

TIPS FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Relationships are the way babies come to know the world and their place in it. They provide the loving context necessary to comfort, protect, encourage, and offer a buffer against stressful times. It is through relationships that young children develop social emotional wellness.

Social-emotional wellness, in a nutshell, is the developing capacity to experience and regulate emotions, form secure relationships, and explore and learn—all in the context of the child's family, community and cultural background. These tips for promoting healthy social-emotional wellness are essential for children from birth to three:

- **Provide your child with responsive care.** Taking time to really sit and observe what children do can tell us a lot. It provides us with clues about what makes our child tick. When children feel responded to and understood, they develop confidence and good self-esteem.
- **Be affectionate and nurturing.** Touching, holding, comforting, rocking, singing and talking to babies - there are more to these interactions than meets the eye. They also provide precisely the stimulation their growing brains need. And when he feels he is loved for who he is, he learns how to love others that way, too.
- **Help your child learn to resolve conflict in a healthy, appropriate way.** Children begin to develop a sense of "self" around age 2 and things like sharing can be hard. Their ability to exercise self-control comes with time, brain maturation, practice, and with the help of caring adults. By helping very young children name their feelings,

and letting them see and practice ways to control their impulses, they learn over time how to do it themselves, which also helps them learn how to resolve conflicts on their own.

- **Help your child experience the joy found in the "give-and-take" of relationships.** Through simple interactions, as she has the opportunity to experience satisfying relationships, she'll learn that she feels good when she makes others feel good. This will help her build healthy relationships and a positive sense of self as she grows.
- **Help your child feel safe.** Through your responses, your child will learn that when he feels uncertain and fearful, he can count on other people to be there to support him. Sensitive responses contribute to a child's growing sense of security and trust.
- **Show your child that she is part of a larger network of love and relationships.** Caring for children can be incredibly joyful and rewarding but also very stressful. It's important to have other people and places we can count on for support.
- **Nurture your child's respect for differences.** Young children are not inhibited by the rules of social etiquette and naturally voice their curiosity about the differences in skin color, size and weight, and physical ability that they observe. Adults play a significant role in helping them appreciate the differences and modeling respect for others.

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