

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL



Social Emotional Development

Children's social and emotional health affects their overall psychosocial development and learning and thus it is just as important as their physical health. Research indicates that children who are mentally healthy tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, more eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than less mentally healthy peers (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik et al. 2015). Parents play key roles in promoting children's social and emotional health.

Ways parents/caregivers can support

- Talk, read, and sing together every day. Young children learn by interacting with others around them. These simple interactions help young children feel special and loved in addition to supporting their early development.
- Provide warm, responsive, and consistent care. Smile, laugh, and encourage play throughout the day. Based on what your child communicates, meet their needs consistently and sensitively.
- Maintain consistent, predictable routines. Knowing what to expect during the day helps children feel safe and secure. As much as possible, try to follow the same order of routines and activities each day, like regular feeding and naptime schedules or reading a book together, as well as independent and collaborative play.
- Get to know each child and follow their lead. What does each child seem curious about? How are they feeling? What activities do they enjoy? Following their lead will help you know how to respond and plan your daily activities around their interests, which increases their eagerness to engage with you and learn.

- Play simple social games and when possible encourage play with other children of the same age. These games are an early way to develop turn taking turn turning, which is an important building block for later social development.
- Be an emotional role model. Even at a very young age, young children learn by watching their caregivers. Responding calmly to situations, expressing joy, and showing kindness to others helps them learn how to behave and what to expect from future relationships.
- Recognize and talk about emotions. By allowing and encouraging children to express their feelings — both positive and negative — parents and caregivers can support their emotional development.
- Help young children by teaching them how to label their emotions. For example, say, "You look so sad. Let's see if we can make you feel better." This demonstrates to your child that you are paying attention to their needs and want to be there for him or her.
- Help your child learn ways to calm when they become agitated and praise this behavior. Understand that young children may need repeated practice when first learning how to manage strong emotions. Provide them grace and direct guidance.

To learn more about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills, please view the following video prepared by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning) <https://youtu.be/y2d0da6BZWA>

Social Emotional Milestones (from *Stanford Children's Health*)

Age 4. By the end of the fourth year, your child should play interactively with others, often assuming the role of "Mommy" or "Daddy." Play may start to involve fantasy and games that have made-up rules. Your child should have enough self-control to negotiate through conflicts.



Age 5. By the end of the fifth year, your child may be concerned more about friends than Mommy and Daddy and know the difference between boys and girls. Your child should enjoy activities such as singing, dancing, and acting.

What if I have concerns about my child's social emotional health and wellbeing?

Let your pediatrician know if your child has extreme difficulty separating from you or seems sad or withdrawn, fearful, or overly aggressive. Other warning signs include a loss of previously achieved social skills, the inability to concentrate on a single activity, or the inability to distinguish fantasy from reality.

Social and emotional milestones are only guidelines, but they may also be important warning signs. If you think your child may be behind on any of these milestones, talk to your pediatrician. Early intervention for a social or emotional delay is the best way to prevent any disability that might affect your child's future.

