Milestones of Social Emotional Development

Use the following charts as resources for yourself and staff members regarding social emotional development.

Social Emotional Development for Infants


| By 2 months, babies: | • Begin to smile at people  
• Can briefly calm himself (may bring hands to mouth and suck on fingers)  
• Try to look at parent  
• Coo, make gurgling sounds  
• Pay attention to faces  
• Begin to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn’t change |
| --- | --- |
| By 4 months, babies: | • Smile spontaneously, especially at people  
• Like to play with people and might cry when playing stops  
• Copy some movements and facial expressions, like smiling  
• Begin to babble  
• Babble with expressions and copy sounds he hears  
• Cry in different ways to show hunger, pain, or being tired  
• Let you know if she is happy or sad  
• Respond to affection  
• Watch faces closely  
• Recognize familiar people and things at a distance |
| By 6 months, babies: | • Know familiar faces and begin to know if someone is a stranger  
• Like to play with others, especially parents  
• Respond to other people’s emotions and often seem happy  
• Like to look at self in a mirror  
• Respond to sounds by making sounds  
• Respond to own name  
• Make sounds to show joy and displeasure  
• Show curiosity and try to get things that are out of reach |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 9 months, babies</th>
<th>By 1 year, babies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • May be afraid of strangers  
• May be clingy with familiar adults  
• Have favorite toys  
• Understand “no”  
• Play peek-a-boo  
• Copy sounds and gestures of others | • Are shy or nervous with strangers  
• Cry when mom or dad leave  
• Have favorite things and people  
• Show fear in some situations  
• Hand a book when he wants to hear a story  
• Repeat sounds or actions to get attention  
• Put out arm or leg to help with dressing  
• Play games such as “peek-a-boo” and “pat-a-cake”  
• Respond to simple spoken requests  
• Use simple gestures, like shaking head “no” or waving “bye bye”  
• Make sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speaking)  
• Say “mama” and “dada” and exclamations like “uh-oh!”  
• Try to say words you say |
Social Emotional Development for Toddlers


| By 18 months, toddlers: | • Like to hand things to others to play  
|                        | • May have temper tantrums  
|                        | • May be afraid of strangers  
|                        | • Show affection to familiar people  
|                        | • Play simple pretend, such as feeding a doll  
|                        | • May cling to caregivers in new situations  
|                        | • Point to show others something interesting  
|                        | • Explore alone but with parent close by  
|                        | • Say several single words  
|                        | • Say and shake head “no”  
|                        | • Point to show someone what he wants |

| By 2 years, toddlers: | • Copy others, especially adults and older children  
|                       | • Get excited when with other children  
|                       | • Show more and more independence  
|                       | • Show defiant behavior (doing what he has been told not to do)  
|                       | • Play mainly beside other children, but is beginning to include other children like in chase games  
|                       | • Know names of familiar people  
|                       | • Play simple make-believe games |
### Social Emotional Development for Preschoolers


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 3 years, preschoolers:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Copy adults and friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Show affection for friends without prompting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Take turns in games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Show concern for crying friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Understand the idea of “mine” and “his” or “hers”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Show a wide range of emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Separate easily from mom and dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* May get upset with major changes in routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Dress and undress self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Name a friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Carry on a conversation using 2-3 sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Play make-believe with dolls, animals, and people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 4 years, preschoolers:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Enjoy doing new things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Play “mom” and “dad”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Is more creative with make-believe play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Would rather play with other children than by himself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Cooperate with other children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Often can’t tell what’s real and what’s make-believe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Talk about what she likes and what she is interested in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Understand the idea of “same” and “different”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Play board or card games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 5 years, preschoolers:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Want to please friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Want to be like friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* More likely to agree with rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Like to sing, dance, and act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Show concern and sympathy for others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Are aware of gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Can tell what’s real and what’s make-believe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Show more independence (for example, may visit a next-door neighbor by himself but adult supervision is still required)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Is sometimes demanding and sometimes very cooperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social-Emotional Development for School-Age Children


| Between the ages of 5 and 7, school-agers: | • Develop greater empathy  
• Establish and maintain positive relationships and friendships  
• Start developing a sense of morality  
• Control impulsive behavior  
• Identify and manage emotions  
• Form a positive self-concept and self-esteem (identity formation has begun)  
• Become resilient  
• Begin to function more independently (from looking after person possessions to making decision without needing constant support).  
• Form opinions about moral values — right and wrong  
• Be able to express an opinion and negotiate  
• Develop greater empathy  
• Begin understanding different viewpoints  
• Start making more sense of who I am (Who am I like? Who likes me?)  
• Develop a sense of family history (identity)  
• Grapple with questions about death  
• Accept that parents are not all powerful |
| Between the ages of 8 and 9, school-agers: | • Fit in and be accepted by peers (preoccupied with comparisons — do I fit in?)  
• Have a best friend  
• Strengthen cooperative skills  
• Adjust to a sexually developing body and handle the agonies of feeling awkward and self-conscious (What will I look like? Do I look normal?)  
• Continue refining a sense of self (fluid and constantly changing)  
• Work out values and beliefs — often passionately adopt an ethical stance  
• Establish independence and individuality (intensely private, wanting alone time, displays of noncompliance at school and home) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between the ages of 10 and 11, school-agers:</th>
<th>By the age of 12 and beyond, school-agers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Behave appropriately in a variety of social situations</td>
<td>• Adjust to a bigger social world with greater expectations and demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refine communication skills</td>
<td>• Overcome the awkward and clumsy stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resolve interpersonal conflicts — understand the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive responses</td>
<td>• Find acceptance within a peer group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Become more independent and responsible for actions</td>
<td>• Becoming more self-assured and able to say “No!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value and respect rules and authority</td>
<td>• Move further away from family and closer to friends for support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know how to act appropriately and safely in online social world</td>
<td>• Handle issues and growing concerns about sexuality and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage emotional changes accompanying puberty (torn between needing the security of the familiar and craving the unknown)</td>
<td>• Manage confusing and unexpected feelings, such as anger and rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop more positive self esteem and resilience by building strengths and accepting limitations</td>
<td>• Move toward self-acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>