



- **Self-control develops slowly.** Children begin to develop self-control around the age of 2 (see Figure 3.3). It takes several more years before this emerging ability fully develops. Children are better able to control themselves as they get older for several reasons. First, their cognitive, perceptual, and linguistic systems have developed, allowing them to understand things from a different perspective. This development gives children access to better skills for dealing with impulses. Control of the self also implies that a child realizes that a self exists; this knowledge develops during late infancy and early childhood.
- **Self-control evolves haltingly, in a “sometimes you see it and sometimes you don’t” fashion.** Preschool children often astonish adults with remarkable self-control, but they demonstrate considerable lack of control at other times. Jack, for example, controlled himself in the block corner, but on the same day, he shoved someone out of the way while rushing to the swimming pool. You will see the same thing in older children who have never learned to control themselves. Young children must practice self-control, just as musicians must practice their instrument-playing skills. It is reasonable to expect some measure of self-control in young children, but it is usually a mistake to expect perfect control.

