

Kids, Boxes, Joy

What's inside his love of boxes?

By Paula Andrus



Stephanie Rausser

2-3 When James Cantorma received an inflatable ball pit for Christmas, the Palos Park, IL, 3-year-old was thrilled with his new plaything -- the box it arrived in. "He climbed in it, put it over his head, and put all kinds of toys inside that box, and all the while the ball pit just sat there," recalls his mom, Melanie. So why do kids love boxes?

- "Because a box is so open-ended, it can be anything your child wants it to be," says Tovah Klein, Ph.D., director of the Barnard College Center for Toddler Development in New York City.
- Kids this age are curious, but they also love the familiar. A new toy can have a different shape, color, and sound, and that may be enough to propel your toddler back to the simple (and familiar) pleasure of the box.
- Toddlers are fascinated with opening and closing, hiding and finding, and placing items in and taking them out of things; a single box lets your child do all of that. It also lets him learn about -- and control -- the separation process: He knows that even though he can't see what he just put in there, it's still there.
- Many kids love to climb into boxes because a small space makes them feel protected. Says Klein: "The world is a big place, and boxes are little places that give toddlers a feeling of security."