



NEWSLETTER

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

33 to 42 months

Your child is growing fast and is now a preschooler! Your child is talking much more, and you are getting to know who they are as a person. They are better able to manage their emotions now, and there are fewer physical or vocal outbursts. However, your child can still fall apart under stress. Take a deep breath and help them calm. This ability to calm—or regulate—is one of the most important skills your child is learning. They learn how to regulate with your help and through your example. What helps you stay calm? Breathing? Taking a break? Talking to someone? Talk to your child about how you calm down when you are having a big feeling.

"I'm Still Your Baby"

Your independent child still needs the comfort of your arms and gentle touch many times a day. Touch and physical connection are an important part of your relationship with them. There will be times when your child has big feelings and only a loving hug from you will help. Research shows that touch is calming for both your child and you.

Friends Forever

Friends are becoming more important to your child. While playing with friends, they may engage in pretend play, becoming a fairy, a pirate, a doctor, or a teacher. Playtime still results in conflicts and big feelings, but your child has more words and ideas now about how to solve problems. Your preschooler may think about ideas such as turn taking or sharing. Often, they will come to you for help solving problems.

The Beginnings of Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize someone else's emotions and respond with care. Empathy is a complicated skill that develops over many years. Your child may be able to express their own feelings now. They are beginning to learn how to recognize other people's emotions too: "Look at Emma's face. She looks scared." Teach your child how to respond with care: "Daddy looks like he's sad. I bet a hug would cheer him up." They learn how to care for others from you and your example.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

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Routine Check-Ins

Your child's sense of safety and security in the world is growing. They can now explore and interact with friends and family without you as close by. Your child may ask you to stay with them at a friend's house, yet rarely come over to touch base with you. You may feel a little sad or neglected. Keep in mind that this is a sign of your child's growing confidence. You still play a critical role in supporting them emotionally. When your child does have big feelings, they will come right back to the comfort of your arms.

Special Jobs

Your child is gaining new skills every day and can be truly helpful around the home. Give them special jobs around the house, like sorting socks after the laundry is done, handing out napkins at dinner, and finding their pajamas for bedtime. Your child will take pride in doing these jobs and their important role in the family. "Thank you for sorting socks, honey! You are a big help."

Nighttime Connections

A good night's sleep can mean the difference between an easygoing, happy child and an angry, fussy child. You also need to get enough sleep to be emotionally available for your child. Use your bedtime routine as a special time to connect. At this age, your child may have nightmares, fears of the dark, or fears of being alone. Let them talk about their fears. Cuddle up and let your child know you will keep them safe. A nightlight, special blanket, or stuffed animal may help.

Hungry and Fussy

When your child is fussy or falling apart, they may be hungry. Offer food every 2 to 3 hours. Make sure you take healthy snacks along whenever you go on an outing. If your child is starting to get fussy, offer a little food. Now you and your child can keep having fun, positive interactions with each other!

Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. Your child develops healthy relationships through positive back-and-forth interactions with you, family members, and friends. Healthy relationships prepare your child for school and life. Screens cannot!



The Trouble with Change

Having a consistent daily routine offers a sense of safety and security to your preschooler. However, sometimes changing activities may make your child angry or frustrated. This is especially true when you are interrupting an activity your child enjoys. During these times, make sure you give your child a warning: "In 5 minutes it will be time to clean up your toys so we can go shopping." Make sure the next activity includes something your child will enjoy: "I need your help shopping. Let's make a list together."