

Social and Emotional Development

Infants and Toddlers

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 to contribute to their self-esteem.

View mistakes as opportunities to learn. Be supportive and model that it is important to keep trying.

Place unbreakable mirrors in several different areas, such as at the changing table and on the walls at your child's eye level.

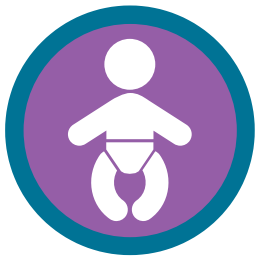
Developing Relationships

Engage with your child during caregiving routines such as diapering, feeding, and bathing.

Meet your child's needs in a timely manner to provide them with a sense of security and trust.

Encourage turn-taking skills by playing games such as pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.

Model and explain "gentle touch" for your child as they interact with others.



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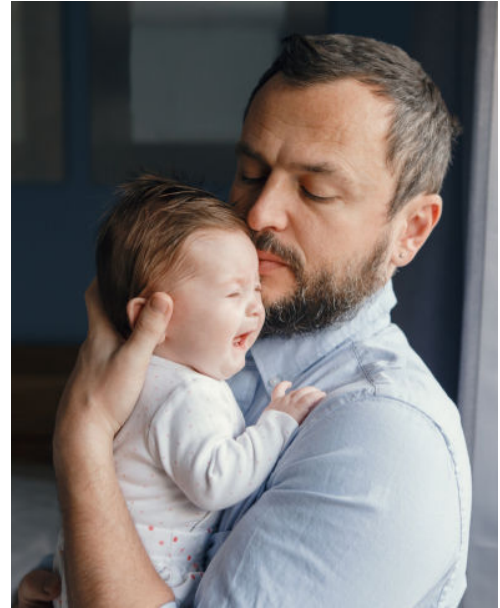
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Self-Regulation and Pro-Social Behaviors

Young children cry or act out to communicate their wants, needs, and feelings. Be patient, model using a calm voice, let them know you are there for them, and love them unconditionally.

Include words that describe feelings as part of children's overall language development. Model language to help your child identify the emotions they are experiencing. Say things like "You look disappointed."

Establishing a predictable daily routine gives children a sense of security and helps them understand the expectations. Try to be consistent with meals, naps, bath time, bedtime, and other regular activities.



Additional Strategies to Promote Social and Emotional Development

Have frequent conversations with children. Listen carefully, observe non-verbal communication, respond, and acknowledge them. Adults can use these techniques to model back-and-forth type "conversations" even before their child develops verbal skills.

Play and interact with children at their level, getting down on the floor, or cuddling close together while reading a book.

Encourage your child to express their needs with words. Model appropriate language by saying things like "May I please have that toy?".



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