



Preschool Parent Press

A publication brought to you by the exceptional children's assistance center

SUMMER

What is Social-Emotional Development?

Social –Emotional development begins at birth and continues throughout your child's life. Social-emotional development involves the growth of skills that allow children to interact successfully with others and to express their emotions.

Stages of Social-Emotional Development

Birth – 12 Months:

Babies depend on adult caregivers to meet their physical as well as their emotional needs. As babies get older, they continue to need physical care and depend on the emotional support from the important adults in their lives. In this stage, it is important to note that babies have different levels of tolerance to sound and movements in their environment and will react accordingly. They are beginning to understand that their actions affect other people's feelings and actions. Loving touches and encouraging words send messages to your baby that they are somebody special!

12 – 24 Months:

Toddlers are becoming more aware of themselves. They initiate interactions with others and show a wide range of emotions. Toddlers show intense affection for their parents and for other familiar people. In this stage, they are developing empathy or how another person might be feeling. As a toddler grows, supportive relationships with parents and caregivers shape their self-image and provide them with the social skills needed to face new challenges!

24 – 36 Months:

Young children do not understand the rules of social etiquette and naturally voice their curiosity about the things they observe. This is a wonderful stage where young children develop a strong sense of self and increase their range of self-help skills that may include dressing and undressing, washing hands, and toileting. Self-regulation is a huge challenge for young children as they begin to drift away from playing side by side with their peers to briefly joining in play with a small group of children. Adults play an important role in teaching young children social skills

You help set the stage for your child to be socially and emotionally aware. Remember, you are your child's best example for positive social-emotional development.

SOURCES: Tips and Tools on Promoting Social Emotional Development, www.zerothree.org; North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation, NCHealthyStart.org; www.education.com



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Tips and Tools to Promote Social Emotional Development

Create Routines

Consistent routines and activities provide comfort and a sense of safety to young children. These are examples of routines that encourage children to learn important social skills.

- Taking turns during playtime is a great opportunity to practice sharing.
- Talking about your day at mealtimes is a great way to practice social skills.
- Reading before bedtime is an opportunity to practice making a transition.

Encourage Independence

Willpower develops as a child strives for independence. This “strong will” can create battles, but you can help maintain the balance between will and learned independence that is necessary for a child’s growth and development. Examples of ways to do this may be to:

- Let your toddler feed himself. Who cares if everything does not exactly reach his mouth! He can practice while you use another spoon to get most of the meal into his mouth.
- Provide a responsibility for your toddler to do such as dressing himself or washing his hands.
- Let young children make up games and “rules” for their games to ensure their own success.

Understand Behaviors

Children are born with their own temperament. Often times their individual way of expressing themselves is not always appropriate. As adults, our job is to help guide and support children so they can learn to regulate their emotions. Ways in which we can do this is:

- Practice patience and encourage your toddler to replace challenging behaviors with positive alternatives.
- Ensure that a young child’s challenging behaviors are not reinforced, such as giving in to temper tantrums in public places.
- Remember to “catch your child being good”. This is a wonderful way of positively reinforcing your child’s appropriate behavior.

Teach Self-Control

This is key to helping children be aware of their behaviors and learn to make good choices.

- When a baby gets louder, you respond quicker, your baby learns cause and effect.
- When a toddler throws a toy and it gets taken away, he learns natural consequences.
- When young children push or hit their friends and that friend no longer plays with them, they learn personal boundaries.

Build Relationships

Being spontaneous and having fun can relieve stress and create positive memories for both you and your child. These are some examples of how children do this.

- Babies imitate the sounds of their parents like a kind of “musical conversation”.
- Toddlers love to dance with each other, which reinforces early friendships.
- Young children build relationships through physical activity with their peers while playing outside on a playground.

Value Playtime

As a parent, you are your child’s first playmate. Through play, children learn skills that are necessary for their social emotional success in school and life.

- Babies learn communication skills while imitating your facial expressions, gestures and sounds.
- Sing and dance with your toddler! This is not only great exercise, it helps develop rhythm, coordination and motor skills.
- Young children love to play tag. While doing so, they learn turn-taking and how to follow simple rules.