



terrified by a toy!

Stephanie Fernando's 6-month-old son was delighted to watch her pull a Tickle Me Cookie Monster out of the box—until the Torrance, CA, mom started it up. Then, as the toy giggled and vibrated, "Aaron's eyes got really big, and he screamed and began crying uncontrollably. He was extremely freaked!" she says. And he stayed that way: When Aaron started crawling, his parents could keep him corralled simply by plopping Cookie in his way.

Some babies acquire fears of random objects along the developmental path, as when they're still figuring out how an object at rest can suddenly begin guffawing, says Mark Sloan, M.D., a pediatrician in Santa Rosa, CA, and author of *Birth Day*. Life changes (like a new sibling or a move) can

also make a child a little anxious. Other cases, though, remain mysteries: Dr. Sloan's own daughter, he reports, was scared of green pants. So what do you do if your baby inexplicably loses it over a toy train or Mylar balloon?

offer support While you know that tiny accordion won't hurt him, your baby doesn't. "Acknowledge that it is frightening," Dr. Sloan suggests, instead of just ignoring the issue.

try again Unless your child's fear is interfering with your life, Dr. Sloan advises simply putting away the toy temporarily. It might get a better reception in a few weeks or months.

don't fret Most children phase out of their toy fears by age 3, says Dr. Sloan. Before you know it, he'll be a reckless toddler and you'll miss these timid times. —Teresa Tobat

tune in, fill up

Slow feeder?
She might just
want a little
music. In one
study, preemies
finished
bottles faster
when listening
to a melody.

win it!

Twenty readers will score their own pachyderm. Go to Parenting.com/giveaways to enter. For more info, turn to page 149.

eco-friendly ellie

When was the last time your kid had a great-smelling toy? Design for Play uses natural wood to make its playthings, finishing them off with a simple linseed-oil polish—no paints, dyes, or stains—so each one carries that great wood-shop scent. (Elephant Cart, \$34.95)

