

**Plays well
with others...**



A GUIDE
to a Young Child's
Healthy Social &
Emotional Development

What is social and emotional development?

Young children (ages birth to 5 years) are learning and growing at a rapid rate. One part of this growth is their social and emotional development - broadly defined as how well they manage their emotions and interact with others. Young children learn through play and relationships. Social and emotional development is important because it affects many parts of your child's life, including his or her behavior at home and with others, the ability to make friends, the willingness to try new things and handle frustrations, and future success in school.

Helping your child develop good social and emotional skills will make him/her more:

- ✧ Successful at school
- ✧ Able to follow directions and learn new ideas
- ✧ Happy and confident
- ✧ Able to make and keep friends
- ✧ Ready to cope with stress
- ✧ Willing to express his/her needs

Read this brochure to learn more about:

- ✧ Typical behavior at different ages (6 months to 5 years)
- ✧ Behavior concerns
- ✧ Tips on how you can help

Remember: All children benefit from positive adult interaction!

The information in this brochure is simply a guide to what is typical development, and what behaviors might be worth asking about. If a behavior seems unusual, happens over and over or goes on for a long time, this may mean your child needs extra help. Catching problems at an early age usually makes them a lot easier to solve. Help is available!

If you are concerned about something you see your child doing, please contact one of these agencies:

- ✧ Amador County Office of Education, Special Education Department & Early Start
(209) 257-5330, www.amadorcoe.org
- ✧ Valley Mountain Regional Center, (209) 754-1871, www.vmrc.net
- ✧ Amador County Behavioral Health, (209) 223-6412, www.co.amador.ca.us
- ✧ Family Resource Network, (800) 847-3030, www.frcn.org
- ✧ First 5 Amador, (209) 257-1092, www.first5amador.com

These parenting tips help with children of any age

- ✓ Parenting can be hard—it's okay to wonder whether you are being a good parent
- ✓ It's okay to take a break and ask for help
- ✓ Model what you expect by sharing, taking turns and saying, "please," "thank you," "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you"
- ✓ Keep the rules clear and try not to make exceptions
- ✓ Make sure the adults in your child's life are working together
- ✓ Be firm with your child, but also respectful and patient
- ✓ Listen to your child—allow her to share her thoughts and feelings
- ✓ Reward good behavior with encouraging praise instead of food
- ✓ Limit your child's TV and video games (the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV for children under the age of 2)—encourage playing outdoors and/or with others instead
- ✓ When your child acts out, remember that he or she is not bad, the behavior is bad
- ✓ Stick to a daily routine as much as possible, like in the mornings, at meal times and at bedtimes
- ✓ You and your child may have different personalities—try to make them work together
- ✓ Make sure your child gets plenty of exercise
- ✓ Get to know people your child spends time with, like teachers, child care providers or their friends' caregivers
- ✓ Learn to deal with your own anger—try taking deep breaths or calling a friend
- ✓ All children benefit from positive adult interaction!

In general, as children get older they will become more able to:

- ✧ Calm themselves down
- ✧ Follow rules
- ✧ Communicate their feelings
- ✧ Do things themselves
- ✧ Have sympathy for others
- ✧ Interact in a positive way with other people



By 6 months...

A child typically:

- ☺ Smiles
- ☺ Cries
- ☺ Makes eye contact
- ☺ Recognizes your face/voice
- ☺ Responds to other people's facial expressions
- ☺ Enjoys cuddling and hugging
- ☺ Can feel excited, happy, relaxed or upset
- ☺ Responds to sounds, like her name or the word "no"
- ☺ Enjoys both quiet and play times
- ☺ Begins to make sounds or babble



What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- ✋ Does not smile or make other facial expressions on his own
- ✋ Does not cry
- ✋ Does not respond to sounds
- ✋ Refuses to cuddle
- ✋ Is fussy and cries most of the time
- ✋ Does not babble or make eye contact

Things to help your SIX-MONTH-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Have fun with your baby by talking, reading, looking at books, singing, laughing, dancing and playing games
- ✓ Learn and be attentive to your baby's cries—this makes him feel safe, it will not spoil him
- ✓ Hold and tenderly touch your baby as much as possible, especially when feeding
- ✓ Introduce your baby to interesting places, objects and sounds, while making sure he or she is safe
- ✓ Remember that babies are interested in exploring the world and want to feel safe—this is a challenge for them
- ✓ Stay close to your baby around new people
- ✓ Baby-proof your house, making it a safe place to move and explore
- ✓ Begin to stick to a daily routine—this helps him feel secure
- ✓ Talk in a soft and soothing voice, telling your baby you love her and how strong she is

By 12 months...

A child typically:

- ☺ Cries when you leave and is fearful or shy with strangers
- ☺ Shakes head to show likes or dislikes
- ☺ Looks when his name is called
- ☺ Responds to "no" and other one-word directions
- ☺ Tries different ways to get your attention
- ☺ Enjoys playing alone and having your attention
- ☺ Can feel happy, sad, angry, scared and upset
- ☺ Starts to understand that objects "do" different things (like phones are for talking)
- ☺ Explores her own body through touch
- ☺ Imitates sounds, actions and facial expressions of others
- ☺ Prefers certain people and toys over others
- ☺ Babbles sounds like "mama" and "dada"



What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- ✋ Does not cry when you leave and ignores when you return
- ✋ Loss of eye contact
- ✋ Does not respond to your smile, sound, or her name
- ✋ Shows very little or a strong response to sound, light, touch or pain
- ✋ Does not sleep through the night
- ✋ Does not use simple movements like shaking head or waving to communicate
- ✋ Is always afraid to leave your side
- ✋ Says no simple words
- ✋ Loss of babbling

Things to help your ONE-YEAR-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Play with, read, sing, laugh, talk to and have fun with your child as much as possible
- ✓ Describe the world with words
- ✓ Help your child identify her feelings with phrases like, "You look like you're mad!"
- ✓ Play on the floor with your child—he or she will feel special having all your attention
- ✓ Have enough toys when your child is playing with others, because he or she doesn't know how to share yet
- ✓ Re-direct or distract your child from unwanted behavior and save a firm "NO" for times when safety is the concern
- ✓ Introduce your child to things that encourage the use of all five senses
- ✓ Let your child makes as many choices as possible
- ✓ Tell your child every day how special he or she is

By 2 years...

A child typically:

- ☺ Has fears like bed time, the toilet, or large animals
- ☺ Is pushy and whines
- ☺ Shows emotions such as fear, sympathy, modesty, guilt or embarrassment
- ☺ Enjoys it if he or she can upset you or make you angry, and may try to make it happen as much as he or she can
- ☺ Refuses to obey and often does the opposite of what you ask
- ☺ Wants everything her way or throws temper tantrums
- ☺ May insist on doing everything himself
- ☺ Likes playing alone sometimes
- ☺ Likes to play next to other kids
- ☺ Does not understand how to share
- ☺ Likes to try new things when he or she knows you are nearby
- ☺ Copies the actions of others like driving, cooking, vacuuming, etc.
- ☺ Gets upset when you leave
- ☺ Uses simple phrases to tell you what he or she needs
- ☺ Says "no!" and "mine!" a lot



What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- ✋ Rarely shows emotion or responds
- ✋ Is not interested in what other children are doing
- ✋ Is not able to calm down, even after a caregiver comforts for 15 minutes
- ✋ Needs constant contact with caregiver
- ✋ Does not understand simple instructions
- ✋ Does not speak, or loses speech
- ✋ Speaks less than 15 words or does not speak 2-word sentences

Things to help your TWO-YEAR-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Have fun talking about different emotions by making faces together in a mirror
- ✓ Remember the "Terrible Twos" are children forming their own personality and identity (it's GOOD!)
- ✓ Don't tease your child about carrying a blanket or stuffed animal—these help him feel safe
- ✓ Listen to your child and be understanding, allow and help her to express fear, anger, and other emotions
- ✓ Refusing to obey is not rejecting you, but usually a test to see how you'll react
- ✓ Let your child know what will happen next in the day, and stick to a routine
- ✓ Remember that toddlers usually cannot remember rules
- ✓ Make sure your toddler is well rested, spends time with books and has lots of active play each day
- ✓ Let your child make as many simple and meaningful choices as possible to help him gain self-confidence
- ✓ When your child tantrums, help your child calm down, remind your child he or she is safe and that you love him or her
 - ✓ Hug and praise your child often, saying things like, "You're so special!" or, "Wow, you did it!"

By 3 years...

A child typically:

- ☺ Changes moods quickly, especially with major changes in routine
- ☺ Becomes more affectionate and sensitive of other people's feelings
- ☺ Enjoys pretending to play different characters
- ☺ May be bossy
- ☺ Starts playing with other children, and likes some better than others
- ☺ May throw temper tantrums
- ☺ Can often stay with one activity for at least five minutes
- ☺ Is starting to share and take turns
- ☺ Understands that some things are "mine" and some are not
- ☺ Makes simple choices for himself
- ☺ Is able to separate from you much more easily
- ☺ Knows her name, age and sex
- ☺ Answers "who," "what" and "where" questions easily
- ☺ Uses 4 to 5 word sentences like, "I want to go outside," or "I don't like it!"



What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- 👋 Doesn't look at you
- 👋 Shows limited facial expressions
- 👋 Shows little interest in toys or other children
- 👋 Cannot focus on one activity for longer than three minutes
- 👋 Doesn't know how to "pretend"
- 👋 Hurts himself, like by biting himself or head banging
- 👋 Has a very difficult time separating from you
- 👋 Does not let you know when he or she is hurt
- 👋 Does not understand simple instructions
- 👋 Uses no two-word phrases (without imitating or repeating)
- 👋 Loses speech or social skills

Things to help your THREE-YEAR-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Play and have lots of fun together
- ✓ Read and talk a lot about how different people or characters in stories feel about things
- ✓ Give words to feelings saying things like, "When you hit that shows me you're mad," or "You're smiling...are you happy?"
- ✓ Have a special reading time each day, and slowly lengthen the stories so she can sit a little longer
- ✓ Play games using simple two-step directions
- ✓ Allow your child to do more for herself
- ✓ Tell your child often that he or she is fun, awesome, and a good helper

By 4 years...

A child typically:

- ☺ Expresses strong emotions and opinions at times
- ☺ Feels guilty about his bad behavior
- ☺ Is beginning to control his frustration
- ☺ "Talks back" and challenges things you are teaching her
- ☺ Begins to understand danger and things that are dangerous
- ☺ Compares things by saying phrases like, "Mine is better" or "You have a dog and I don't"
- ☺ Asks questions about her life and family after spending time with other families
- ☺ Has an active imagination and may have imaginary friends
- ☺ Likes everyone to do things the "right" way
- ☺ Becomes more independent and likes to play with other children
- ☺ Can ask for help

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- 👋 Is not interested in games or other children
- 👋 Repeats behaviors like rocking, hand flapping, spinning, etc.
- 👋 Cannot focus on one activity for longer than three minutes
- 👋 Uses sexual behavior or language you can't get her to stop
- 👋 Tries to hurt other children, adults or animals
- 👋 Hits or bites others without any self-control when upset
- 👋 Still clings and cries when you leave
- 👋 Speaks very few words, loses speech or social skills



Things to help your FOUR-YEAR-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Have fun with your child!
- ✓ Read with your child at least once every day
- ✓ Recognize good behavior and reward with encouragement and praise—this makes her want to do it more often!
- ✓ Keep helping your child talk about his or her feelings
- ✓ Express feelings using activities like drawing a "mad" picture or dancing an angry dance
- ✓ Keep a daily routine and let your child know what's coming up next
- ✓ Make sure your child has a chance to play with other children and encourage taking turns
- ✓ Pay attention to your child when he or she is talking
- ✓ Let your child make daily choices like, "Do you want to brush your teeth or get your pajamas on first?"
- ✓ Help your child feel important by giving her jobs like setting the table, picking up or feeding pets
- ✓ Talk about how people are the same, how they are different, and that it's okay
- ✓ Cuddle, hug and praise your child for all the new things he or she can do

By 5 years...

A child typically:

- ☺ Shows many emotions, including jealousy
- ☺ Can be demanding at times and cooperative at others
- ☺ Will be sensitive to other children's feelings
- ☺ Is able to follow simple rules like waiting in line or using a quiet voice
- ☺ Wants to please you, but may go against your authority
- ☺ May make up excuses or stories for his or her behavior to stay out of trouble
- ☺ Can take turns and share, but doesn't always want to
- ☺ Plays in small groups and may choose to leave someone out
- ☺ Likes to sing, dance and act
- ☺ Likes to make many independent choices about clothes, food and activities

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- ✋ Does not express a wide range of emotions
- ✋ Seems sad or unhappy most of the time
- ✋ Is very aggressive
- ✋ Is very fearful or shy
- ✋ Refuses to go to school
- ✋ Is only interested in one or two activities
- ✋ Cannot focus on any one activity for longer than five minutes
- ✋ Unable to make friends
- ✋ Does not understand that some things are not real
- ✋ Cannot separate from you without getting very upset
- ✋ Loses speech or social skills



Things to help your FIVE-YEAR-OLD with his or her social and emotional development:

- ✓ Be silly, laugh at your child's jokes and have fun together
- ✓ Encourage your child to ask for help instead of whining or pouting
- ✓ Don't be afraid to show a wide range of your emotions and how you deal with them in a healthy way
- ✓ Use magazines or pictures to point out real dangers (like guns or fire) and make-believe dangers (like monsters)
- ✓ Make sure your child gets enough exercise and rest
- ✓ Encourage your child to play games that involve working together
- ✓ Encourage creativity and understanding of others by acting out stories, dressing-up and pretending
- ✓ Gently remind him of rules and why we have them
- ✓ Allow your child to help plan activities
- ✓ Read with your child at least once each day
- ✓ Give lots of praise, hugs and encouragement every day

A Guide to a Young Child's Healthy Social & Emotional Development

First 5 Amador supports and designs programs for children ages 0-5 and their families.



For more information please visit our website
www.first5amador.com
or call us at (209) 257-1092.



This brochure is an adaptation of "Plays well with others..."
distributed by the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board.