

Social and Emotional Health of Children:

What is Social and Emotional Health?

Social and emotional health is a child's growing ability to:

- Form relationships
- Express emotions
- Manage strong feelings
- Explore new things
- Solve problems



Why is Social and Emotional Health So Important?

Social and emotional skills help children be ready to learn. This sets the foundation for how they will attend, focus, and start to learn their ABC's and 123's, among other important information!

Social and emotional skills also help children be ready to connect. This helps them learn how to approach, communicate with, and start to form bonds with others. This is the start of building skills to help form and maintain lasting relationships!

Children with <i>Emerging</i> Social and Emotional Health often can:	Children with <i>Strong</i> Social and Emotional Health often can:
Tune in to learning experiences for short periods of time	Focus attention for longer periods of time to complete a task or solve a problem
Start to learn the rules for how to share learning space with others	Use words and/or behaviors to learn together with others
Try out strategies to make friends	Make a friend and maintain connections with others
Manage strong emotions in positive ways some of the time	Manage strong emotions in positive ways most of the time
Show happiness in certain interactions with others	Enjoy most of their social interactions with others



Fostering Social and Emotional Health Starts Early!

Babies are not born with these skills. Their brains grow and develop through their relationships with loving, dependable adults. Children need adults to model and teach ABC's and 123's. The same is true for social and emotional skills! Adults can teach social skills such as turn taking. *Isabella, you have had a few minutes with the toy. How about you offer a turn to Nydia?* Adults can teach emotional skills by talking about how they manage their own strong feelings.

When I am feeling mad, I squeeze my fists and breathe in and out very deeply, like this. Let's try it together.

Social and Emotional Health of Children: Birth to Eight

Signs of Social and Emotional Health:



Infants and Toddlers ages 0-2	Preschoolers ages 3-5	Early Elementary ages 6-8
Cry, coo, smile, laugh, look at faces	Engage with others	Show respect and kindness towards others
Seek and accept comfort from a familiar person	Play well with others	Develop and keep friendships
Express many feelings	Start to manage strong feelings	Express strong feelings in appropriate ways
Show curiosity	Play make-believe	Show creativity and try new things
Attend to a person, activity, or toy	Begin to work independently	Focus attention to solve problems and complete tasks

When Development of Social and Emotional Health is Delayed:

Children who do not have emerging or strong social and emotional skills are not as ready to learn and connect in school. They are more likely to:

- have trouble making friends
- have behavior problems like biting, hitting, or using unkind words
- withdraw from others and play alone
- have difficulty learning
- develop longer term issues related to mental health and physical health

How Can You Support Children's Social and Emotional Health?

Children need help from adults to be ready to learn and connect. Adults help children set the foundation to get along with others and manage their feelings. Adults can use simple strategies every day to help a child develop social and emotional health, such as:

- cuddling, sharing a laugh, and playing with an infant or toddler
- taking time to listen to, engage, and talk with a preschooler about their day
- showing interest in a school age child's friends, activities, and projects

The great news is... it is never too late to help children develop these lifelong skills!

All children, no matter what their age, need the basics: safety, interaction, and love.

Relationships with caring adults are the building blocks for these basics and are so important for a child to develop strong social and emotional health!

To learn more about social and emotional health, access [Social and Emotional Health: A Guide for Families with Children Birth to Age 8](#), Revised in 2019.

