

Connect with Me

Promoting Early Social & Emotional Development

Part of the *CIRCLE Infant & Toddler Teacher Training: Play with Me* series

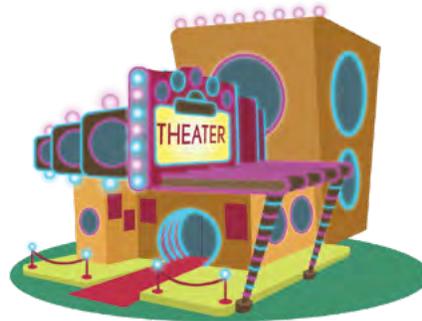
companion workbook

This workbook belongs to:

This workbook will help you review:



instructional strategies viewed in the workshop



social and emotional development topics discussed by experts in the theater



social and emotional milestones, theories, and academic outcomes from the library

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Navigating this Workbook

This companion workbook covers five parts (i.e., course modules) of the *Connect with Me* series. Parts 1 through 4 are organized by the three categories below:



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

The workshop in the *Connect with Me* course series contains videos filmed with real caregivers that demonstrate the key instructional strategies for supporting infant and toddler social and emotional development. There are a total of 20 strategies between the five course parts. These strategies are summarized in this workbook. You may find it helpful to review them as you practice implementing strategies in your classroom.



THE THEATER:

Hear from the Experts

The theater in the course contains interviews with experts on a wide variety of topics related to infant and toddler social and emotional development. Each part in the course series contains new expert videos. The key concepts presented in these videos are summarized in this workbook.



THE LIBRARY:

Dive Deeper

The library provides resources for you to dive deeper in your learning about early childhood development concepts. We've summarized the three sections in the library in this guide:

- Child Skill Development (Part 1)
- Connections to Theory (Part 2)
- Academic and Social Outcomes (Part 3)
- Book Club Recommendations (Part 4)

Part 1



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

The workshop in the *Connect with Me* course contains videos filmed with real caregivers that demonstrate the key instructional strategies for supporting infant and toddler social and emotional development. These strategies are summarized below, and you may find it helpful to review them as you practice implementing strategies in your classroom.

1 Express Warmth and Affection

Expressing warmth and affection through nonverbal behaviors, such as **smiling, cuddling, and providing a gentle touch**, reassures young children that teachers care about them and their well-being.

These expressions **build a trusting relationship** between the child and teacher in which the child feels safe and secure and that their needs and interests are important.

Other examples of warmth and affection may include a warm and gentle tone of voice, a soft or happy facial expression, and pacing that matches the child's energy level.

Tips

- Children enjoy learning from and playing with teachers who clearly show they like spending time with them. Combine affection with a playful attitude to keep children engaged when exploring new concepts.
- Transitioning from home to school can be distressing for young children. Teachers who express joy and affection for children when they enter the classroom can help ease this transition. Teachers can use an excited voice and outstretched arms to signal to children that they are wanted and belong.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel expressing warmth and affection in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Express Warmth & Affection

Why are warmth and affection toward a child important to the child’s parents? How can you show parents that their children will receive warmth and affection?

2 Comfort Children in Distress

Comforting children in distress helps them learn **how to manage their own emotions and behavior.**

When teachers comfort infants and toddlers in distress, children learn to trust that teachers will meet their needs, and they begin to learn how to soothe themselves. If teachers consistently ignore a distressed child, the child may feel rejected and struggle to form secure attachments with teachers.

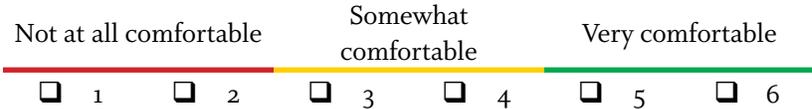
Teachers can comfort a child in distress by **responding quickly** in a calm and relaxed manner and by providing physical comfort by cuddling the child. Teachers may also use a quiet, soft tone of voice and gentle words to calm the child.

Tips

- When more than one baby cries at once, it can be challenging for teachers to respond to them all. If a teacher cannot physically comfort a child, she can use her voice to acknowledge the baby and make sure someone attends to his needs as soon as possible.
- Young children may show distress by crying or having a tantrum **but also by withdrawing or signaling they want to be close** to a trusted adult. Keep an eye out for children who show distress in quieter ways.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel comforting children in distress in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Comfort Children in Distress

What are the different ways you've seen caregivers respond to infant and toddler distress? How comforting to children do you think these responses are?

3 Label Feelings

Teachers can help infants and toddlers identify and learn about their feelings by labeling them. For example: "Derrick, you look happy!" or, "Jade, I know you feel sad when it's time to say goodbye to Mommy."

When teachers name feelings, they are **building children's emotional vocabulary**, which allows children to talk about their feelings as they grow older. Teachers may begin by labeling basic feelings, such as happy, mad, sad, and scared. They can then label more complex feelings, such as frustrated, disappointed, and embarrassed. If teachers are not sure what a child is feeling, it's okay to take a guess and ask the child. For example, "Avery, you look scared. Did that loud noise scare you?" As children grow and learn, they can help adults correctly identify whether they feel frustrated, disappointed, or ignored, for example. However, when children are very young, they have to hear different feeling words to begin learning the differences between those words.

Teachers can identify their own feelings, too. For example, teachers can say, "I am so happy to see you at school today!" or, "When I see children hurting each other, I feel sad."

Tips

- While intense, negative emotions receive lots of attention from teachers, it's just as important to pay attention to children's displays of positive emotions. For example, when a teacher sees a baby smile, she can say, "You are smiling! You look so happy!"
- Teachers help young children manage their feelings and behaviors by embracing the idea that infants and toddlers experience a wide range of feelings, such as grief, love, elation, and hopelessness. When teachers label feelings, they are acknowledging that all feelings are normal and important and that they can help children cope with their feelings.
- Teachers can use group activities with toddlers to help them learn how to identify feelings. Visual aids and songs or rhymes are helpful to capture young children's attention and explain feelings.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable are you with labeling a wide range of feelings in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Label Feelings

Think back on the last week. Can you remember how many feelings you labeled for children? Were there any feelings you missed labeling?

4 Encourage Back-and-Forth Play

Back-and-forth play involves turn taking between teachers and children during a game, activity, or conversation, such as peek-a-boo or mimicking sounds. Back-and-forth play encourages children to communicate, develop self-control skills, initiate play, cooperate with others, and increase their attention span.

Back-and-forth play follows a predictable sequence of action-response-action—that is, either the teacher or child initiates an action or conversation and the other person responds, which prompts another action or vocalization from the teacher or child. What is crucial in this interchange is how the teacher responds positively to the child’s cues.

Teachers can initiate back-and-forth play by **paying attention to children’s interests** and **joining in their play or conversation**. Teachers can take turns playing or communicating and show interest in what children are saying and doing. Taking turns also involves sharing control with children (of toys or objects, for example) so that they can be active participants in the interaction. In a back-and-forth exchange, teachers should make sure to provide enough time for the child to respond before they take another turn.

Tips

- When interacting with a young child, it is important to pause and wait for her to respond. This encourages her to take her turn in the back-and-forth play.
- Toddlers enjoy being active participants in their play. Back-and-forth play teaches them how to interact socially in appropriate ways with the teacher as participant and model. Children learn that they can get others interested in activities when their teacher listens to them and follows their lead.
- Outdoor play, such as tossing a ball, provides another opportunity for teachers and children to take turns and learn from each other.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with initiating and joining in back-and-forth play in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Back-and-Forth Play

Why should caregivers give children enough time to respond when engaged in this kind of activity?
Are there any back-and-forth activities you tend to rush that could be slowed down a bit?

5 Use Praise to Encourage Positive Behavior and Cooperation

Praise is giving children positive verbal feedback about their behavior, actions, or ideas.

Teachers can praise children to encourage positive behaviors, such as cooperating with peers, following directions, generating creative ideas, and persisting during a difficult task. Children are more likely to repeat behaviors that have been praised, which can help decrease undesired behaviors and increase more positive ones.

Teachers can **use descriptive praise** to help children understand exactly what they did well. For example, teachers can say, “That was very kind of you to give Jacob a crayon,” or, “Thank you for throwing your trash away.” Teachers should remember to pay attention to positive behaviors and immediately tell the child what he or she did well.

Teachers can also comment on and **praise children’s effort** as they play and work. Praising effort is important because persistence is a quality that will help children be successful eventually, even if they do not succeed the first time. Working hard at difficult tasks builds children’s self-esteem more than being praised for doing things that are easy for them. For example, teachers can say, “I see you working hard on that puzzle. You just have one more piece to put in!” This type of praise supports persistence, resilience, and growth.



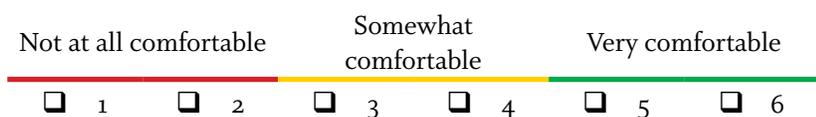
Tips

- Young children sometimes need help focusing and maintaining their attention on objects and conversations. Teachers can help by using praise and encouragement to maintain their focus as long as children are interested in the activity.

- Giving praise and providing encouragement also helps shape young children’s positive behavior toward their peers. When children play together, it is helpful for teachers to use praise and prosocial language, as well as model appropriate words and behaviors and assist children in using them.
- New activities can be challenging to young children. When teachers encourage their persistence and attention to the task, children usually continue to try and do their best in completing the task. Similar to acknowledging children’s feelings by labeling them, it is important to acknowledge when a task may be difficult and encourage a child to continue trying.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using praise to encourage positive behavior and cooperation in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Use Praise

Why should specific praise (praise that is specific to a child’s actions, ideas, or language), rather than universal praise, be the strategy of choice?

THE THEATER:

Hear from the Experts



The theater in the *Connect with Me* course contains interviews with experts on a wide variety of topics related to infant and toddler social and emotional development. The key concepts presented in these videos are summarized below.

WATCH
FILM

Should I pick up a crying baby?

There is a long-held belief that it's best not to pick up a baby who is crying because this would spoil the baby. This isn't true. Crying is completely natural, and how an adult responds is the opportunity for that baby to feel safe and secure by knowing, "When I cry, you are going to attend to me. My needs are met. You are there for me." Picking up the baby when he or she is crying is an early sign of you communicating attachment, or saying "I am here for you. I am responding to you." If the baby is crying and you cannot attend to the baby, even acknowledging "I'm coming" can communicate that you care.

It is important for teachers to know the different levels of crying because crying is one of the only forms of communication for infants. Babies' crying may intensify the longer it goes without a response, until it reaches a peak that indicates significant distress. Teachers should be responsive, intentional, and consistent with providing comfort early to avoid these peaks.

WATCH
FILM

What are social and emotional red flags?

Teachers want to see kids expressing a range of emotions. Teachers should worry when babies don't express some sadness or disappointment, or when they're not showing signs of joy or smiling in response to someone. Babies want a lot of attention from adults, and they try to get it from caregivers. Think about the times you've been in a grocery store or at a restaurant and a baby tries to capture your attention and smiles at you. That's what teachers should see. We worry when babies don't show a wide range of emotions, when their emotions are dampened, when they don't show enough joy, when they're having long, long bouts of crying. When babies can't be comforted, teachers should be concerned. Toddlers who tantrum for long periods of time, who are overly aggressive with others, or who bang their heads or pull their hair might need some help. Teachers need to know what is normal development for infants and toddlers and what is not. So it's important to know developmental milestones, and red flags occur when children do not meet them. For example, from zero to three, if a child doesn't respond to loud sounds, that's of concern. At three to six months, if a baby doesn't coo, make sounds, or show affection toward a caregiver, this is also cause for concern. These developmental red flags should prompt teachers to refer the child to early intervention.

Early Childhood Intervention, or ECI, serves babies from zero to three years old with developmental delays or a diagnosed disability, such as Down syndrome or autism.

ECI provides services such as:

- **Physical therapy**, or working with gross motor skills, like crawling, walking, or pulling to stand.
- **Occupational therapy**, working with the fine motor movements, like using fingers to pick something up or being able to stack blocks.
- **Speech therapy**, which involves helping children learn how to talk.
- **Nutrition services**, for babies who are having difficulty gaining weight or need to be monitored for their nutrition.
- **Developmental services**, provided by an early intervention specialist, who teaches things like focus, attention, and problem solving.

WATCH
FILM

How can teachers foster a positive relationship with parents?

Every baby has a system of caregivers that includes family members and teachers, and every child is impacted by the quality of that system. Therefore, it is really important that all participants in the system come together for the benefit of the child. Teachers can engage parents in relationships not only through friendliness and open communication, but also by acknowledging their concerns and worries. It is often difficult for parents to leave children in the care of another, and sometimes it is teachers who witness major milestones like a first step or first word. Children act as observers in moments when families and teachers come together, so it is also a good opportunity to show the child that both can be trusted to work together to support him or her.

WATCH
FILM

How do emotions develop?

Emotional development is the process of learning how to express, understand, manage, and regulate our emotions. There is tremendous development in this area during infancy and toddlerhood. Young babies express their emotions just like we do—with their facial expressions, with their tone, with their body. But the expressions of emotions develop over time. Early in infancy there is general pleasure and displeasure. As they get older, the feelings of sadness and joy and fear emerge. And we know that fear emerges about the same time that infants start to crawl, around six to nine months. Later on, children begin to develop self-conscious emotions as they recognize themselves and know that they're separate from someone else. These emotions, like shame, guilt, pride, and embarrassment, start to develop around 24 months. Children should express all different kinds of emotions, and they're better at it when they have caregivers who talk to them about emotions, about their own feelings, and about other people's feelings.



THE LIBRARY:

Child Development: Social & Emotional Skills

The library provides resources for you to dive deeper in your learning about early childhood development concepts. In Part 1 of the *Connect with Me* course, the library covers social and emotional skill development over the first four years of life and gives us a look at key developmental milestones.

Social & Emotional Skill Progression

FROM BIRTH TO ONE YEAR

Social and emotional development in the first year is about bonding with familiar caregivers and feeling secure that both physical and emotional needs will be met. An infant's emotional state is usually tied to her physical state—infants tend to cry when they feel hungry, uncomfortable, or tired. And they will show contentment when they are held close and cuddled.

Babies do not yet have the ability to regulate their emotions, but during their **first three months**, they can sometimes calm themselves by sucking on their hands, a toy, or a pacifier. They will also be comforted by the voice, sight, smell, and touch of familiar caregivers. Even babies as young as one month are developing socially and will enjoy interacting with adults, and sometimes they may cry when the interaction stops.

The **three- to six-month** age range is characterized by more recognizable displays of emotion, from interest and excitement to distress and displeasure. Babies at this age will often be seen observing people and activities and responding to familiar caregivers by looking, smiling, and cooing. They are learning from the adults around them and will copy some facial expressions, like smiling and frowning. They will start to display social interest by initiating eye contact and cooing. Look for signs of interest and excitement in these babies—they might squeal, laugh out loud, blow bubbles, or wave their arms and legs in anticipation.

At **six to nine months**, babies begin to express distinct emotions, such as fear, sadness, anger, and excitement. They may start to cling to familiar caregivers and respond to other adults differently. They will use familiar caregivers as a secure base and seek reassurance from them when they start to explore, for example, when they look back at the caregiver while crawling. Six- to nine-month-olds will also begin to recognize themselves in the mirror, turn their heads when they hear their names, and seek physical contact by reaching out to touch others.

From **nine to 12 months**, babies increasingly look to familiar caregivers for comfort and may become shy or nervous around unfamiliar adults, a perfectly normal behavior referred to as “stranger anxiety.” But babies in this age range will also show affection through hugs, pats, and kisses, and will likely repeat sounds and actions that get attention or laughter. They understand the word “no” and are starting to communicate more directly by showing, pointing, and waving bye-bye. Nine- to 12-month-olds also begin to show a sense of humor, for example by laughing at funny faces. And they love simple interaction games, such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.

FROM ONE TO TWO YEARS

From **12 to 18 months**, toddlers become very busy people! As they learn to walk and talk, they can take a more active role in playing social games and doing a bit of exploring on their own. However, young toddlers still need the security of knowing they can come back to their caregivers for safety and comfort when needed. As they try out new skills, toddlers at this age also enjoy praise and clapping to celebrate their accomplishments, a sign of self-awareness. They'll often be attached to a favorite toy or blanket and will actively move away from people or objects if they feel uncomfortable. When exploring or faced with a new situation, they'll likely look to a caregiver for reassurance. Although they can be possessive of toys at times, one-year-olds will often bring toys to share with caregivers.

From **18 to 24 months**, toddlers will begin to assert independence, using words like “no!” and “mine!” They'll often start to have their own preferences for things like food and will want to try to do things without help, like climbing on furniture or taking off their shoes. Toddlers at this age are still learning to manage their emotions and express themselves verbally, so they may have temper tantrums or use physical aggression when frustrated. But they should also show increasing social awareness, empathy, and caring for others, such as comforting another child who is hurt. At this age you'll start to see toddlers engaging in parallel play—this is when children aren't coordinating their play with other children but are happily playing near or next to them. Finally, a big way toddlers at this age learn is from copying others, especially adults and other children.

FROM TWO TO THREE YEARS

At **two years**, toddlers can begin to recognize some emotions in themselves and others. They begin to take pride in their own accomplishments by smiling, clapping, cheering for themselves, or saying “I did it!” With a small but growing vocabulary, two-year-olds will also begin to say the names of feelings.

Socially, two-year-olds are learning to interact with and appreciate their peers. Even if they are not playing together yet, two-year-olds should generally show interest in other children and enjoy being around them. They may show preference for certain children and affection for friends. They should start to take turns sharing toys and space with assistance from their caregivers. They can also learn to say “please” and “thank you” when reminded by a patient adult. And they will participate in simple group activities or games, such as ring around the rosie.

Finally, two-year-olds are well known for their intense emotions. They can be joyful and excited, and they also have rapid mood shifts, temper tantrums, and even engage in physical aggression. All of these behaviors are a normal part of social and emotional development because two-year-olds have not yet learned how to regulate their powerful emotions. Adults can help moderate tantrums with sensitivity, patience, and some clever prevention strategies. Check out our *Connect with Me* Part 5 module, “Preventing and Responding to Challenging Behavior,” to learn more about helping toddlers regulate their emotions and behaviors.

FROM THREE TO FOUR YEARS

At **three years**, children begin expressing a wider range of emotions, such as embarrassment, boredom, bravery, and gratefulness. Sometimes this includes the development of specific fears, such as of monsters, the dark, certain animals, or costumed characters like clowns. As their vocabulary grows, they will more commonly express their emotions through words in addition to actions and body language. They will also begin to develop patience and the ability to wait before becoming upset. Unlike two-year-olds, three-year-olds may start to demonstrate a capacity to manage their emotions by asking for help or using conscious self-soothing strategies, like deep breathing, with assistance from adults.

Three-year-olds can follow familiar daily routines at home and school, as well as simple rules for group games. Socially, they will share toys and take turns with assistance, and they will initiate or join in cooperative play with other children. Even though they will continue to have conflicts with peers, they will start to negotiate solutions or accept a compromise offered by an adult. When asked, they can name children they consider to be their friends. They will also begin to notice differences and similarities in people, such as recognizing that people have different eye colors.

Take a look at the full list of social & emotional milestones on the following pages!



Social & Emotional

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

0-3 MONTHS

- Likes to be held close and cuddled
- Turns head toward familiar voice
- Enjoys looking at faces
- Begins to smile and coo at people
- Enjoys playing with people and might cry when playing stops
- Cries when hungry, uncomfortable, tired, or unhappy
- Can briefly calm self by sucking on hand or pacifier
- Is comforted by voice, sight, smell, and touch of familiar caregiver

3-6 MONTHS

- Observes people and activities
- Responds with eye gaze, smiling, and cooing when spoken to, picked up, or shown affection by a familiar caregiver
- Initiates social interactions with others by making eye contact and cooing
- Copies some facial expressions, like smiling or frowning
- Laughs aloud, squeals, blows bubbles
- Shows excitement by waving arms and legs
- Communicates distress verbally (fusses, cries) and nonverbally (turns head, frowns, arches back, spits up)
- Stops crying when a familiar caregiver comes near
- Responds to other people's emotions

6-9 MONTHS

- Looks back and forth between toy and adult while playing
- Reaches out to touch another person
- Responds differently to caregiver and strangers, may become clingy with familiar adults
- Turns and looks when name is called
- Recognizes self in mirror
- Expresses distinct emotions, such as fear, sadness, anger, excitement
- Seeks reassurance from caregivers, for example starts to crawl and often "checks back" with caregiver

9-12 MONTHS

- Repeats sounds and actions that get attention or laughter
- Shows affection to others, such as hugs, pats, and kisses
- Uses several gestures like showing, pointing, and waving bye-bye
- Plays simple interaction games, such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
- Looks to familiar adults for comfort
- Is shy or nervous with strangers and may cry when separated from primary caregiver ("stranger anxiety")
- Understands "no"
- Begins to show a sense of humor, for example laughing at funny faces

12-18
MONTHS

- Shows or points to object and looks at caregiver to make sure the caregiver sees it too
- Brings toy to share with caregiver
- Enjoys praise and clapping to celebrate accomplishments
- Moves toward or away from people or objects to express comfort/discomfort
- Looks to caregiver for reassurance when faced with a new situation
- Often attached to favorite toy or blanket

18-24
MONTHS

- Plays near or next to other children (“parallel play”)
- Copies others, especially adults and older children
- Shows signs of empathy and caring for others (e.g., comforting another child who is hurt or giving bottle to a crying baby)
- Begins to assert independence (“No!” “Mine!”) and own preferences and wants to try doing things without help
- May have temper tantrums and use physical aggression when frustrated

24-36
MONTHS

- Says “please” and “thank you” when reminded
- Shows interest in other children and enjoys being around them, even if not playing together yet
- May show preference for certain children, show affection for friends
- Participates in simple group activity or group game, like chase
- Begins to take turns with assistance
- Recognizes some emotions in self and others; begins to name feelings
- Takes pride in own accomplishments by smiling, clapping, cheering for self, or saying “I did it!”
- May have increased temper tantrums, physical aggression, or rapid mood shifts

36-48
MONTHS

- Can follow familiar daily routines at home and school
- Begins to notice differences and similarities in people (e.g., skin color, hair color, abilities)
- Can name a friend
- Initiates or joins in cooperative play with other children
- Joins in group games with simple rules
- Begins to negotiate solutions to conflicts or might accept compromise offered by an adult
- Shares toys and takes turns, with assistance
- Expresses a wider range of emotions (e.g., embarrassed, bored, brave, grateful)
- Develops specific fears (e.g., monsters, the dark, certain animals, costumed characters)
- Begins to develop patience (is able to briefly wait without becoming upset), with assistance
- Expresses emotions through words in addition to actions and body language
- Begins to manage emotions by asking for help or using conscious self-soothing strategies (e.g., deep breaths to calm down, self-talk), with assistance

References

For this section, we reviewed many of the available charts and resources to create our list, including:

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Part 2



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

1 Be Predictable

Young children who have predictable teachers understand that their needs will be met, which contributes to feeling safe and secure in their relationships with their caregivers.

Predictability in caregiving means that teachers respond consistently, warmly, and sensitively when infants and toddlers are hungry, tired, upset, or ready to play.

There will be times when teachers cannot meet children's needs immediately, but they can use their voice to acknowledge that they heard children's signals or cues and that they will be there to help them as soon as they can.

Being predictable also means following through on commitments to a child. Once teachers have said that they will do something (e.g., find his favorite blanket, not let someone else play with her toy while she goes to the bathroom), it is important that they follow through with their promise to ensure that the child experiences that teachers can be trusted and are a safe and secure base.

It is also important that teachers be predictable when setting limits on behavior. Teachers should keep classroom rules simple and consistent and respond promptly, calmly, and firmly when children act in ways that are unsafe or disruptive.

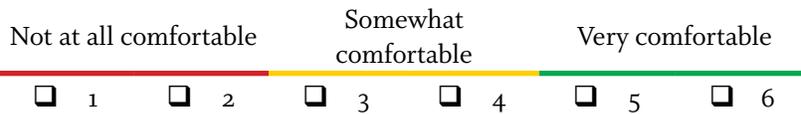


Tips

- Some children begin their day tired, some may be upset after saying goodbye to a parent, and others come ready to play, but all children need teachers who welcome them warmly every morning and start their day in a predictable way. Allow time for the children to practice some independence unpacking their belongings, and provide support when they need help. Respond sensitively to the children's signals that they are tired, shy, or ready to play before providing choices of toys and activities.
- If a child isn't following directions, sometimes you can avoid a power struggle by approaching him in a calm, warm, and consistent way and helping him instead of repeating directions, focusing on how he wasn't following directions, or giving up. Children are more likely to cooperate if they see a caregiver's reaction as consistent and supportive.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with changing your behavior to be more predictable in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Be Predictable

Why would unpredictable caregiver responses be unsettling for an infant or toddler?

2 Redirect Undesired Behavior

Redirecting undesired behavior is when teachers **offer a positive behavior** to replace the negative or undesired behavior of the child.

Teachers should avoid using “no,” “stop,” and “don’t.” These words do not help children learn what they **should be doing** instead. Additionally, if a child hears these words often, they begin to tune them out and may ignore them in an emergency situation.

Teachers can help children redirect their attention by requesting a more desirable behavior. For example, if a child is drawing on the wall, you can redirect the child by saying, “Let’s draw on this paper instead of the wall.” Teachers may also want to model the positive behavior. For example, if a child is playing roughly with another child, teachers can model how to play gently and say, “Use gentle hands like this.”

Another redirecting technique is to make a substitution when a child wants a toy that is already in use. Teachers can redirect the child’s attention to another object or help the child find a different activity while waiting for the toy she wanted.

Redirection positively guides young children to positive behaviors.



Tips

- Babies love to explore, touch things, and put them in their mouths... and that's how they learn best! However, teachers may need to redirect a baby to play with something more appropriate at times when babies try to explore or mouthe something that's not safe or sanitary, such as a teacher's earrings or someone's shoes. Teachers can substitute a more appropriate toy or activity in a positive way that doesn't disrupt the baby's mood or play.
- During tense peer interactions, try redirecting behavior by modeling actions and simple phrases for the child to imitate, without drawing attention to what he is doing wrong. This modeling and imitation is an excellent way for children to practice more positive behaviors.
- If teachers encounter some resistance to a task, making the task into a game is a good way to redirect a young child's behavior and avoid getting into a power struggle. For example, if a child does not want to clean up his toy cars, try reframing cleanup as a game of driving and jumping the toy cars into a box.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with redirecting undesired behaviors in positive ways?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Redirect Undesired Behaviors

What kinds of strategies do you use now that might be replaced with positive redirection strategies?

3 Follow Consistent Daily Schedules & Routines

When young children have consistent schedules and routines, their world feels more predictable and secure.

Following routines means doing activities **in a certain order and around the same time each day**. For example, after breakfast, toddlers may play in different areas of the room, then play outside, then have snack time, and then participate in a shared book reading before lunch and naptime. While these activities may occur at slightly different times each day, they occur in the same order, and children begin to anticipate what happens next in their day.

Although being consistent is very important, teachers should also be flexible, because children's needs change over time. Some children may not need to have their diaper changed or go to the bathroom at the exact same time each day. Schedules may shift for special occasions, such as special visitors to the classroom or field trips. When children are secure in their daily schedules and routines, it is easier for them to adapt with less stress and anxiety when schedules or routines have to change.

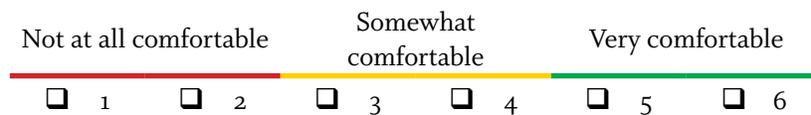


Tips

- Teachers can use a visual schedule posted at the child's height to highlight the major activities of the day. A picture of a child performing the activity, or an icon that represents the activity with the activity's name, can orient children to what's happening next in their day.
- Smooth transitions help reduce children's frustration, confusion, and challenging behaviors. So establishing a consistent way to transition from one activity to the next is a very important part of the daily routine for both teachers and children! Capture young children's attention by singing songs or nursery rhymes, doing fingerplays, and playing brief games while waiting to transition to the next activity. Songs, timers, or verbal warnings can also be used to let children know that they will soon transition to a different activity.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with following consistent schedules and routines in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Follow Consistent Daily Schedules & Routines

What are some of the predictable routines that contribute a feeling of security in your classroom? What happens in your class that you think might add too much unpredictability?

4 Help Children Share Space

Young children need guidance from teachers to learn how to share space and materials and play together. Sharing space is needed when more than one child is in an area.

Teachers can play alongside young children to interpret their verbal and nonverbal communication for their peers and help resolve conflicts that may arise. For example, a teacher may say:

- “Remember, our rule is one friend on the slide at a time. Wait until Jesse goes down and then it will be your turn.”
- “Jermain, let’s move you over a little bit so that Aria can sit here, too.”
- “Lloyd is using that shovel, Terrence. Let’s find another shovel for you.”

Providing enough materials also helps young children share space with others. If all children have access and opportunity to play with objects in the different play and learning areas, conflicts are reduced.

Teachers can also model what to say when children are playing in the same area. For example, teachers can say, “Amayrah, let’s say ‘excuse me’ to let Evan know that you need to walk behind him,” or “Isabella would like to play with the trucks. Isabella, ask your friend for a truck. Say, ‘Truck please.’”



Tips

- Often it helps to physically support children, such as positioning them in a seat or play area in ways that help them feel more comfortable and therefore more willing to share the space.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with helping children share space in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Help Children Share Space

Sharing space and materials does not come naturally to toddlers. What is the teacher’s role in helping them learn how to do this?

5 Support Turn-Taking

Learning how to take turns is the first step for children in learning how to share, which is a difficult concept for toddlers to grasp. Teachers can support young children's ability to take turns through modeling, explaining, and giving specific praise.

Teachers can help children take turns with each other throughout the day, such as when rolling a ball back and forth, taking turns going down a slide, or taking turns washing hands at the sink. Even infants can learn how to take turns with their teacher by passing an object back and forth as the teacher says, "My turn. Your turn."

Using explanations also helps infants and toddlers learn how to take turns. Teachers can explain what's going to happen next, why it's happening, and what happens afterward. For example: "Todd, it's Mariah's turn with the puzzle. She's been waiting patiently for the duck puzzle. We're going to let Mariah take her turn and then you get a turn with a different toy. What would you like to play with next?"

Remember to use specific praise and describe children's actions when children do share to help think about their positive behavior. For example, teachers can say, "Did you see Mariah smile when you gave her the puzzle? She really liked that."



Tips

- Before children can take turns on their own, they should practice taking turns through structured activities led by adults. Toddlers do best when turns are kept very short, everyone gets a turn, and there is a clear order to who gets a turn and when.
- Music and songs are a great way to practice taking turns! Use musical cues to prompt children to take turns and let other children take turns.
- Playing outside is a great time to take turns rolling a ball back and forth or take turns going down a slide. While you may feel a little silly going down the slide yourself, modeling is a great way to show toddlers how to wait for a turn and then how to take a turn!

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with supporting turn-taking in your classroom?

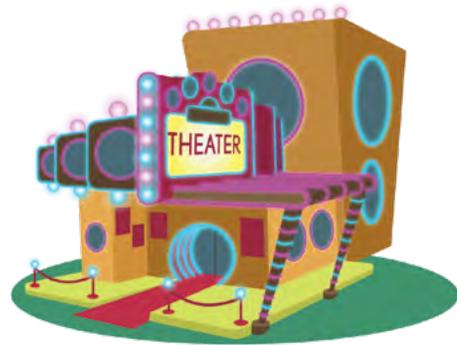
Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Support Turn-Taking

What are some common activities during your day that are good opportunities to encourage more turn-taking?

THE THEATER:

Hear from the Experts

WATCH
FILM

What is attachment?

Beginning at birth, an infant and primary caregiver begin to form an enduring, emotional bond that becomes a source of security and love to the infant. The process of attachment evolves during the first year of life through these relationships.

Within an attachment relationship, it's important to have very predictable, consistent interactions. The caregiver, through daily, responsive interactions, especially in times of distress, must provide warmth and comfort so that the infant's sense of safety and trust can develop. Unfortunately, when responses and reactions are unpredictable or unreliable, the infant might not develop that sense of trust and therefore feels insecure in the relationship. In extreme cases of neglect or trauma, we see a disorganized attachment relationship—when a caregiver who is supposed to be a source of comfort is instead a source of pain or fear. Read more about attachment in the next section, “Connecting Developmental Theories to Social & Emotional Development.”

WATCH
FILM

Can children have more than one attachment figure?

Children cannot form an unlimited number of attachments, but they can form multiple ones. When parents work outside the home, infants spend much of their day with other caregivers. It is important for babies to form secure attachments to their childcare providers. For this to happen, that provider must be consistently responsive to the infant's needs, such as hunger, comfort, and playful stimulation in order to promote secure attachment.

Frequent teacher turnover or staffing changes throughout the day are threats to infants forming a secure attachment. Whenever possible, caregivers should remain consistent throughout the infancy period.

WATCH
FILM

Can toddlers understand rules?

Toddlers do not yet have the brain capacity to think about or rationalize their behavior because they lack fully developed language and executive function skills. This means toddlers usually do not understand or remember rules, especially if the rule is a general principle that we expect them to apply to many situations (e.g., “Keep your hands to yourself.”). However, toddlers can begin to understand specific, simple instructions that are gently reminded over time. For example, “touch gently” is a rule that is often used in specific contexts and can be reinforced by modeling from the teacher.

When helping children remember instructions, it's important to have realistic expectations, and use the same language when stating the instructions and repeat them as often as necessary. As toddlers grow, they will need fewer and fewer reminders.



Why are routines and classroom organization important?

When establishing routines for toddlers, it's important to think about the organization and set up of the room. When arriving each morning, the child should know what comes first, next, and so on.

Thinking ahead and planning helps prevent problematic situations. Caregivers must also keep in mind the developmental level and individual needs of every child. The learning environment should match the abilities of the toddlers. Tips to keep in mind include:

- Have displays at eye level for toddlers
- Use visual cues to show where things belong
- Always have duplicates of favorite toys
- After playing with toys, model how to clean up
- Help children find another place to play if there are too many children in one area

THE LIBRARY:



Connecting Developmental Theories to Social & Emotional Development

ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Erik Erikson, a German-born American developmental psychologist, is the father of psychosocial theory. Psychosocial theory describes human psychological growth across the lifespan from birth to death and focuses on both psychological and social developmental milestones. Erikson identified eight stages of development, briefly described below. During each period, Erikson felt there was a unique crisis or challenge. The name of each stage reflects the challenge for that age. For example, unless an infant develops a sense of trust in the world, he will carry a sense of mistrust as development continues.

- Trust vs mistrust: from birth to one year
- Autonomy vs shame or doubt: From one year to three years
- Initiative vs guilt: from three years to five years
- Industry vs inferiority: middle childhood from 6 to 12 years
- Identity vs role confusion: adolescence from 12 to 19 years
- Intimacy vs isolation: early adulthood from 19 years up to 40 years
- Generativity vs stagnation or self-absorption: middle adulthood from 40 years to 65 years
- Integrity vs despair: late adulthood from 65 years on

Erikson's theory guides our relationship building with children across these different stages. Relationships are at the heart of all developmentally appropriate practice. What does this mean for a teacher of young children?

Erikson described the central task of infancy as the need to form a **sense of trust** against a negative element of mistrust. If needs are met consistently during the first year of life, infants learn that the world and the people in it are good. This sense of trust contributes to the development of a positive outlook. Caregivers of infants must understand the importance of responsive, attentive care and must appreciate that all infants need to have a sense of security that comes from continuity of care.

Teachers of toddlers should remember that every toddler deserves to have a caregiver who understands and enjoys their exuberance and their fearless exploration of the environment. Toddlers thrive with teachers who support their **developing autonomy (sense of self)** while at the same time protecting them from possible dangers. Constantly stopping a toddler or giving frequent negative feedback can foster a sense of shame or doubt about themselves. Toddlers are still developing self-control, and often their actions are impulsive. Teachers must set limits to keep children safe, but it's important for toddlers to strive to master new skills under the guidance of a caring adult.

Older toddlers or three-year-olds begin to form a sense of themselves as "do-ers," competent and full of ideas and energy. They are able to initiate their own activities and become very purposeful in their play.

When young preschoolers have ideas for an “invention” or a drawing, a supportive teacher will guide them and not immediately respond with negativity. An attitude of, “Why don’t you try that?” or “That is a great idea for an invention” will encourage more ideas in addition to promoting the child’s feeling of self-worth. On the other hand, constantly saying no to attempts to follow their own **initiative** can lead to feelings of guilt for suggesting or wanting to try something original and new.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

All humans have needs that must be met for survival, as well as needs that must be met in order to lead a useful, productive life. Abraham Maslow created the Hierarchy of Needs pyramid to describe those human needs, starting with the most basic needs at the base of the pyramid. According to Maslow, each person’s behavior is motivated by these needs. Unless the basic physical needs are satisfied, people are unable to fulfill their potential.

The five levels of the hierarchy begin with the most basic needs. No human being can maintain life without food, clothing, sleep, and shelter. These needs are considered **physiological** (or biological) needs. If basic needs are met, we begin to seek safety in the world, which is the second level. This sense of **safety** includes protective factors such as stability, protection, and security. Young children experience a sense of security when they are kept safe and protected from harm or neglect. Children’s environments and their caregivers should offer a feeling of safety and security.

After the safety and security needs have been met, children are motivated to seek satisfaction of their psychological needs. It is natural to seek out **social interaction**. This is the level at which the child needs others to love him and to provide him with a sense of belonging. At this level, some sort of caregiver (e.g., parents, teachers, extended family members) needs to provide stability in order for the child to invest love in someone else. The child’s sense of belonging may be threatened by factors such as divorce, death of a parent, moving to a new home or childcare center, or other family stress factors, including poverty.

At the **esteem** level the child is self-motivated to search for feelings of self-worth. At this level, the child has a need for respect and attention from others, while also having a need for self-respect. This includes feelings of confidence, competence, and independence.

The final level is **self-actualization**, which is met when a self-fulfilled, fully functioning individual has reached his full potential through activities that bring meaning to the individual’s life (hobbies, creative work, etc.). Not every person will reach this level.

When supporting infants and toddlers, teachers should keep these principles in mind:

- In her earliest days, an infant has physiological needs that must be met almost around the clock for the first few weeks of life. The infant is completely reliant on others to provide for these most basic needs. When an infant enters childcare at this young age, teachers must be diligent in attending to the basic needs of the child, responding consistently and quickly.
- Beyond basic needs, interactions between the teacher and the child should be loving, nurturing, and frequent so that the child will feel safe and secure in her environment and be motivated to explore and discover the world around her. A loving, responsive relationship with a primary caregiver strengthens the child’s curiosity about the environment and about social contact with adults and other children.
- As children grow, they have a desire for independence and doing things on their own. They need encouragement and support to master new skills, which build a sense of “I can do that!” A toddler’s drive for autonomy is a natural step in their development of self-esteem and self-awareness.



- Remember that by meeting infants' and toddlers' physiological, safety, and social needs, teachers are laying a foundation for the development of self-esteem and self-actualization.

ATTACHMENT

From the moment they are born, infants depend on others for all of their physical needs, such as food and protection. But infants have social and emotional needs as well, such as security, comfort, social engagement, and affection. “Attachment” has been described as a powerful emotional connection between two people that develops over time. Attachment Theory describes the ways that children develop and maintain a strong emotional connection to their primary caregivers (most often their parents) and how the strength and quality of that emotional connection affects the child’s later development. The most positive type of attachment relationship is called a *secure* attachment. This means that the child trusts that his primary caregiver(s) will meet his physical and emotional needs. This trust gives the child a sense of internal security that he is loved, that the world is basically a safe place, and that his needs will continue to be met. The child is then able to carry forward this positive sense of self and relationships into the world as he approaches new experiences and forms new relationships throughout life.



To develop a **secure** attachment, a strong, positive connection must be formed with one primary caregiver, most often the mother. The type of attachment developed by infants depends on the responsiveness of the caregiver. A responsive caregiver will respond to the infant’s signals quickly, consistently, and sensitively. Attachment develops as the physical and emotional needs of the young infant are met routinely with affection and comfort (e.g., being changed when wet, being fed when hungry, being held when upset).



When infants have developed a secure relationship with a primary caregiver, they are able to begin exploring the environment with curiosity and interest, while “checking in” with the primary caregiver to make sure he or she is available when needed. The infant will also return to the primary caregiver for comfort at times of distress or anxiety. John Bowlby (1988) described this process as the infant having a “secure base” from which to explore and a “safe haven” to return to. Securely attached infants will show distress when the caregiver leaves but will show pleasure and resume regular activities when the caregiver returns. As children move from infancy into toddlerhood and beyond, they become more independent and will want to do a lot for themselves, even rejecting cuddling and help at times. However, they continue to look to their primary caregivers for emotional stability and support, which allows them to feel safe, loved, and confident.

Not all attachment styles are secure. Three insecure attachment styles have been identified: ambivalent/resistant, avoidant, and disorganized.

Mary Ainsworth (1978, 1988) named and described these attachment styles through research looking at how one-year-old infants responded during brief periods of separation from their mothers, reunion after the separation, and interaction with a stranger. Her research paradigm for observing these babies and their moms is called the “Strange Situation.”

- An **insecure avoidant** attachment style is formed when the caregiver does not respond to the child's needs or distress and may encourage a child not to cry. Children with avoidant attachment may appear unusually independent and show very little or no distress when the caregiver leaves them. They do not seek contact with their primary caregivers when distressed and do not show much reaction to their caregivers' return.
- An **insecure ambivalent/resistant** attachment style is formed when the caregiver is not consistently responsive—responding to the child appropriately sometimes and negatively or neglectfully at others. This confuses the child and leads them to lack trust in the caregiver's ability to meet his needs. Children with an ambivalent/resistant attachment style may be clingy or whiny toward the caregiver but then reject the caregiver during interactions. They are hard to soothe when distressed and do not take comfort from interactions with their caregivers.
- A fourth attachment style, called the **disorganized** style, was later identified. This style tends to be seen in children who experienced caregivers as frightening, abusive, or neglectful. These children have experienced a great disruption in social-emotional development, because rather than serving as the soothing, safe figure, the caregiver is the source of the child's distress. When this happens, the child has no organized strategy that works to get their needs met. They may show behaviors that are contradictory or don't make sense, such as approaching the parent but then turning away and rejecting contact.

Starting in the early 1960s, psychologist Harry Harlow was interested in understanding the bond between mother and infant. He wanted to find out if this bond was based on more than having physical needs met—he wanted to find out if emotional support such as cuddling is just as important. To explore this, Harlow studied infant rhesus monkeys. He took the infant monkeys away from their real mothers and gave them two artificial mothers: one model made of wire with a bottle to feed the baby monkey, and the other made of cloth without a bottle attached. He observed that the baby monkeys rarely stayed with the wire “mother” longer than it took to get the necessary food. The infant monkeys clearly preferred cuddling with the softer cloth model, especially when scared.

Later, John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (1978, 1988) observed that the quality of the parent-child relationship was the most important factor in determining secure attachment. Secure attachment was observed with mothers who were warmly responsive and physically affectionate. Mothers of anxiously attached infants were observed to be inconsistent, unresponsive and even rejecting. More recently, a 30-year longitudinal study by L. Alan Sroufe (2005) at the University of Minnesota found connections between early attachment style and later social-emotional behavior.

It is important to note that children can and do form attachment relationships with more than one person, and the quality of each attachment relationship may be different. While attachment literature most often talks about mothers, children will form attachments to their fathers, grandparents, teachers, and any other individuals who are consistent presences in their daily lives. The important thing is for a child to have one or two PRIMARY caregivers who are trustworthy, consistent, and loving over a long period of time. Children who have multiple caregivers over time and many disrupted attachment relationships, such as those in the foster care system or those raised in institutions such as orphanages, are at high risk for attachment difficulties that lead to emotional and behavioral challenges.

While teachers do not stay with the children in their classes forever, they have a powerful ability to create strong, positive attachment relationships with the infants and toddlers in their care. Families are counting on teachers to provide the love and comfort and individual attention that their children need while their parents cannot be there. Every time you respond to a child's distress with comfort, respond appropriately to their signals, and meet their physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, you are building a positive, secure attachment relationship with that child.



Additional ways to support positive attachment relationships include creating consistent classroom routines and schedules, providing cozy spaces for quiet time in the classroom, offering children encouragement, and using a positive, calm approach when addressing difficult behaviors. In turn, children who feel secure in their school environment are likely to be more engaged in classroom activities, more willing to try new things, more attentive to their teachers, more cooperative with their peers, and better able to follow routines and behavioral expectations.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

In the 1960s, the psychologist Albert Bandura conducted research on children's behavior at Stanford University. Through his work he discovered the importance of behavioral models—that is, he believed that children's learning could occur through observation and imitation of someone else's behavior. Bandura's initial research focused on the social modeling of aggression. To test his theory, he used an inflatable clown doll called a Bobo doll.

In Bandura's experiment, young children first watched a film of an adult interacting with a Bobo doll in various ways. Some children observed an adult interacting in calm, non-aggressive ways with the Bobo doll. Other children observed an adult being aggressive toward the doll, for example by hitting the doll with a hammer, tossing the doll in the air, kicking the doll, or making hostile remarks to the doll. The children were then taken to a room with various toys, including a Bobo doll. Children who had observed an adult interacting aggressively with the doll tended to imitate this aggressive behavior. Those who had observed an adult acting in calm, non-aggressive ways and ignoring the Bobo doll were much less likely to display aggressive actions toward the doll themselves.



Bandura offered a four-step modeling chart as an explanation for this kind of social learning:

1. Attention: children need to actively pay attention to the behavior.
2. Retention: children need to be able to remember the actions/behaviors.
3. Reproduction: children have opportunities to re-enact/imitate the specific behavior.
4. Motivation: children receive reinforcement of behaviors, such as praise and attention from caregivers or peers.

Although all four steps are important parts of how children learn something new through modeling, Bandura spent most of his career studying the last step: motivation. Often the first three steps happen without us even realizing it! Bandura found in his later studies of motivation that one of the best ways caregivers can ensure that a positive behavior continues or a negative behavior stops is by *being intentional about how these behaviors are reinforced*.

Teachers of young children can keep in mind several key points related to this theory:

- Children look at, listen to, and imitate what they see and hear. Adults are often surprised to hear even very young children repeat an inappropriate word. Lesson learned? They do listen!
- Children learn not only by how teachers interact directly with them, but also by watching and listening to their teachers talk to other children and adults. It is important to always be aware of side comments to other adults, as well as the power of self-talk and describing or narrating what the child is doing, seeing, eating, or touching.
- Children will repeat a behavior if there is some kind of reinforcement for it, which may include attention from caregivers or peers, or success in getting what they wanted. As children attempt new skills or actions, teachers can use specific praise as feedback and encouragement, and teachers should be careful children are not receiving reinforcement for undesired behavior.
- Children can learn by listening to verbal instructions about how to perform a behavior, as well as through observing either real or fictional characters displaying behaviors in books or films. This suggests that reading stories with good lessons, or using stuffed animals or puppets to act out desired behaviors, can have a positive impact on how children learn new skills.

TEMPERAMENT

All children are born with their own personality. Psychiatrists Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess (1977) were among the first to identify dimensions of temperament that contribute to the interactions between children and their parents and other primary caregivers. Chess and Thomas considered temperament to be the observable differences in each infant's behavior, mood, and responses. Temperament helps define the differences in infant behaviors such as crying, reactions to physical touch, activity level, and adaptability, to name a few.

Their research identified nine dimensions of temperament:

- Activity level
- Distractibility
- Intensity
- Regularity
- Sensory threshold
- Approach/withdrawal
- Adaptability
- Persistence
- Mood

From this list, three specific temperament styles, or types of infant behavior, emerged. Approximately 65% of infants can fit in one of these three areas. The other 35% may have a combination of behavioral characteristics that do not easily fit into one of these three areas.

1. About 40% of babies are labeled “easy” because they are flexible, adaptable, approachable, and good-natured. These babies take things in stride, such as mild stress or changes in the environment.
2. Other babies (15%) are slow to warm up to strangers and often react negatively to change or new situations. They need time to adjust to new people and experiences. They are often seen as withdrawn or fearful, but they may just be cautious. They are shy, reserved, and low in activity level.
3. About 10% of infants display the third type of temperament called “feisty” or “difficult.” These infants tend to be more active and restless, may have very unpredictable, irritable reactions, and are hard to settle down. They also tend to be reactive, loud, and experience frustration easily.



Teachers must take careful note of those infants who demand more attention. Infants with difficult personalities are at-risk for attachment issues with their caregivers if caregivers are not patient, warm, sensitive, and responsive to the child's communicative signals, even when it is difficult to do so. Caregivers must be supportive and understanding of the temperament of all infants and tailor their responses to meet the specific needs of the child.

“Goodness of fit” is the degree to which an individual’s temperament is compatible with the demands and expectations of his or her social environment. Teachers can adjust to children’s temperament by adjusting their influences on the children’s environment. For example, knowing that a toddler has difficulty with a change in schedule, a teacher can prepare that toddler by alerting her ahead of time and staying close by for reassurance. A more active infant may need to have a wider variety of toys and materials to choose from in order to keep his interest. When caregivers choose approaches that match the child’s temperamental traits, they can avoid frustrating themselves and the child.

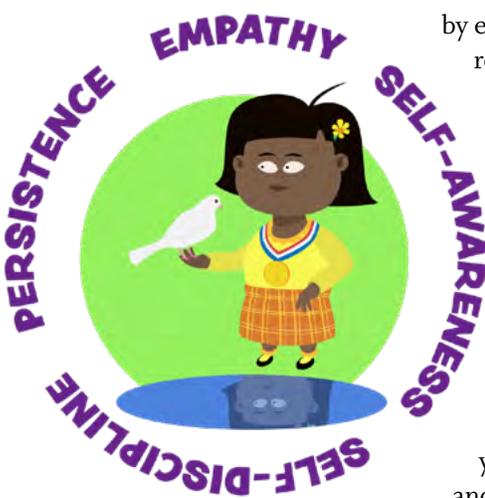
Temperament is important because it helps caregivers better understand children’s individual differences. By understanding temperament, caregivers can learn how to help children express their preferences, needs, and emotions. Caregivers and families can also use their understanding of temperament to avoid blaming a child for reactions that are normal for that particular child.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately respond to emotions in ourselves and others. Using this type of intelligence, people are better able to manage their own behavior, emotions, and relationships with others. In 1995 Dr. Daniel Goleman published the ground-breaking book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*. In this book, Goleman argues that empathy, self-awareness, self-discipline, and persistence are a flexible set of skills that can be acquired and improved with practice. Goleman also argues that these skills are of greater importance than the measurement of IQ or scores on achievement tests. He asserts that children and society are at risk if only academic skills are taught at the expense of these other skills. Since the book was published, there has been growing awareness and acceptance of the value of social emotional learning, starting in children’s early years of life. Today, many states have even included competency standards in this area just as they do for math or language.



Even before children enter school, they must feel secure and have an emotional foundation for learning. Adults play an important role in providing this foundation. In the earliest years, infants develop trust that their needs will be met when caregivers are there to provide the food, nurturance, and care they require. As children grow, caregivers guide toddlers in prosocial behaviors, acting as models for how to cooperate with others and build friendships. Children’s understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others is an ongoing task, with adult guidance needed along the way.



Teachers of infants and toddlers set the stage for successful social and emotional learning by ensuring the environment is welcoming and warm. Caregivers must be sensitive and responsive to the needs of all, including parents. As early as infancy, caregivers can label emotions through narrating or parallel talk, such as “I can see how upset you are right now” and “That makes you so happy, doesn’t it?” Caregivers can also use self-talk to describe their own emotions, such as “I missed you when you were gone” and “I’m so happy to see you are all better now.” Recognizing and being aware of emotions is often a key first step in many interactions, but particularly in conflicts. Talking about emotions shows the child that feelings are respected and valued.

Once emotions are recognized and labeled, teachers can also use positive strategies to guide children through interactions, for example redirecting a child who is having difficulty waiting for a toy by saying, “Let’s look at a book until it’s your turn for the firetruck.” Teachers can model, or show and tell, exactly what to say and do as toddlers struggle with learning social skills.

It’s important to remember that acquiring emotional intelligence takes time, patience, and practice. Our community and culture influence how we understand emotions and interact socially with others, as does the ongoing maturation of the brain. Caregivers must have appropriate expectations as children master these skills.

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Part 3



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

1 Encourage Children to Talk about Feelings

Talking about emotions helps children understand what they are feeling and that it is normal to feel all kinds of emotions. Teachers can discuss how feelings are a normal part of being a person (i.e., everyone has feelings). Teachers can also talk about basic feelings, such as happy or mad, and use facial expressions associated with those feelings. For example: “Your friend is crying. He feels sad,” or “I see you smiling and laughing! Do you feel happy?” Teachers can point out characters’ feelings in stories, talk about their own feelings, and verbalize what other children may be feeling to encourage children to talk about their own feelings. For older toddlers, teachers can begin to talk about a wider variety of emotions, such as scared, frustrated, surprised, or excited.

Encouraging children to talk about and share feelings is also a key step in helping children develop empathy. Empathy refers to thinking about and understanding how others are feeling. Helping children identify and talk about their own feelings in the classroom is the first step to building an awareness of others’ feelings.



Tips

- Books are a great tool for talking about feelings. Teachers can ask children about the characters’ emotions, make connections between actions and events and the characters’ feelings, and make connection to children’s own experiences.
- Opportunities to expand on children’s own emotions or on their observations of a friend’s emotions are plentiful throughout the day. The next time you hear a child express an emotion or tell you about the emotion of another person, try to restate the emotion and expand on that emotion. You could point out why someone might feel that emotion. You can model the emotion yourself, or affirm that emotion by saying you feel that way sometimes too. These acknowledgements and actions do not take much time but they help children feel more comfortable voicing how they feel and using emotion words to describe others.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel encouraging children to talk about feelings?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Encourage Children to Talk about Feelings

How often do you label children's feelings and talk about causes for their feelings? Can you give an example of a time you think you did this well?

2 Talk about Connections between Feelings, Actions, and Events

Teachers can talk about how feelings are connected to actions and events. This helps children learn what types of events or actions cause emotions and how to manage their own emotions and behaviors. One way to connect feelings to actions and events is by using phrases like “when” and “if . . . then.” For example, “When Jackson feels mad, he stomps his foot,” or “Joshua feels calm when I rub his back.” By narrating everyday occurrences when children demonstrate emotions, teachers help children learn how feelings are connected to their actions or events around them.

Teachers can also point out how a character's action is related to an emotion in a story, or share how their own emotions are affected by actions and events. For example, “I am so happy that it finally stopped raining so that we can go outside! It makes me feel like dancing when the sun comes out!” Making connections in this way helps children learn emotion words and connect emotions to events and actions, and to learn that even though we all have feelings, we can make okay and not okay choices as to how we act on those feelings. For example, a teacher might say, “I know you feel angry. You can stomp your feet and say, ‘I'm mad!’ but you may not hit your friends.”

For infants in particular (but toddlers as well), connecting feelings to events often involves teachers helping children “move through” their emotions. In this situation, the teacher is the one who provides the action (such as soothing a crying child) that is connected to the emotion.



Tips

- Connecting feelings to actions and events does not require much planning. For example, acknowledge a smile at feeding time with, “You are smiling because you know what time it is.” Verbally connecting these simple emotions to common actions and events can help children notice these feeling and actions themselves.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with connecting feelings to actions and events?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Talk about Connections

Can you think of a time when a toddler showed emotional distress because of a situation in the classroom? How could you have better connected the emotion to the event?

3 Engage Children in Planned Activities to Build Emotional Understanding

Teachers can help infants and toddlers learn about emotions through simple, planned activities in addition to natural “teachable moments.” Planned activities might include reading books that focus on emotions, singing songs that include emotions, or doing pretend play activities in which puppets, dolls, or the children in class pretend to express different emotions. Books should include high quality images of different facial expressions that teachers can label for children. As children get older, stories should include examples of why the character feels an emotion and what they do in response.

Teachers might also do art activities that feature images of faces displaying different emotions. These offer an opportunity to label facial expressions such as smiling and frowning and to point out how faces can show feelings. This gives children practice identifying what different emotions “look like.” For older toddlers, it is fun to play a guessing game of what the teacher or a friend may be feeling based on what facial expression she is making. For example, the teacher might take a turn by pretending to cry and saying, “Oh no! My cookie fell on the floor and it’s broken!” Then she might ask the children to guess how she is feeling. Children might need simple choices to pick from, such as, “Am I sad or am I happy?” Props such as simple pictures of a happy face and a sad face can also be held up for children to choose which one shows how the teacher feels.



Tips

- When playing activities to build emotional understanding, remember to combine words with your tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures. These all contribute the child’s understanding of the emotion.
- Take the time to connect emotions to the children’s personal lives, and model these emotions. This helps children feel that their own emotions are important and that it is okay to express those emotions.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel planning and engaging children in activities to build emotional understanding?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Build Emotional Understanding

Toddlers love puppets! Can you think of a simple puppet activity you could plan to build emotional understanding?

4 Offer Prompts for Peer Interaction

Teachers can help children develop their social skills by demonstrating what is okay and not okay when they are interacting with their peers.

With infants, many prompts to encourage peer interaction will include a nonverbal action or gesture paired with a description of the interaction. Examples include waving to other children while saying “Goodbye, Johnny! Can you wave bye-bye with me?” or “Let’s wave hello to Jacob.” Smiles and warm expressions toward other children tell a baby that peers are fun and interesting. Actions like beckoning friends or including friends in activities can prompt early peer interaction. Teachers can use gestures and words to show what to do when a peer is upset, for example patting a friend’s back or giving him a hug while saying, “Let’s give Marcus a hug to help him feel better.” When babies and toddlers are too rough with each other, correct them with gentle, simple words and actions, such as, “No hitting, use gentle hands.” Toddlers are learning to talk, and they will often use words to assert themselves with teachers and classmates, such as “No!” and “Mine!” Teachers can model and prompt children for friendly words and requests too. These include words for polite manners (such as “please,” “thank you,” and “excuse me”) and short sentences for common situations, such as “Can I play?,” “Can I have a turn?,” or “Want to play?” Teachers can also provide prompts for peer interaction by using puppets, dolls, or stuffed animals to show children the many ways they can talk and play with friends. Make sure to demonstrate how to handle negative interactions with friends along with positive, and provide praise when children interact in a positive way. The most powerful strategy is to model how to greet and talk to friends, since children will often imitate their teachers’ and caregivers’ words and tone of voice.

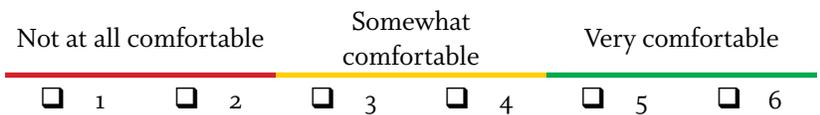


Tips

- Whenever young children are gathered together, there is an opportunity to prompt interaction. This can be done simply by helping children notice their peers and calling peers by name.
- One thing teachers can do to help children interact with peers is to provide children with common phrases that peers say to each other, such as “Hi, friend,” or “See you later!”

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with offering prompts for peer interaction?



Stop and Reflect: Offer Prompts for Peer Interaction

What are the times of day that work best for prompting peer interaction? What are some simple phrases you can give children to say to each other during these times?

5 Engage Children in Planned Activities to Promote Positive Peer Interactions

By planning ahead to promote positive peer interactions, teachers can focus children’s attention on their peers and how to interact with them. For infants, this often means teachers have them in close proximity to other infants and use their voice and gaze to help draw infants’ attention to peers. Interactions in which babies play near each other but do not pay much attention to each other are expected. With older infants, teachers can help them play with each other by including activities that require some cooperation, like helping children roll a ball back and forth.

For toddlers, teachers can use circle time to include activities in which children dance or sing together, greet each other with a good-morning song, pass things around the circle, or cheer for each other when they take their turn to participate. These activities promote awareness and appreciation of peers and build a positive, friendly classroom climate. During play time, teachers can model and participate in pretend play scenarios that encourage sharing, helping, or “working together.” For example, teachers may help children pretend to cook food and serve it to each other. They might pretend to take care of baby dolls together or pretend to be animal doctors taking care of pets. Playing running and chasing games outdoors can also help children share positive emotions with each other such as joy and excitement. At this age, children often develop preferences for things they like and don’t like; teachers can foster interaction by pointing out when children have the same interests. Teachers can also create opportunities for children to help each other, such as by carrying something heavy together, cleaning up toys together, wiping up spills together, or working on a puzzle together.

 **Tips**

- Games provide a wonderful chance for children to interact with each other in a positive way. They also provide structure for how to interact, which may be easier for toddlers struggling with peer interactions.
- During these activities, remember to model positive emotions around playing with other children, how to include other children, and being patient when waiting for peers.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel planning and engaging children in activities to promote positive peer interactions?

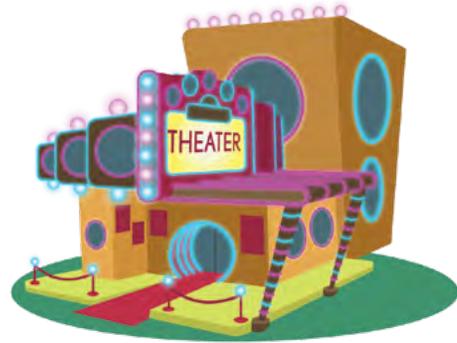
Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Planned Activities for Peer Interaction

How could you set the stage for an activity such as Partner Painting at the easel that will make it a positive, interactive experience?

THE THEATER:

Hear from the Experts

WATCH
FILM

What is social development for infants and toddlers?

Children are naturally oriented to be interested in others. The social development of infants begins very early, as infants learn to recognize their mother by sight, sound, and even smell. Early social interactions begin at about 6-8 weeks, as they begin to smile and make sounds to get attention and responses. Adults teach children about social interactions through their modeling, expressions, tone of voice, and physical interactions with the baby. During toddler years, there is growing social interaction with peers. The social experiences from an infant's first years with primary caregivers have an influence on later peer relationships.

WATCH
FILM

How can teachers facilitate positive peer interactions?

The adult caregiver is the one to promote interactions between peers at early ages, building on the natural tendency of infants to be interested in others as they grow. The adult caregiver can narrate what each baby is doing. By making the commentary in the second person, such as "You saw your friend," teachers are calling the baby's attention to the other child. With toddler peer interactions, teachers should pay close attention to what toddlers are doing when they are close together. In addition to narrating their actions for them, teachers can guide their interactions and model appropriate conversation, play, and physical interaction (e.g., gentle touching).

WATCH
FILM

How can teachers support children who are shy or withdrawn?

There are ways for a teacher to support children who are just naturally shy or slow to warm up.

1. Pay close attention during very stimulating times, which may be a problem. This stimulation could be lots of light or loud sounds, or anything that makes the child withdraw. Once patterns of behavior have been observed, the teacher can respond accordingly.
2. A teacher can use play situations to model how to deal with different social interactions and build the child's self-confidence. Also during play, the teacher can invite another somewhat shy child to join in. The teacher acts as the narrator of the interactions, and helps the children notice what the other is doing, and even provide prompts for conversation.
3. A teacher must also be patient during these interactions, because shy children need plenty of time to respond to questions or requests. Patience is also important when these children encounter something new, like a change in their routine.
4. Some children are uncomfortable in large group times. By noticing signals, a teacher can consider how to reassure the child, perhaps by allowing closer proximity to one of the teachers.
5. Above all, accept that children have different temperaments and needs, and the teacher's job is to offer support and reassurance.



THE LIBRARY

Connect with Me

Social and Emotional Development: Academic & Social Outcomes



How do we know that children's early social and emotional experiences matter?

Researchers answer this question by following groups of children over time, looking at how their early experiences and interactions with caregivers and peers relate to later outcomes. These studies show that, just as early language and cognitive stimulation predict children's future development, infants' and toddlers' very early social and emotional experiences have a *significant impact* on their lifelong development and well-being.

So, what exactly IS social and emotional health? Broadly speaking, social and emotional skills allow us to identify and manage our feelings, regulate our behavior and behave appropriately in different settings and relationships, understand and empathize with the feelings of others, and develop and maintain positive relationships in our personal and professional lives.

Social and emotional development begins with **children's early attachment relationships with their primary caregivers**. Children's primary caregivers are usually their parents, and when children begin attending childcare or school programs, teachers become important attachment figures as well. In this section, we'll look at how early childhood experiences can shape the pathways children follow toward social and emotional growth throughout school and into adulthood.

Infancy & Early Childhood



Infants and toddlers whose primary caregivers are **consistent, warm, and responsive** develop feelings of safety and self-confidence. They are encouraged to recognize and express their feelings, to ask for what they need, and to show interest in other people. They are ready to explore their environment and then come back to their caregivers for safety and comfort.

On the other hand, when children's early experiences with caregivers are neglectful, inconsistent, harsh, or disrupted, they are *at risk* for social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Early caregiver-child relationships may be disrupted or of poor quality for many reasons. Sometimes caregivers have personal challenges that make it hard for them to care for their children, such as physical illness, mental illness, substance abuse, or a history of trauma in their own childhood. There are also larger community factors that put extra stress on caregivers and limit their emotional energy for parenting. Poverty, neighborhood violence, or unstable housing or employment are a few of these.

In addition to providing a sense of security, caregivers serve as “coaches.” They show children how to behave, how to manage their emotions, and how to interact with others. When children's behavior is not appropriate, caring adults set limits and patiently show, teach, and redirect them toward better choices. Over time, children who are both loved and patiently coached learn how to regulate their emotions and behaviors (like a thermostat that can move from warmer to cooler and back again without freezing or overheating too often). These children often feel less anxious and more confident to start exploring the world around them, which leads to rich learning experiences. They begin to establish friendships, adapt well to preschool, and cope with the everyday ups and downs of life.

When children's primary caregivers are under stress, children experience that stress as well. While some stress for families is completely normal, consistently stressful environments can be especially damaging to children when they have no way to control or escape from it and it lasts for a long time. Over time, children can begin to feel unsafe, anxious, overwhelmed with emotion, and unsure that their needs will be met.

Their caregivers may be preoccupied with their own needs and unable to model and coach appropriate ways to handle emotions, regulate behavior, or make friends. Without consistent support and coaching from their caregivers, children find it difficult to regulate their emotions. They are also less likely to learn the words they need to talk about their feelings, which is an important tool for regulating emotions. At least 60% of preschoolers with challenging behavior have language delays.

When these children get to preschool, they often have difficulty coping with everyday challenges such as separating from parents or transitioning from one activity to another. They may externalize feelings through anger, tantrums, and impulsive behavior. Or they may internalize their feelings, keeping them inside and causing sadness and loneliness. They may also have difficulty maintaining their attention, which negatively affects their ability to learn new things.



Elementary Age

By the time they get to elementary school, children living in supportive, stable, nurturing environments have typically had more opportunities to safely explore the world and learn the language and literacy skills that prepare them to do well in school. They are more likely to become positively engaged in school and to stay on track academically. They are also more comfortable talking about their emotions, which helps their parents and teachers recognize their needs and better support them. Their previous experiences have equipped them to handle frustration and setbacks, so they are more willing to take on new challenges that continue to expand their skills and knowledge. Because their caregivers have supported and coached them in building *social competence*, they are typically liked and accepted by their teachers and peers. This social acceptance gives them more opportunities to form positive relationships and learn from others.

On the other hand, children with poor emotion regulation skills are sometimes less curious about the world and have difficulty handling new tasks without getting frustrated and losing self-confidence. They may develop coping strategies that work in the short term—such as shutting down emotionally and socially, tuning out attention, or lashing out aggressively—but these strategies often become ineffective and problematic as the child matures.

The ability to regulate emotions is closely tied to social competence.

Children who keep their emotions inside themselves may withdraw from peer interactions, which means losing opportunities to practice building relationships, resolving conflict, and receiving support from friends. Children who express their emotions in more impulsive and poorly regulated ways may show aggressive behavior or emotional outbursts. Peers and adults are likely to react negatively to this kind of behavior. If it continues, a cycle of rejection from peers further reinforces their view of the world as an unwelcoming and unsafe place.

The Teenage Years



The teenage years can be emotionally challenging for adolescents, as hormones cause changes in their bodies and emotions. Children who have developed a strong social and emotional foundation—including emotion regulation strategies, a growing social support network, and a good awareness of their changing emotions—are already on, and are more likely to stay on, a healthy path. For example, the ability to manage emotions has been shown to lead to better academic performance, as these students are better equipped to keep their attention focused on the increasing challenges of school.

It's normal for teenagers to have emotional ups and downs as they navigate physical changes, social group dynamics, first boyfriends or girlfriends, and increasing independence from parents.

Those who are *on-track* socially and emotionally tend to feel more secure in their relationships. They are better able to resist negative peer pressure and are better equipped to resolve disagreements in ways that preserve relationships. They have also developed **empathy**, which allows them to support others.

At-risk teenagers are less likely to be aware of their emotional states. Teenagers who aren't fully aware of their emotions and express anger and sadness in inappropriate ways tend to have very poor academic performance and experience higher levels of depression and anxiety. This creates an ongoing negative cycle. Socially, these teenagers are often withdrawn and lonely and are more likely to form relationships with other anti-social peers. These peer groups are the most likely to engage in risky behavior that impacts their future opportunities, such as skipping school, using drugs, committing crimes, and dropping out of high school.



Adulthood

Social and emotional skills affect our everyday interactions with others and how we feel about ourselves as adults.

Adults with strong social and emotional skills are better able to acknowledge and manage their emotions, achieve academic and career goals, have healthy relationships with others, and generally have a positive outlook on life.

Because teenagers with healthy social and emotional skills tend to have strong academic outcomes in high school, they also tend to have better employment opportunities as adults. Success in the job market is also related to a set of social and emotional skills often referred to as *soft skills*. Soft skills are the personal behaviors, attitudes, and skills that are not listed on a resume but that help us perform well in our jobs and work with others to achieve goals. Examples include self-control, social skills, conflict resolution, and problem solving—all skills that start to emerge in early childhood.



Adults with good soft skills are more likely to be hired, do well in their jobs, receive promotions, and earn higher wages. While there is evidence that we can improve our soft skills in adulthood, supporting social and emotional development in infants and toddlers is the best way to provide a **solid foundation** from which to build these skills.

Adults who have struggled with social and emotional skills throughout their lives may need to work hard to change established patterns of behavior and learn new soft skills. The more significant the social-emotional difficulties, the more likely it is that an adult will experience serious problems in relationships (such as divorce or abuse), in physical health (such as drug abuse or eating disorders), in academic or career goals (such as dropping out of high school or unemployment), and with the law (criminal activity and incarceration). Sadly, in some cases, social and emotional impairment interacts with a person's genetic predispositions, resulting in the development of mental illness—a public health crisis that impacts roughly 1 in 5 Americans.



Resilience

It's important to remember that the development of social-emotional skills is complex, and many children who are at risk for social-emotional difficulties do overcome challenges and barriers through resilience. **Resilience** can be thought of as the capacity to adapt, recover, or “bounce back” when faced with personal difficulties. Resilience forms through protective features in a child's life that help the child to stay on a positive developmental path, or return to it, despite negative or painful experiences. These protective features include caring and supportive relationships with teachers and other adults, as well as quality learning environments that promote cognitive skills and encourage a positive outlook on themselves, their relationships with others, and school and career goals.

Early childhood educators play a very important role in providing the kind of support that leads to children's resilience.

In fact, when children are struggling at home, **school becomes an especially important place** for them—a place to receive emotional support, stability, and positive messages about their worth, their ability, and their potential.



Key Points to Remember

For a baby or toddler, adults represent models of the world and relationships that the baby remembers and carries into future relationships. Adults who respond to children consistently, warmly, and sensitively are providing the child with a model that says, “People are kind and trustworthy, and they value me.” The baby will remember this model and approach other relationships with positive expectations.

Babies and toddlers do not yet know how to regulate their emotions—they rely on adults to help them do this. Respond to babies' distress as soon as possible to help them learn to regulate their emotions. Look for toddlers who keep to themselves a lot, who seem afraid, or who are uninterested in engaging with you or other children. These children are missing out on the everyday social interactions that promote language and social-emotional skills. Talk to these children and try to engage them in play with their peers.

Moments of conflict or disappointment in the classroom are opportunities for every child to develop social and emotional skills. The most powerful instructional tools are kindness, patience, and modeling positive social and emotional behaviors. Be patient and consistent when toddlers express anger and frustration. Offering comfort, providing choices within limits, and validating their strong feelings will help them develop more self-control over time.

Young children who have good relationships with their teachers are more likely to learn positive ways to interact with others at school and to develop social competence.

Social skills learned at school can even carry over to the home environment, positively impacting children's relationships with their families.

Supporting children's social and emotional development lays the groundwork for satisfying work and healthy relationships throughout life.

Part 4



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

1 Model Prosocial Behaviors

Providing children with examples of what to say and do is one of the most powerful ways that teachers teach. Babies' brains are built to learn through imitation, so it is important for teachers to be aware of their own behaviors while caring for children. There are many opportunities throughout the day to demonstrate positive, kind, friendly behaviors for children to imitate. Teachers can model social behaviors such as greetings, goodbyes, invitations to play, and offers to help. They can model polite manners such as saying "please," "thank you," and "excuse me," even for babies who are too young to use these words themselves. They can show how to offer comfort by using a gentle touch and soothing words. And they can model how to take turns and share in ways that are gentle, respectful, and fair to all children. Remember that babies and toddlers need to see and hear actions and words many times before they can use a new skill themselves. Modeling prosocial behaviors helps infants and toddlers learn how to be kind, helpful, and friendly.



Tips

- Even though infants do not yet really play with each other, they do start to notice and show interest in each other. When teachers pay attention to babies' signals they can use these natural opportunities to encourage babies' social interest.
- One way to model prosocial behaviors is to encourage children to notice and connect with each other in friendly ways. Teachers can do this, for example, by playing a simple game of having children look for each other on the playground. Toddlers love games involving hiding and finding, and this game allows children to imitate their teachers' social behaviors such as calling to their classmates by name, smiling, pointing, and showing delight in finding each other. This is an easy, fun opportunity to encourage toddlers' social interest and connection.
- Pretend play is a great time to show children how to interact in friendly ways with each other. Through informal play activities like this, teachers help children learn what it means to be friendly, play together, and share materials.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with modeling prosocial behaviors in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Model Prosocial Behaviors

What kinds of social behaviors are you modeling for children? Are there more positive behaviors you can begin to model?

2 Explain What Comes Next

One of the earliest ways to help children feel secure and manage their emotional responses is to talk with them about what happens next. It is helpful for babies to hear teachers explain to them what comes next, and their understanding of these words grows over time. For toddlers, simple, explicit reminders regarding what comes next help them remain calm. This is also the best way to help children prepare for a transition they may not want to make. For example, teachers can let children know that, “In five minutes, we will wash our hands for lunch.... In one minute, we will wash our hands so that we have clean hands for lunch.”

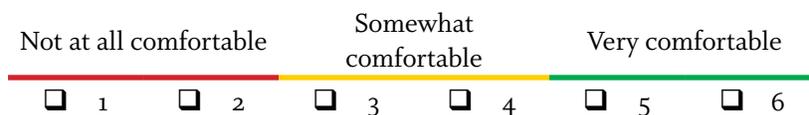


Tips

- Babies are often picked up and moved around without anyone explaining to them what is happening. But babies want to understand their world, and they are actively looking for clues from their caregivers. Explaining what comes next can help babies connect words with actions and feel more comfortable during transition times. Even if you think a baby is too young to understand all of your words, your tone of voice will provide reassurance. Over time, the baby will look to you for explanations, and these words will help him with emotional self-regulation.
- Transition times can be challenging for young children. They require stopping the current activity, shifting attention, and focusing on something new. Transitions often go more smoothly when teachers prepare children for what comes next.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with explaining what comes next in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Explain What Comes Next

What are the transition times that children in your classroom have the most difficulty with? How can you try explaining what comes next in these situations?

3 Provide Verbal and Physical Cues for Self-Control

Verbal cues are words that remind children what to do (such as “hands in your lap” or “walking feet”) and might also include songs or rhymes (for example, a clean-up song). Verbal cues should be very simple for infants and toddlers. Physical cues may be facial expressions and eye contact and movements such as shaking your head no or nodding yes. Physical cues also include gestures such as touching one’s lips with the index finger to indicate “quiet,” using a pointing finger or a patting hand on the rug to indicate where a child should sit or stand, or offering a hand for the child to hold. Gestures and physical cues are very useful tools to support infants’ and toddlers’ self-control because their understanding of words is limited and their emotional reactions can be strong.

Gestures, words, and emotional tone should be consistent with each other when communicating with children. For example, if a child does something unsafe and the teacher says, “No, don’t do that!” but also laughs or uses a playful tone of voice, the child is getting an unclear message. On the other hand, if a teacher praises a child but frowns or touches the child roughly, the child may be confused or misunderstand the intended message.

Other kinds of cues can help infants and toddlers too, such as ringing a bell or chime to help children turn their attention toward something, or turning on soft music and dimming lights to transition children to nap time. When the same cues are used consistently over time, children will learn what they mean and begin to respond appropriately. Watching and listening to oneself on recorded video, or having a colleague observe and give honest feedback, can help teachers become aware of all the verbal and nonverbal cues they are giving and whether or not they are helpful to children.



Tips

- Environmental supports can enhance verbal and physical cues, such as using chairs or stools for circle time and charts or pictures to show children what you want them to do.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with providing verbal and physical cues for self-control?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Provide Verbal & Physical Cues for Self-Control

What is one problematic behavior that keeps recurring in your classroom? How can you use physical and verbal cues to help children practice self-control with this behavior?

4 Offer Opportunities for Children to Make Choices

Making choices helps children feel confident in themselves and gives them important opportunities to become aware of their own preferences and practice independence and problem solving. Babies can be offered simple choices, such as what book to look at or what toy to play with. Teachers should look for infants' signals that indicate their choices, such as reaching, smiling, or vocalizing toward one choice instead of the other. Toddlers may be offered choices such as which center to go to during center time, which riding toys to take out to the playground, or which of two options they would like for snack. However, too many choices may be overwhelming to toddlers. Providing two or three options often works best. During play time, allow enough time for children to experiment and make different choices, for example during pretend play, constructive play with manipulatives, or art activities. These are times to let children take the lead and use materials in a variety of ways, as long as they are being safe and mindful of other children's needs.

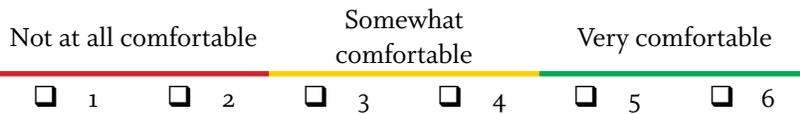


Tips

- Infants may be attracted to different toys because of their shapes, colors, sounds, movement, or textures. As an adult, you may think one toy is more interesting than another, but the baby may have his own ideas or preferences. Offering two choices, and then waiting patiently for the baby to choose, shows respect for the baby and his developing brain.
- Meal time is an important time to let infants and toddlers make choices, as they are just learning to recognize and communicate their internal signals of being hungry, thirsty, or full.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with offering opportunities for children to make choices?



Stop and Reflect: Offer Opportunities to Make Choices

How often do you make choices for the children in your classroom (which toy to play with, which center to go to, etc.)? Which of these choices can be offered to the children instead?

5 Help Resolve Conflicts with Peers

Resolving conflicts with peers is one of the hardest parts of managing early childhood classrooms. With babies, resolving conflicts often includes separating the children, making sure there is enough space and materials for all the babies to play and move around, and modeling gentle touch while repeating a simple rule, such as “We use gentle hands.”

Toddlers often need help sharing space and taking turns with toys. Because children at this age often do not have the patience or the words to express what is bothering them, they often resort to physical aggression or crying when conflict arises. Because teachers can anticipate that these kinds of conflicts will occur frequently, they can be prepared by staying close and being ready to offer help and support, giving a reminder of classroom rules, and setting limits to keep children safe.



Tips

When approaching children in conflict, teachers should stay calm and use these effective steps:

1. Get down to children’s eye level.
2. Keep children physically safe and comfort anyone who is hurt.
3. State the problem and label children’s feelings.
4. Give children words to use to communicate.
5. Offer solutions or choices.
6. Help children follow through with solution or choice.

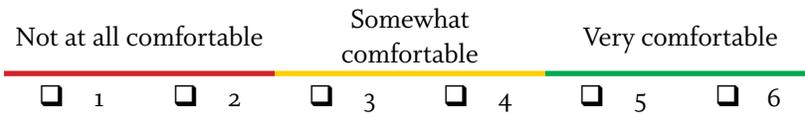
Giving children words might include prompting them to say “Help please,” “I need more space,” “I need some blocks,” or “Can I have a turn?” Solutions and choices might include:

- gently moving a child a few steps to the side so both children have more space to play
- offering a second toy to the child who tried to grab from another child
- showing children a way that they can use the materials together at the same time
- offering a different role for the child during pretend play

These are also good times to encourage empathy by pointing out children’s feelings and needs to each other. For example, “Reena, look at Marcus. He is sad because he doesn’t have a bucket. Let’s find a bucket for Marcus so that he can have one, too.” Providing help that is immediate, brief, consistent, and done with empathy and compassion helps children learn social skills for interacting with peers and forming positive friendships.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with helping resolve peer conflicts in your classroom?



Stop and Reflect: Help Resolve Peer Conflicts

Think about the last peer conflict in your classroom. Which of these strategies would have applied? How?

THE THEATER:

Hear from the Experts

WATCH
FILM

How can teachers help infants to self-soothe?

Babies are not able to soothe themselves, so caregivers must act as co-regulators to help babies do this. It's not always possible to pick up a crying baby immediately but with soft touch, eye contact, and breathing together, we can reassure babies that we are near. Resting a hand on their belly and rocking them side to side is calming and something infants can learn to do by themselves. Breathing in slow deep breaths while close to or holding the baby is another way for a caregiver to soothe. A blanket or lovey serves as a transition object, which is a comfort to the infant when not being held. Caregivers can also help toddlers learn to do deep breathing as a way to self-soothe.

WATCH
FILM

What's wrong with time-out?

Children learn appropriate behavior in the context of social situations. By removing a child from the situation or sending the child home, he is deprived of a learning opportunity. Sending a child to time-out also becomes a power struggle in which the child receives a lot of attention, which can reinforce the negative behavior. It's more helpful to look at the situation and think about what the child specifically needs to learn how to do, for example, share toys. The caregiver can then scaffold or coach the child in learning to share and learning to communicate with peers while playing. A time-out is not the end of the problem because the child still needs to learn a better way to communicate needs or wants.

WATCH
FILM

How can teachers practice self-care?

Self-care enables teachers to be their best for the children in their care. Try some of these strategies to help manage your stress levels:

- Take deep breaths and become aware of your own emotions (known as mindfulness)
- Recognize when you need a break from the classroom, and step out of the room for a minute if you can
- Seek out an understanding social support group
- Use your creativity in an activity that is self-satisfying
- Reflect on positive moments and good things that are happening
- Get active with an enjoyable physical activity
- Find a word or phrase that is repeated over and over (mantra) as a reminder to stay calm



Book Club!

Recommended Reading to Support Infant & Toddler Social and Emotional Development

BOOKS TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller
- Baby Faces: Hugs & Kisses* by Roberta Grobel Intrater
- Baby Faces: Smile!* by Roberta Grobel Intrater
- Bear Feels Scared* by Karma Wilson
- Can You Make a Happy Face?* by Janice Behrens and Scholastic
- Daniel Gets Scared* by Maggie Testa
- Feeling Happy* by Ellen Weiss
- Glad Monster, Sad Monster* by Ed Emberley & Anne Miranda
- Go Away, Big Green Monster!* by Ed Emberley
- Grumpy Cat* by Britta Teckentrup
- Happy and Sad, Grouchy and Glad* by Constance Allen
- Happy Hippo, Angry Duck* by Sandra Boynton
- How Do Dinosaurs Say I'm Mad?* by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague
- How Do I Feel? Cómo me siento?* by the Editors of The American Heritage Dictionaries
- How Do You Feel?* by Jodie Shepherd
- How I Feel Angry* by Marcia Leonard
- How I Feel Frustrated* by Marcia Leonard
- How I Feel Proud* by Marcia Leonard
- How I Feel Scared* by Marcia Leonard
- How I Feel Silly* by Marcia Leonard
- How Is Daniel Feeling?* by Maggie Testa
- How Kind!* by Mary Murphy
- I Am Happy* by Steve Light
- I Feel Happy and Sad and Angry and Glad* by Mary Murphy
- I'm Feeling Happy* by Natalie Shaw
- I'm Feeling Mad* by Natalie Shaw
- I'm Feeling Sad* by Natalie Shaw
- I'm Feeling Silly* by Natalie Shaw
- I'm Feeling Thankful* by Natalie Shaw
- I Was So Mad* by Mercer Mayer
- If You're Happy and You Know It* by James Warhola
- If You're Happy and You Know It* by Will Grace
- If You're Happy and You Know It!* by Jane Cabrera
- If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands!* by David Carter
- Kiss It Better* by Hiawyn Oram
- Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems
- Let's Talk About Feeling Sad* by Joy Berry
- Little Yoga* by Rebecca Whitford and Martina Selway
- Llama Llama Misses Mama* by Anna Dewdney
- Making Faces: A First Book of Emotions* by Abrams Appleseed
- My Friend is Sad* by Mo Willems
- Lots of Feelings* by Shelley Rotner
- Peekaboo Morning* by Rachel Isadora
- Proud of Our Feelings* by Lindsay Leghorn
- See How I Feel* by Julie Aigner-Clark
- Sleepy Little Yoga* by Rebecca Whitford and Martina Selway
- The Feel Good Book* by Todd Parr
- The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr
- The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain
- Things That Make You Feel Good, Things That Make You Feel Bad* by Todd Parr
- Toby's Silly Faces* by Cyndy Szekeres
- What Makes Me Happy?* by Catherine & Laurence Anholt
- When I Feel Sad* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- When I Feel Scared* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- When I'm Feeling Angry* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Happy* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Kind* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Lonely* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Loved* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Sad* by Trace Moroney
- When I'm Feeling Scared* by Trace Moroney

BOOKS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>ABC Look At Me</i> by Roberta Grobel Intrater | <i>Hands Can</i> by Cheryl Willis Hudson | <i>Sharing Time</i> by Elizabeth Verdick |
| <i>A Big Guy Took My Ball</i> by Mo Willems | <i>How Do Dinosaurs Play with Their Friends?</i> by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague | <i>Should I Share My Ice Cream?</i> by Mo Willems |
| <i>Be Gentle! A Story About Playing Nicely</i> by Virginia Miller | <i>I Can Share!</i> by Karen Katz | <i>Teeth Are Not for Biting</i> by Elizabeth Verdick |
| <i>Best Friends</i> by Charlotte Labaronne | <i>I Love My New Toy</i> by Mo Willems | <i>Thank You Day</i> by Farrah McDoogle |
| <i>Big Brother Daniel</i> by Angela C. Santomero | <i>I'll Wait, Mr. Panda</i> by Steve Antony | <i>The Baby Is Here!</i> by Angela C. Santomero |
| <i>Calm-Down Time</i> by Elizabeth Verdick | <i>I'm a Big Brother</i> by Ronne Randall and Kristina Stephenson | <i>The Little Engine That Could: An Abridged Edition</i> by Watty Piper and George & Doris Hauman |
| <i>Can I Play Too?</i> by Mo Willems | <i>I'm Sorry</i> by Sam McBratney | <i>The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear</i> by Don & Audrey Wood |
| <i>Clean-Up Time</i> by Elizabeth Verdick | <i>King Daniel the Kind</i> by Angela C. Santomero | <i>The Thank You Book</i> by Mo Willems |
| <i>Daniel Chooses to Be Kind</i> by Rachel Kalban | <i>Llama Llama Time to Share</i> by Anna Dewdney | <i>Time To Say "Please"!</i> by Mo Willems |
| <i>Daniel Feels Left Out</i> by Maggie Testa | <i>Manners Time</i> by Elizabeth Verdick | <i>Waiting Is Not Easy!</i> by Mo Willems |
| <i>Daniel Learns to Share</i> by Becky Friedman | <i>Mine! A Backpack Baby Story</i> by Miriam Cohen | <i>Words Are Not for Hurting</i> by Elizabeth Verdick |
| <i>Daniel's New Friend</i> by Becky Friedman | <i>My Friend and I</i> by Lisa Jahn-Clough | <i>Worries Are Not Forever</i> by Elizabeth Verdick |
| <i>Excuse Me!: A Little Book of Manners</i> by Karen Katz | <i>My Friend Bear</i> by Jez Alborough | <i>You Can Do It, Sam</i> by Amy Hest |
| <i>Feet Are Not for Kicking</i> by Elizabeth Verdick | <i>My New Friend Is So Fun!</i> by Mo Willems | |
| <i>Hands Are Not for Hitting</i> by Martine Agassi | <i>No Biting!</i> by Karen Katz | |
| | <i>No Hitting!</i> by Karen Katz | |
| | <i>Quiet Loud</i> by Leslie Patricelli | |

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Be You (formerly Kids Matter): <https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/social-and-emotional-learning>

Center on the Developing Child: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL): <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): <https://www.naeyc.org/>

Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org/>

References

“Resources: Practical Strategies for Teachers/Caregivers.” Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#list>

Part 5



CATHY'S CORNER:

Preventing and Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Introduction

As infants and toddlers develop through the first three years of life, they are increasingly able to explore the world, interact with other people, and begin to become independent, unique little people. Tiny infants need to learn basic “state regulation,” which means being able to move smoothly through cycles of being awake and alert, calm and relaxed, sleepy and asleep. They start to express contentment by smiling, cooing, and watching with interest. They show distress by grimacing, fussing, or crying. They may also fall asleep as a way to shut out too much stimulation. As older babies and toddlers watch, listen, move, play, and form relationships, they experience and express more distinct emotions, such as curiosity, anxiety, frustration, and joy. These feelings and experiences can be mild and manageable or intense and overwhelming.

We might compare children’s ability to regulate their levels of emotional intensity to an inflatable balloon. A balloon works best when it is full of air, but not so full that it pops. Sometimes the balloon might need more air, and sometimes it might need air released gradually so that it will not burst. It needs to maintain this balance of “just right” inflation. We can think about children’s emotional intensity in a similar way: All children have times when they feel sad, mad, or fearful, and children who tend to be passive or anxious may need extra support to explore their environment, generate excitement, and try new things. With help from responsive caregivers, most children are able to keep their emotional balloon inflated enough to be actively engaged and happy more often than not, rather than being mostly withdrawn, sad, and “deflated.” Still, there will be times when children’s emotional intensity may become like an over-inflated balloon that pops—frustration, anger, or fear may overwhelm children with distress. With their limited language skills and increasing desire to make their own choices, infants and toddlers use the skills they have, which include crying and tantrums, to express their needs and wants. Their struggles are a normal and important part of their social and emotional development as they begin to learn how to *self-regulate*. We can think of self-regulation as being able to keep the “just right” amount of air in their balloons by adding more or letting some out safely as needed. It takes many years and lots of practice to build self-regulation skills.

Sometimes children’s strong needs and desires lead to behaviors that are unsafe or harmful to themselves or others. When this happens, or **preferably before this happens**, they need help from adults to get back to a calmer state, and they need adults to set limits on their behaviors. Yet it can be challenging for early childhood teachers to know how to support children’s development of self-regulation skills. This manual will present some common infant and toddler behaviors that often need intervention from adults. This section will:

- describe the behavior,
- talk about typical reasons for the behavior,
- describe ways to prevent or minimize the behavior through classroom structure and routines, and
- identify social and emotional support strategies that can be used when the behavior happens.

Examples will help illustrate these processes, and tips for communicating with parents about behavior will also be provided.



Infant Distress

Young babies have very limited ways of communicating their needs. The most common way they communicate distress is by crying.



Causes

Infants may cry because they are hungry, scared, tired, wet or soiled, sick, hot, cold, or otherwise physically uncomfortable. When caregivers know their babies very well, they may be able to hear differences in a baby's cries. For example, they may be able to tell the difference between a "hungry cry" and a "tired cry."



Preventing or Minimizing

Infants need attention, gentle stimulation, and physical care throughout the day. Teachers can prevent or minimize infant distress and crying by being attentive to each infant, making sure that the infant is dry, clean, and appropriately dressed for the indoor or outdoor temperature. Infants need to be fed according to their individual cycles and put down to sleep when they show signs of sleepiness. Teachers can also pay close attention to the baby's state, looking for signals that tell you what the baby may need. For example, after a nap and a diaper change, the baby may be in an alert, attentive state and will be ready for play. This is a good time to introduce a game such as peek-a-boo, a picture book, or toys to play with. After lunch, a baby who is rubbing her eyes, yawning, and fussing may be ready for a nap. Anticipating the baby's needs, following familiar routines, and responding promptly to the baby's signals will help minimize prolonged crying and distress.



Responding

Despite caregivers' best efforts, all babies cry. Some young infants go through a period of colic or fussiness around the same time each day. Sometimes crying is unpredictable and the baby cannot tell you what is wrong. When babies cry, they need a prompt response from caregivers. There is no such thing as "spoiling" a baby by responding to crying with attention or cuddling. In fact, research shows that infants whose caregivers respond consistently and promptly to their distress end up being more emotionally secure and better regulated in their behavior than infants who receive inconsistent responses or whose crying is ignored.

Check to see whether the baby is wet, soiled, hot, or cold. Think about when the baby last ate and slept, and consider whether she might be hungry or tired. Talk warmly to the baby, and try to engage her in play if she is needing social attention. If none of these are true, it often helps to use physical soothing strategies. Different babies may be soothed by different comfort behaviors, but general strategies to try include cuddling the baby in your arms, putting him up against your shoulder and patting or rubbing his back, and rocking or gently bouncing the baby in a rhythmic manner. Some babies use a pacifier or suck their thumb or finger to soothe themselves, as sucking is a primitive behavior that often soothes babies. Talk with parents about the strategies they use at home and try those at school if possible.

Linked Strategies

- Express warmth and affection
- Comfort children in distress

Stop and Reflect: Infant Distress

Babies cry for different reasons, and caregivers may begin to hear differences in cries as they get to know a baby. How could learning to recognize an infant's different cries help in knowing how to respond?

Although there is no such thing as spoiling an infant by being responsive to baby's cries, not all new parents believe that is true. How would you respond to a parent who asked you to let her baby "cry it out"?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to infant distress in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6



Separation Anxiety

Somewhere between seven and ten months old, many infants begin to clearly show that they recognize familiar caregivers and respond differently to new people. They may start to cry or cling when a familiar caregiver leaves. Babies vary in the intensity of these responses and their developmental timing: some babies show quite a bit of distress and anxiety, while other babies' reactions are milder. Some children show more of these behaviors during toddlerhood than during infancy.



Causes

Distress at separation from familiar caregivers happens when children have developed an emotional attachment to their caregivers. They have established feelings of safety and security in the presence of these family members and/or teachers. They are beginning to develop a sense of self as separate from other people, and they can hold in memory the concept of the caregiver even when that person is not present. Babies also are developing motor skills at this time that allow them to move away from, or closer to, caregivers on their own, for example by crawling. Although we cannot ask babies what they understand and what they are thinking, their new awareness is a sort of “safety feature,” as it motivates babies to stay close to their caregivers for protection and begin to identify which people they can trust. We must also remember that infants and toddlers do not have the same concepts of time that adults have, nor do they have the ability to understand verbal explanations—when a special caregiver leaves, the baby has no way of knowing whether the caregiver will be back in five minutes, in six hours, or not at all. Imagine how distressing that would be!



Preventing or Minimizing

Because separation anxiety is part of normal development, it should not be viewed as a problem that needs to be corrected but as a normal, healthy response that can be anticipated and responded to with support.

Separation distress is most likely to occur in school when children need to say goodbye to their family members in the morning, or when a familiar teacher leaves the classroom or is out for the day and a substitute teacher takes over their care. To prevent or minimize separation anxiety, children's attachment relationships to their teachers should be encouraged so that they feel safe and comfortable in the classroom environment. Having a comforting and predictable routine for morning drop-off can also help ease the transition between home and school when infants and toddlers arrive and need to say goodbye to parents. Goodbyes are important, so do not encourage parents to sneak out in hopes that the child will not notice. Being sneaky about separations often undermines the child's trust, making him more fearful that important people will disappear whenever he is not looking. Instead, create rituals for saying goodbye, such as kissing and hugging, putting personal items in a cubby, cuddling with the teacher, waving goodbye or blowing a kiss to the parent, and/or helping the teacher with a task in the classroom. It can also help to have a special “transitional object” that the child can use to soothe himself, such as a special blanket, stuffed animal, or family picture. To minimize distress about separation from teachers, it is best to maintain consistent staffing schedules so that children always know who their morning and afternoon teachers will be. Letting children know when you are leaving the room, even if another teacher is there to care for them in your absence, may also be important for some children.



Responding

When responding to children’s anxiety, it is best to provide comfort and reassurance, both physically and verbally. For example, you can hug, rock, or rub a child’s back, while singing a soothing song and/ or reassuring the child that the parent will come back later. You can also help a toddler put words to her feelings by saying “You feel sad this morning,” “You miss Mommy,” or “It’s hard to say goodbye today.” Do not ignore children who are crying, as this can leave them feeling emotionally abandoned. Children should never be scolded or teased about their distress. It is, however, okay to use some distraction after the goodbye ritual to entice the child into a play activity, eating breakfast, or some other task that connects them to the classroom routines.

Linked Strategies

- Be predictable
- Express warmth and affection
- Comfort children in distress

Stop and Reflect: Separation Anxiety

Separating from a parent can be stressful for infants, especially at certain ages. As you reflect on your classroom practices, can you think of ways to improve upon your morning rituals or routines that would ease the stress of separation?

Staffing changes during the day mean that an afternoon teacher or a substitute teacher may be a necessary part of the day. When it’s time for you to leave, what are some ways that you can minimize toddler distress when there is a new or unfamiliar teacher coming into the room?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to separation anxiety in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6



Stranger Anxiety

Stranger anxiety emerges at about 8 to 18 months—around the same time as separation anxiety. Stranger anxiety is a fearful response to new people getting close, and it reflects the baby’s growing attachment relationships and awareness that what is new may not be safe. While some children who are very needy or have experienced inconsistent caregiving may go to anyone, healthy infants and toddlers may react to new adults by clinging to their familiar caregiver, turning their face away from the stranger, and protesting or crying if the stranger tries to pick them up or approach them too quickly. As adults, we may forget that the baby’s definition of a “stranger” may be different from ours. You may know the teacher from the classroom down the hall and know that she is a safe person, but if the baby has only seen that teacher in passing, she is a “stranger.” Within families, aunts, uncles, or other relatives may feel disappointed or hurt that the baby does not want to be held by them. However, if these people are not part of the baby’s everyday life, they too may be perceived as “strangers.”



Causes

Stranger anxiety is typically triggered by new adults approaching or picking up the baby or toddler before the child is comfortable with the new person. Some children are quite fearful and will hide and cling as soon as a new adult makes eye contact or begins to talk to them. Other children are comfortable being greeted by a new adult as long as they do not get too close or try to pick them up. Loud voices and fast movements are more likely to frighten children than softer voices and slower movements.



Preventing or Minimizing

It is appropriate for young children to be cautious with people whom they do not know—it is not desirable from a safety standpoint for children to be too comfortable going off with strangers. Therefore, you do not need to try to prevent stranger anxiety entirely. However, you can signal children about which adults are safe and friendly, and your calm, welcoming manner toward the other adult will let children know that it is okay to engage with them.



Responding

When children show anxiety around strangers, let them warm up gradually and decide when they are ready to approach or talk with the new person. Children should not be forced to hug or sit in the lap of strangers. However, if the new person will continue to be a part of your classroom or needs to interact with the child (e.g., to complete an observation or assessment), you can reassure the child by smiling, introducing the stranger, and telling the child in simple words why the person is there (e.g., “This is Miss Monica. She came to play with us today. It’s okay, you can show her our toys.”)

Linked Strategies

- Express warmth and affection
- Comfort children in distress
- Model prosocial behaviors
- Offer opportunities for children to make choices

Stop and Reflect: Stranger Anxiety

If someone new or unfamiliar comes into an infant or toddler classroom, children will look to their caregiver for reassurance. How can your calm, warm interaction with the stranger help to ease distress?

Infants cannot use words to describe their fears or anxieties. What kind of behavioral cues can you observe in infants that signal their anxiety with strangers?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to stranger anxiety in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 6



Tantrums

A child having a tantrum may scream, cry loudly, stomp his feet, yell angry words or protests, throw himself on the floor, kick his feet, and lash out physically when approached. Tantrums may be as short as 30 seconds or may last for a few minutes or up to 30 minutes or more. Tantrums often begin to occur around 18 months and may continue through the toddler period. Tantrums often lessen between ages 3-4 years in typically developing children. However, as with other behaviors, each child is unique. Some children begin having tantrums earlier or later and have more or less intense and frequent outbursts.



Causes

Tantrums are usually triggered by frustration, when the child's coping skills to deal with whatever is happening are overwhelmed. Typical situations that lead to tantrums include an adult saying "no" to what the child wants, having to stop a fun activity before the child feels ready, and having something taken away. Tantrums are more likely when children are tired, hungry, not feeling well, or overstimulated (too much excitement or activity).



Preventing or Minimizing

Having regular, predictable routines helps children know what to expect. This allows them to anticipate transition times and prepare themselves emotionally for each part of their day. Giving reminders and cues before and during transition times also helps children manage the hard task of stopping one activity and starting a different one. Giving children choices within limits (e.g., "Do you want pretzels or animal crackers?" "Which crayon would you like to use?") allows them to have some feelings of control and practice making appropriate choices, rather than just being expected to obey commands all day long. While children do need structure and limits, being overly rigid and controlling tends to result in more power struggles and negativity in children. Offering acceptable choices can also help redirect children who are displaying inappropriate behaviors. For example, if a child is throwing toy cars for fun, instead of taking the cars away and provoking a tantrum, the child can be offered a choice: "It is not safe to throw the cars. You can push the cars on the rug, or you can throw a foam ball into the basket." Teachers also need to watch for signs of escalating emotion in children. When a child starts to shout, grab, tense his body, scowl, or say "No!" to a request, the teacher should begin to use strategies to help the child calm down and resolve the problem, such as

- Getting down to the child's level
- Talking in a quiet, clear voice
- Labeling the child's feelings (e.g., "Josh, you look upset." "Shaundra, I can see that you're mad.")
- Stating your understanding of the problem (e.g., "You want to stay outside." "Your water spilled." "Clinton took your bucket.")
- Offer comfort and help with the problem

Children can usually listen and respond at this stage, before a real tantrum starts.



Responding

Many times prevention strategies will work. But sometimes they don't. When a child is having a tantrum, the first thing to do is to make sure that the child and others around her are safe. Remove any items that are being thrown or kicked, and move other children away so that they are not harmed by flailing feet or arms. If the child is hurting herself, she may need to be moved to a spot that is safe, such as an area of the room with pillows or a mat.

At this point, the child may not be able to listen to and process your words, so you may need to use gentle physical soothing strategies first, such as patting or rubbing her back. The child may not even want to be touched at this time, so watch for signals that she is, or is not, ready to receive comfort. She may need a few minutes to calm down by herself before you try to connect with her. Most children will have a peak in their distress and then begin to calm down, at which time they are often ready for comfort and/or a transition to the next activity. When you see the child's intensity starting to decrease, you can start to talk to her again, using simple phrases. Label the child's feelings and connect her feelings to the situation (e.g., "I know you were very mad that we had to come in from the playground."). Offer help and comfort to the child that she can accept or reject (e.g., "Would you like to rock with me in the rocker?", "Would you like a drink of water?", "Would you like Mr. James to read you a book in the Library Corner?", "Would you like your naptime blanket?"). If the child is too young to understand these choices, try providing physical comfort and telling the child what you are doing (e.g., "Let's rock for a few minutes," or "Let's get a drink of water.") and see if this helps the child recover. If the child rejects help and comfort, let her express her anger and frustration as long as she is not hurting herself or others or destroying property. Let her know that you will come back and check on her in a few minutes, and do so. Continue to offer comfort and affection, and as the child calms down, suggest an enticing activity to help her transition to something new.

Linked Strategies:

- Follow consistent daily schedules/routines
- Comfort children in distress
- Label feelings
- Talk about connections between feelings/actions/events
- Redirect undesired behaviors
- Offer opportunities for children to make choices
- Provide verbal and physical cues for self-control

Stop and Reflect: Tantrums

A tantrum is a loss of control for the toddler. Without coping skills, they are overwhelmed by their frustration. Why is telling a child, "You need to share" not appropriate in the middle of a tantrum?

Setting up a daily schedule with consistent routines has many benefits for the children and the teacher. What are some of your classroom routines that are helpful as a tantrum prevention strategy?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to tantrums in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<hr/>		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6



Saying “No” or Refusing to Participate

One of the first words many toddlers learn to say is “no.” It is a powerful word because it asserts independence, self-defense, or control. However, it is not a word that teachers tend to appreciate. When children say or shout “no” and refuse to cooperate with a request or an action, the teacher may be faced with how to get the child’s cooperation or how to help several children resolve a conflict. Even small children can exert a lot of energy and power with their “no.” Some typical times when children say “no” or refuse include being asked to give up an object they are using (such as a toy that needs to be shared or an object that is not safe to play with), being asked to stop a preferred activity and do something less preferred (such as getting their diaper changed), and being asked to wait for something they want. Toddlers are more likely to say “no” and refuse when they are tired, anxious, not feeling well, feeling rushed or unprepared for a transition, or feeling the need to defend themselves.



Causes

Sometimes children’s “no!” means, “I’m not ready to do that yet.” Sometimes it means “I’m scared to do that,” or “I don’t like that activity.” Sometimes it means, “Don’t take that away from me. It’s mine!” Thinking about the meaning of a child’s “no” can help you use more effective strategies to respond.

Prevention

Preventing or Minimizing

Promoting positive behavior and cooperation begins with the relationship between the teacher and the child. When young children feel loved, nurtured, and appreciated, they are more likely to be cooperative and want to please you. This does not mean that toddlers will never refuse or reject activities, but you will have a positive relationship from which to respond to their behavior. In contrast, when young children feel unloved or rejected, or when they are constantly scolded or told “no,” they will imitate this negative behavior and be more likely to say “no” themselves. Another important way to increase cooperation is to have a well-organized classroom with plenty of fun and interesting activities for children to do. When children are provided with lots of age-appropriate, hands-on activities that entice and stimulate them, they are more likely to maintain a positive attitude toward school and be eager to do what is asked of them. To a great extent, happy children are better behaved than children who are unhappy, bored, frustrated, overwhelmed, or feeling unwelcome in their classrooms. Having predictable classroom routines and schedules can also go a long way toward improving children’s cooperation. When they know what will happen next, for example through the use of a visual schedule and explanations, children can anticipate and prepare for transitions. When they know what the expectations are and that there will be future opportunities to do what they want to do, children will be better able to self-regulate and trust that they will get what they need and desire. Finally, using a heads-up reminder (such as, “Two more minutes and then it will be clean up time”) and then a transition signal to let children know when it’s time helps children learn to get ready to stop and start activities without feeling as interrupted or taken by surprise.



Responding

When responding to “no” or refusals, think about the different possible causes and choose a strategy that best addresses that cause. For example:

- If a child is saying “no” because he is afraid to try a new activity, you can offer to help, to do it together, or to watch other children do it first, and this might help the child become ready to say “yes.”
- If a child is saying “no” because she is not ready to stop a desired activity, you can remind the child of the positive aspects of what is coming next (e.g., “It’s time to do our helper jobs, and I need you to come water our plant!” or “It’s almost time to go outside and you need to use the potty before we go out.”). You can also let her know when she will have another opportunity to come back to the desired activity (e.g., “I’ll save the puzzle for you on this table, and after we get a clean diaper, you can come back and finish it.”).

- If a child is saying “no” to another child—for example, trying to hold on to a toy that another child is grabbing—you can respond by helping the children negotiate turn-taking and waiting for their turn. See the section on “Not Sharing Toys” below for more on this topic.
- Sometimes making a game out of the activity can help promote cooperation and turn a “no” into a “yes!” Here are some easy and fun ways to make an activity, such as cleanup or a transition, into a game:
 1. Pretend that a container is a basketball net, and cheer when children “make a basket” by placing items in it.
 2. Pretend that a bag or toy box is a hungry, talking mouth that needs to be fed. For example, use a deep or funny voice to say, “I’m still hungry; feed me!” or “Delicious! More cars, please!” as children place toys inside to feed it.
 3. Park toys on a shelf (or line them up in a box), and pretend that it is a parking garage.
 4. Drive, fly, and skid toys off ramps and into containers.
 5. Pretend a lid on a box or container is a mechanical door that is closing very slowly. Add your own motorized sound effects, and announce that all of the toys need to get inside before the door closes completely.
 6. Pretend toys or objects are going to sleep, and whisper, “Goodnight, let’s tuck you in... Everybody get in bed. Shh, don’t wake them up!”
 7. Animate toys so they seem alive and excited to go into containers, for example, “I’m falling in the bag... Weeeee, it’s a long way down!” or “I’m jumping in the water... 1, 2, 3, jump! Splash! Come on, guys, jump in!”
 8. Race to see who or which team can clean up the fastest. Can the children put all the pieces back in the bucket faster than their teacher? Ready, set, go!
 9. Create a fun way for children to move their bodies from one place to another: jump to..., tiptoe to..., walk backwards to...
 10. Choose an animal action to move to the next place or activity: jump like a rabbit, slither like a snake, chomp like an alligator, or swing like a monkey.
 11. Challenge the child to race you to wherever he needs to go next.
- If a child continues to refuse after you have tried several of these strategies, you will need to decide how important it is that she does what you have asked her to do. If it is very important (e.g., it is time to come in from the playground and the child is refusing), you may need to offer the basic choice: “You can come by yourself or I can help you,” and then hold her hand to lead her inside, or pick her up if she is still refusing to come. If it is not that important that the child comply immediately, you may decide that it is okay to wait until the child is ready. For example, if a child does not want to come sit for circle time or does not want to come to the table to eat lunch, it may be best to invite the child to come join you when she is ready. If there are fun things happening at circle time, or yummy food at the lunch table, the child is likely to come over by herself soon enough.

Linked Strategies

- Follow consistent daily schedules/routines
- Explain what comes next
- Express warmth and affection
- Use praise to encourage positive behavior/cooperation
- Offer opportunities for children to make choices
- Help resolve conflicts with peers

Stop and Reflect: Saying “No” or Refusing to Participate

Why does a warm and responsive relationship with each child actually set the stage for less negative behavior?

What are some ways to start looking for the reason behind the “no” response?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to “no” or refusals to participate in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6



Hitting, Kicking, Pushing, or Pinching Others

Aggressive behaviors such as hitting, kicking, pushing, or pinching are common concerns among teachers of toddlers. As much as we would like toddlers to “use their words” when interacting with each other, they are still learning to talk and to control their impulses enough to resolve conflicts peacefully. Toddlers may use aggressive behaviors to communicate feelings and thoughts such as, “Stop!”, “I don’t like that!”, “You’re in my way!”, or “I’m mad at you because you took my toy!” It is also important to remember that young children do not yet have the ability to take another person’s perspective. This means they really don’t understand the pain they may cause when they hit or kick another child, even if they see them fall or cry. However, there are many things teachers can do to help children learn empathy and self-control, and there are ways to respond when undesired behaviors happen.

CAUSES!?!

Causes

Aggressive behaviors often happen when children are very close to each other or sharing a small space. They also may happen when there is competition for popular toys or a desired place to sit or play. In other words, crowding and limited resources are more likely to result in physical conflicts between toddlers.

Children are also influenced by the behaviors they see adults and older children modeling. They will often imitate what they see, whether in real life or on TV or videos.

PREVENTION!!

Preventing or Minimizing

Teachers can try to minimize crowding by setting up their classrooms to allow enough space for the type of activities children are doing and the number of children in the room. This might mean that you need to move furniture to make some areas bigger. Make sure you have enough chairs at the table or spaces on the carpet for all children to sit comfortably and be able to see and reach materials. You can minimize competition for toys by having more than one of popular items (enough for everyone if possible), limiting certain toys to small group activity times, and helping to structure turn-taking. You can also make a point of encouraging gentle touches and praising children when they do express themselves in words instead of using their bodies. Share general information with parents about how easily toddlers will imitate the behaviors they see at home, and remind them that if their children see or watch examples of aggressive behaviors, including spanking or “popping” to punish, children are likely to imitate those behaviors.

RESPONSE!!!

Responding

You may notice a conflict when you hear a shriek or someone crying, or you may see a scuffle between children across the room. It is important to intervene quickly and let children know that it is not okay to hurt anyone. Go to the children quickly but calmly and protect them from any further harm. You may need to do this by physically separating them from each other, blocking a child who is hurting another, or removing an item that is being used in an unsafe way. Let children know that you are there to keep them safe and to help them with their problem. Use a calm but firm voice. For example, you might say, “Hold on, Reggie and Joseph. You may not hit each other. We need to stay safe. It looks like you both want to use that shovel. I can help you.” Comfort any children who are hurt and/or need a band-aid, ice, or other treatment. Then help them find a better way to get what they want, using prompts or strategies that are within the child’s ability level. For example, if a child is not yet able to talk, it is not helpful to say, “Use your words.” Instead, you may need to help them find another toy, or sit in a different seat, or help them share space on the climbing structure. When children do have words they can say, you can model the words or phrases you would like them to use.

A word about time out: Because very young children have short attention spans and are not able to reflect on their own behaviors, putting a child in time out for every offense is not necessary or effective. The child will not be able to tell you why she is there or what she will do differently next time.

Unless a child is repeatedly and purposefully hurting others during a given time period, it is better to take a firm but patient approach as outlined above, rather than focusing on punishing or scolding. Many conflicts among toddlers can be resolved within a matter of seconds, and then they are ready to move on with their play. You can also use logical consequences, which are consequences that are linked to the specific behavior. For example, if a child is repeatedly pushing other children on the climbing structure, a logical consequence would be to have her find a different area of the playground to play on for the rest of the play period.

Linked Strategies

- Model prosocial behaviors
- Help children share space
- Support turn-taking
- Redirect undesired behaviors
- Provide verbal and physical cues for self-control
- Help resolve conflicts with peers

Stop and Reflect: Hitting, Kicking, Pushing, or Pinching Others

The environment has an impact on toddler behavior. Take a step back and look at your classroom. What are some ways you could improve on your classroom environment that would give toddlers more space and avoid overcrowding?

Is there one area of your classroom where most of the aggressive behavior occurs? What do you think is causing this, and how could you address it?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to physical aggression in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6



Biting is a very common behavior in older babies and toddlers, but it can be distressing to teachers, parents, and other children because of the potential for children or teachers to get hurt. Most children outgrow biting behavior by age 3 to 3.5 years.



Causes

Biting can be exploratory, to find out what something tastes like or how it feels when bitten. When babies are teething, the hard pressure of biting soothes their sore gums. Older babies and toddlers may bite in a playful way as they explore objects and people (think about games adults may play with babies, pretending to bite the baby's toes or fingers), or they may bite in a reactive way when angry and frustrated or emotionally overwhelmed. They may also bite in a strategic way if they learn that biting causes another child to give up a toy or move out of the way.



Preventing or Minimizing

Provide teething babies with safe things to chew on. Provide toddlers with enough play space to minimize crowding, and help them share space so they do not feel threatened or overwhelmed by the children close to them. Help toddlers learn words to say to express their feelings and needs instead of biting, and prompt them to use those specific words. Praise children when they communicate with words and gestures. Read books that remind children of safe ways to interact and touch others, such as *Teeth are Not for Biting* by Elizabeth Verdick.

Do not label a specific child as a “biter,” since this may lead to isolation and rejection rather than supportive intervention. However, try to observe patterns of when, where, why, and whom a child tends to bite. With this knowledge you may be able to anticipate and prevent incidents by changing the environment and/or providing extra supervision and redirection at these times. For example, you may notice that Matilda tends to bite when another child tries to take a toy from her. Closely monitoring Matilda when she is playing with toys close to other children may allow you to intervene quickly to prevent a bite.



Responding

When a child bites, you will first need to examine the child who has been bitten and apply any first aid needed. Comfort the child who was bitten, and make sure he is safe from additional harm. If there are two teachers in the room, one can attend to the child who was bitten and the other can attend to the child who bit. If you are the only teacher, you will need to do both. Remove the child who is biting, and firmly say, “Stop. No biting. Biting hurts.” You can also explain and show the child that he has hurt the other child. For example, “Mark is crying because you bit his hand. Your teeth are sharp, and Mark is hurt.” Then remind the child of a better way to get what he needs. Try to remain calm and firm to avoid giving too much reinforcing attention to the child who bit. Follow your school's policy with regard to documenting the incident and notifying parents if needed.

Linked Strategies

- Model prosocial behaviors
- Engage children in planned activities to promote positive peer interactions
- Help children share space
- Support turn-taking
- Redirect undesired behaviors
- Provide verbal and physical cues for self-control
- Help resolve conflicts with peers

Stop and Reflect: Biting

Toddlers bite for any number of reasons. How could it be helpful to know the motivation behind the biting?

The issue of biting in a toddler classroom can bring out a strong emotional response from parents. How would you respond to an angry parent who is demanding to know who bit her child?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to biting in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6



Not Sharing Toys

Sharing toys is a challenging skill that young children develop over time. Sharing often means taking turns with a particular toy or activity. It can also mean playing with a set of toys in the company of other children, for example, when three toddlers are all using puppets or toy cars in the same area. Babies do not have a concept of sharing or taking turns, although older babies may begin to offer toys and food to familiar caregivers. When they hand an item to you, they often expect that they can take it right back. Toddlers are establishing a sense of autonomy and ownership. They start to recognize items that belong to them. At school they may try to assert control over classroom toys, and they may be frustrated when someone else is using a toy that they want or when they cannot have all the crayons or trains for themselves. Children typically get better at sharing around four years old, when they have the ability to use their language skills to negotiate turn-taking and trading and have more self-control when waiting for their turns. It is important, therefore, to have realistic expectations for toddlers and to gently support them in managing conflicts about sharing.



Causes

Infants and toddlers do not understand that other people have wants, needs, and feelings different from their own. Therefore they do not understand that toys in the classroom belong to everyone and must be shared. Crawling infants do not yet understand the idea of personal space, so they do not see a toy being held by another baby as off limits to them. They also do not have the language skills to understand explanations and rules about turn-taking. Even toddlers who are starting to talk have a very limited sense of time, so they do not understand or believe that if they give up a toy, they will get it back in a few minutes. “Now” is all that matters to infants and toddlers.



Preventing or Minimizing

Infant and toddler classrooms need to have plenty of toys and interesting materials appropriate to the number of children in the class. If there are only a few fun toys, you can be sure that children will be frustrated and fight over them. In contrast, when there are many interesting things to do and objects to play with, children can share toys and space more easily. It is also helpful to establish trust and a feeling of safety within the classroom environment. When children feel safe, and when they trust their caregivers, they begin to understand that their needs will be met. This allows them to feel more relaxed and have less need to defend and cling to everything they have. Part of establishing this kind of safe environment is offering children choices when possible (e.g., “Are you finished with that crayon, Kaitlyn? Can we give George a turn with it?”) and making sure that when a child is willing to give up an item, she does get another turn with it again soon. In fact, back-and-forth games in which children practice giving and receiving encourage children to practice this early form of turn-taking. Activities such as rolling a ball back and forth, offering each other pretend food to eat, or passing items to each other during snack time lay a foundation for sharing. When children share and take turns successfully, label and praise this behavior: “Wow, Benjamin, that was so kind of you to share your crackers with Emily!” or “Shelby and William, you are doing a great job taking turns on the bike. What good friends you are!”



Responding

When an infant takes a toy from another infant, look for the babies’ signals to see whether your help is needed. If neither baby is showing distress, you may “let it go” and just make sure there are enough toys for both babies to explore. If one baby is frequently passive and another is frequently grabbing from others, you will want to step in and redirect the baby who is grabbing to a different toy. When babies or toddlers are grabbing from each other and showing distress, it is helpful to respond calmly, using simple words and actions to prevent harm and facilitate turn-taking. For example, you might say gently, “Hold on, Raymond. Jesse is using that car. I can help you find another one to use.” You may need to gently return the toy to the child who was playing with it as you say this.

When working with children who are able to talk, prompt them to replay their interaction using words after returning the toy to the child who was using it. For example, as you return the toy to the first child, say to the second child, “Emily is using the bucket right now. If you want a turn, you can ask her: ‘Can I have a turn?’” Then prompt the other child to give an answer, such as “yes,” “no,” or “later.”

Sharing Tip 1: Think about what rules you have about sharing and why. Do you expect children to give up what they are playing with as soon as another child asks for it? Is this fair to the child using the toy? Is it okay for a child to say “no” when asked to share? Will you set a limit on how long a child can keep a popular toy? Do you use a timer or other routine to help children wait for a turn? Remember that sharing is harder for children when it always means “give up what you have.” When you allow children the choice to say “no,” at least temporarily, they are also more free to choose to say “yes” when they are ready.

Sharing Tip 2: Remember that when you offer choices and ask questions, you need to respect children’s answers. If you ask, “Can Marisol have a turn with that ball?” you are giving the other child permission to say “no,” and you will need a plan for Marisol to wait for her turn. If you do not want to offer the option of “no,” you can use a statement instead of a question, such as “Kimberly, you have had the ball for a long time. Marisol is waiting for a turn. I will count to ten and then it will be time to give Marisol the ball.”

Sharing Tip 3: When children are physically struggling over a toy as you are trying to facilitate turn-taking, you may need to hold the toy yourself while the conflict is being resolved. You can say, “I will hold the doll while we figure this out.” Stay down at the children’s eye level as you talk with them and help them take turns or find another way to share the materials.

Linked Strategies:

- Support turn-taking
- Offer prompts for peer interaction
- Help resolve conflicts with peers
- Engage children in planned activities to promote positive peer interactions
- Offer opportunities for children to make choices
- Use praise to encourage positive behavior/cooperation

Stop and Reflect: Not Sharing Toys

Understanding toddler development is necessary for a teacher to know what is within a normal range of toddler behavior. What kind of realistic expectations should a toddler teacher have about sharing?

How would you describe your role as a teacher during the many sharing struggles that occur during a normal toddler day?

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel responding to refusals to share toys in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6



Tips for Communicating with Parents about Challenging Behaviors

It is important to maintain positive, ongoing, back-and-forth communication with parents about their children throughout the year, rather than initiating contact only when there is a problem to report. When you take the time to build genuine, mutually respectful relationships with each parent or guardian, it is easier to approach them when you have a concern to discuss.

When a child is showing a pattern of challenging behavior, your first approach should be to work with your instructional team and supervisor or director to try to problem solve within the classroom. Take time to notice as much as you can about the child's behavior: What time(s) of day does it happen? Is it every day or on certain days of the week? Does it happen in a particular area of the room, or in proximity to certain classmates? What might be changed in the environment to prevent or minimize the behavior? What might be changed in the daily routine, or at transition times, to prevent or minimize the behavior? What additional supports could you or a co-teacher provide to this child?

Make a plan based on your observations and your brainstorming, and try it out. Remember that changes and new strategies may take days or weeks to have an impact on a child's behavior, so do not expect instant success. If things are improving, you may just want to mention to the parents the ways you are supporting their child and what seems to be working. Alternatively, you may not need to involve the parents at all.

If you have already done all of the above and the child is still showing frequent challenging behavior, it is appropriate to share this information with the parents or guardians and invite them to partner with you on finding solutions. What is NOT helpful is to simply keep sending home notes to parents reporting on their child's problematic behavior (e.g., "Maria hit another child twice today and sat in time out," or "Maria threw her lunch kit on the floor today," or "Maria refused to come to circle time:"). These kinds of notes tend to distress and alienate parents, and they do not provide helpful guidance or support. Instead, invite parents to partner with you in addressing the concerning behavior, using an approach such as the following:

- Invite the parents to meet with you in person for a conference.
- Come prepared to share your observations along with the solutions and approaches you have tried thus far.
- Present your observations in a caring way:
 - "We've noticed that Gregory is having a hard time with ____."
 - "We've been trying to support Lawrence with ____."
 - "Transition/nap/circle times are really hard for Brianna..."
- Invite parents to share their own observations and challenges they have been having in the home environment.
- Ask parents if there is any additional information they would like to share that would help you understand their child's behavior.
- Make a mutually agreeable plan for new or additional strategies to try and for how (and how often) you will communicate about how things are going (e.g., daily or weekly email, brief check-in at pick-up time, note sent home in child's backpack).
- If you and your supervisor feel that outside consultation is needed about this child, and you have such consultation available to you (such as from a mentor teacher or a child development specialist connected with your organization), it may be appropriate to share this information with parents as well. Parents may be relieved that you are seeking out support to help their child and make her classroom experience more successful. If they have concerns about confidentiality or what information will be conveyed back to them, be prepared to answer those questions.

If, after all these steps have been taken, you and your director feel that an outside evaluation would be beneficial for this child to identify an underlying developmental or behavioral issue, be prepared to provide referral suggestions to parents and to offer whatever information or support you can to facilitate this process (such as offering to fill out any requested questionnaires or be available for a phone interview with the outside evaluator).

Conversations with parents about their children's behavior can be hard. However, when you approach them in a thoughtful way, with good preparation and anticipation of parents' possible questions and reactions, you are more likely to have a successful, collaborative dialogue. Remember, you are all on the same team, working to support the child's social, emotional, and behavioral development and learning.

Conclusion

Learning to regulate emotions and behavior takes lots of time and practice, and infants and toddlers can't do it alone. They need caring, patient, consistent adults to keep them safe, provide warmth and affection, acknowledge their strong feelings, and direct them toward positive behavior choices. Some toddler behaviors such as tantrums, biting, or saying “no” can challenge our own self-regulation skills! But take a deep breath and hang in there—the work you do now will pay off as you set children on the path to becoming caring, capable, and emotionally healthy adults.

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