



Social and Emotional Development

Preschool Age Children

Healthy social and emotional development supports positive interactions and relationships, as well as progress in other areas. Check out these strategies to help with social and emotional development!

Developing a Positive Sense of Self

Demonstrate deep respect for and genuine interest in your child. Smile, laugh, and spend time with them. Make comments that focus on positive qualities and contribute to their self-esteem.

View mistakes as opportunities to learn and explore solutions. Be supportive and let children know everyone makes mistakes. Model that it is important to keep trying.

Promote reflection by asking open-ended questions as children are working on a project.

Help your child develop a positive sense of self by providing many opportunities to make choices, allowing them to make decisions and plan (what book to read, song to sing, or game to play, etc.).

Developing Relationships

Talk to your child about their interests and ask genuine follow-up questions. Let your child see that you understand by mirroring their emotions, such as sharing joint excitement over an accomplishment.

Discuss the characters in storybooks; talk about the feelings of the characters, their similarities and differences, etc.

Allow your child to have responsibilities that contribute to the good of the family, such as setting the table, putting away toys, watering plants, and caring for pets.



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Self-Regulation and Pro-Social Behaviors



Encourage your child to do things for themselves as much as possible, even though it may take longer and will not be done as you might have done it yourself.

Include words that describe feelings as part of your child's overall language development. Use language to help your child identify emotions you see your child is experiencing, like "You look disappointed."

Model and practice techniques to help your child learn to relax, stay calm, and manage their anger and fears, such as breathing deeply, finding a comfortable spot to listen to music, and using words to express themselves.

Additional Strategies to Promote Social and Emotional Development

Acknowledge and celebrate your child's successes. Encourage them to recognize their own achievements and congratulate others on their successes.

Have frequent and meaningful, back-and-forth conversations with your child. Listen carefully, respond, acknowledge, and give them credit for their ideas.

Be a good role model for your child by being honest with them and following through on what you have told them you will do.

Prepare your child for new situations and changes in routines, such as a visitor or a medical appointment, by using pictures, verbal explanations, and acting out what will happen.



This information was adapted from the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines. To learn more, talk to your childcare provider or visit sdstepahead.com.