



ANALYZE THIS!

What's really going on in your toddler's little head when she shoves peas in her ear, guzzles bathwater, or strips naked in the store? Her motivations make more sense than you'd think.

My 2-year-old loves meatballs. Well, she did yesterday—today she won't touch them. Shower her with birthday or holiday gifts and three weeks later, she's still more fascinated by the battered boxes and torn tissue paper than the actual presents. She finds dirty bathwater irresistibly drinkable, occasionally explores her nose like it's an archeological dig site, and would happily go to Starbucks stark naked if I let her.

"She's acting like she's 2," jokes my friend Courtney when I wonder aloud (and inwardly panic) about what could possibly be going on in my kid's head. Oh yeah, I think, she's just doing her job: figuring out the world and her role in it.

Still, what parent wouldn't want to know the method behind her toddler's apparent madness? We asked experts to interpret little kids' oddest behaviors and give advice on the sanest ways to handle them.

BY JENNA McCARTHY • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM FRANCO