

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

Warm, positive relationships between adults and children are at the heart of healthy social-emotional development. Positive social skills and behaviour have been linked to success in learning.

From birth, children begin to develop the skills they need to relate well to others, these include:

- self control
- self worth
- a sense of belonging
- understanding the feelings of others

What will you see in your child's learning program?

- a calm, uncluttered setting with spaces for children to be alone or in a group
- interesting materials children can reach and use by themselves
- opportunities for children to choose a play partner and play materials
- family photos to connect the world of home with the learning program
- photos of the children playing and learning together
- a learning space that reflects the children who spend time there including their names, photos, cultural items, interests and learning projects

The Important Role of Adults in Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

Consistent, caring adults are important for children's healthy development. A child's social and emotional skills take time to develop and are helped along with the guidance of patient, caring adults. The role of adults in supporting children's social-emotional development is critical and lays the foundation for their future health and development. When children feel safe and close to the adults in their lives, they learn to have more trust and confidence.

What will you see in your child's learning program?

- a focus on building relationships with children
- a safe, secure and consistent environment
- educators listening carefully to children and responding to their needs and interests
- respect for each child's unique experiences and capabilities
- gentle guidance appropriate to the child's developmental stage
- educators who make learning interesting to children by building on their interests and strengths

- educators who show children by example, acceptable behaviour and how to solve problems

The Power of Supportive Relationships

Learning to live in relationship with oneself, others and the world is a lifelong skill. Respect is the core value of successful relationships.

Adults teach respect by having respectful behaviours, understanding that every child is unique and each has a different personality and way of responding to others and to situations. Adults stay calm when children lose control and gently guide them back to a sense of stability. Children learn that they are still lovable even when they are out of control and gradually learn to manage their emotions.

Through positive interactions with other children and adults, young children begin to take responsibility for themselves and develop awareness that others might have a different opinion from their own. The “me” of the early years gradually becomes “us” as the child moves from dependence to independence and eventually, interdependence where they rely on others and are able to have others rely on them.

What will you see in your child’s learning program?

- educators greeting children warmly and by name
- educators speaking clearly and calmly to children and encouraging children’s efforts
- children and educators laughing together
- educators letting children know ahead of time, if possible, that a change in routine is going to occur
- educators observing children’s play with interest, being fully present to the child and supporting the child’s efforts with a mixture of nods of approval, smiling, making “I wonder” statements and occasionally asking questions
- children and educators engaged in meaningful conversations where children receive feedback on their ideas and accomplishments
- educators encouraging children to learn from and support each other e.g. “Tommy knows how to do that, ask him to show you how”
- educators teaching how to get involved in play e.g. Taking Grace to the house area where children are playing with dolls and saying “Grace has come to see your new baby”
- children confidently trying new things, testing their theories and exploring and experimenting with materials

What can you do at home?

The first few years of your child's life lay the foundation for future learning and development. Get your child off to a good start by practising positive parenting.

- spend time with your child every day. Smile a lot. Play together. Share books
- comfort your child if he is sick or upset
- teach your child what is acceptable behaviour: "You can't throw your ball in the house, let's go outside and play"
- model acceptable behaviour, if you are angry, calm yourself e.g. deep breathing, count to ten; if necessary, give yourself a time out to regain your self control
- notice what your child is interested in and encourage her to talk about it
- encourage your child in her efforts: "You did a good job putting away your toys"
- learn to read your child's cues: "What is my child thinking and feeling right now?"
- take the time to listen to what your child has to say and what he might be feeling. Teach him the words to express his feelings
- give your child appropriate choices: "Would you like to wear your blue socks or your red socks?"
- play games like 'red light, green light', 'duck, duck, goose' or 'freeze tag'. This helps children learn self control

These positive parenting tips help build your child's self esteem and teach him or her the skills he or she needs to get along with others.

More Ideas

For more ideas on positive parenting check out Comfort, Play & Teach: A Positive Approach to Parenting and your child's development at

http://www.beststart.org/invest_in_kids/parenting_resources.html Or

Visit the family page provided by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

Possible quotations:

"What do children need? They need to be comforted and feel safe, especially when they are sick, tired, upset or hurt.

They need to play and explore their world. They need people to teach them how to think, solve problems and communicate.

They also need parents or caregivers to help them get along with others and learn right from wrong.” (Comfort, Play and Teach: A Positive Approach to Parenting)

“If a child does not know, she has the right to make mistakes. It works because after she sees the problem and the mistakes she made, then she knows.” (Five year old children’s ideas about the rights of children. Diana School, Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1990)

“Through relationships with important adults in their lives, infants and toddlers develop ... social-emotional wellness, which includes that ability to form satisfying connections with others, play, communicate, learn and experience the full spectrum of human emotions.” (Parklakian & Seibel, 2002, p. 7)

“When young children feel safer and more loved, they actual learn more.” (Riley, San Juan, Klinkner and Ramminger (2008). Social & Emotional Development: Connecting Science and Practice in Early Childhood Settings. p34)