

Social and Emotional Development

Social-emotional development is the cornerstone of skills that promote other areas of growth and learning, but at the same time can be harder to pinpoint. Included in social-emotional development are self-awareness and self-regulation, which are skills a child develops and integrates into their being at a young age.

Here you will find a chart of social and emotional developmental milestones.

Age	Milestones
The first year	From the start, babies eagerly explore their world including themselves and other people.
Birth to Three (3) Months	<p>Babies spend a lot of time getting to know their own bodies. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suck their own fingers • Observe their own hands • Acknowledge with facial expression they are being touched • Learn how body parts, like arms and legs, are attached to themselves and can move <p>Infants are interested in other people and learn to recognize primary caregivers. Most infants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be comforted by a familiar adult • Respond positively to touch • Interact best when in alert, attentive state • Benefit from short, frequent interactions more than long, infrequent ones • Smile and show pleasure in response to social stimulation
Three (3) to Six (6) Months	<p>Babies are more likely to initiate social interaction. They begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play peek-a-boo • May cry if play stops • Pay attention to own name • Smile spontaneously • Laugh aloud • Mimic facial expressions • May calm or quiet when talked to, held or rocked
Six (6) to Nine	<p>Babies show a wider emotional range and stronger preferences for familiar people. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express several clearly differentiated emotions

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(9) Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish friends from strangers • Respond actively to language and gestures • Show displeasure at the loss of a toy
Nine (9) to Twelve (12) Months	<p>As they near age one, imitation and self-regulation gain importance. Most babies can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed themselves finger foods • Hold a cup with two hands and drink with assistance • Hold out arms and legs while being dressed • Mimic simple actions • Show anxiety when separated from primary caregiver
1 – 2 Years	<p>Children become more aware of themselves and their ability to make things happen. They express a wider range of emotions and are more likely to initiate interaction with other people. At this stage, most children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize themselves in pictures or the mirror and smile or make faces at themselves • Show intense feelings for parents and show affection for other familiar people • Play by themselves and initiate their own play • Express negative feelings • Show pride and pleasure at new accomplishments • Imitate adult behaviors in play • Show a strong sense of self through assertiveness, directing others • Begin to be helpful, such as by helping to put things away
2-3 Years	<p>Children begin to experience themselves as more powerful, creative "doers." They explore everything, show a stronger sense of self and expand their range of self-help skills. Self-regulation is a big challenge. Two-year-olds are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show awareness of gender identity • Indicate toileting needs • Help to dress and undress themselves • Be assertive about their preferences and say no to adult requests • Begin self-evaluation and develop notions of themselves as good, bad, attractive, etc. • Show awareness of their own feelings and those of others, and talk about feelings • Experience rapid mood shifts and show increased fearfulness (for example, fear of the dark, or certain objects) • Display aggressive feelings and behaviors <p>Children enjoy parallel play, engaging in solitary activities near other children. They are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch other children and briefly join in play

Age	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defend their possessions • Begin to play house • Use objects symbolically in play • Participate in simple group activities, such as singing, clapping or dancing • Know gender identity

Resources

Milestones taken from the [PBS.org/wholechild](https://www.pbs.org/wholechild) website. Additional in-depth information on this topic can be found at [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org).

The Zero to Three website provides resources on the importance of healthy social and emotional development. In this [video](#) you will see how babies connect to those important to them and gain a sense of self.

In addition, Zero to Three features a section and series on [Developing Social-Emotional Skills](#) that provides activities and ideas on what one can do to enhance the social and emotional development of an infant. This tool can be a great strategy for working with families.

Another valuable resource is the [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning](#). CSEFEL training modules with handouts, videos, activities and materials provide a wealth of information that can be implemented into the delivery of services and support the family in meeting the needs of their infant or toddler. These age-appropriate milestones, temperament worksheets and videos provide information on this skill area and can support the service provider and family.

[Center for Early Childhood Health Consultation](#) contains behavior toolkits, a temperament tool and observation checklists for childcare settings.

[Early Childhood News](#) has articles on behavior and social-emotional development.

[National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\)](#) takes the research that shows which practices improve the social-emotional outcomes for young children with, or at risk for, delays or disabilities and creates **FREE** products and resources to help decision-makers, caregivers, and service providers apply these best practices in the work they do every day.

Activity

From these resources, identify two that will support your understanding of the importance of social-emotional development and how to enhance the caregiver/child relationship. Share and discuss in supervision.