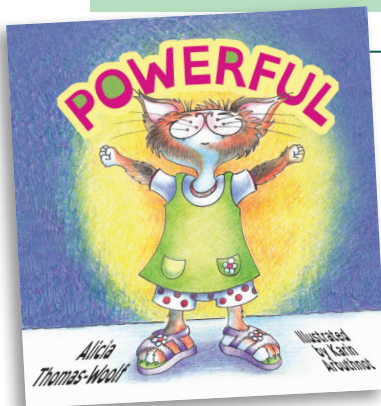
Roleplaying is also a way to provide your child with knowledge of how to act in certain situations, such as children playing together and sharing. Keep it light and practice different scenarios with your child (such as if someone takes their toy, go tell the teacher) so they are better prepared for encounters. This can also teach them what is healthy respectful behaviour to them and to their friends, and what isn't.

Have faith in your child. Life has challenges for individuals and we all must deal with them.

Continue to provide a secure foundation of love and do your best as a parent to support them. Let them find their own way, keeping an eye on their progress to ensure that they are happy and safe.

Signs that your child may be being bullied:

- Frequent complaints of stomach aches and headaches
- Not wanting to go to school
- Shows trouble eating and sleeping
- Starts making self-deprecating comments such as "I am stupid"; "No one likes me."
- Changes friends or avoids certain children with whom they were friends
- They speak about eating alone at playschool or not being able to play
- Crying spells or over-emotional reactions to incidents at home
- Obsession with or withdrawal from devices such as cellphone, iPad, television, games (PlayStation)
- Torn clothing or physical marks. **YB**



The *Powerful* book and CD gives your little one tools to deal with feelings that are "mad", "bad", "scared" and "sad". While these emotions are often associated with teasing or bullying, they may also present in unfamiliar environments and when meeting unknown people. Narrative, song and action work together to build inner

confidence. The narrative creates a safe, dissociated space where things are happening to Kitty, not the reader. The language helps children acknowledge unpleasant emotions, guiding children to deal with these themselves with specific actions detailed in the text, danced in the *Powerful* song.

The song lyrics embed action

processes that show children how to deal with those emotions through power poses – they can deal with them because they are innately powerful. *Powerful* is available at Exclusive Books, Bargain Books, [www.powerful.rocks](http://www.powerful.rocks) and [takealot.com](http://takealot.com). Digital versions available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and [audible.com](http://audible.com) for approximately R200.