



Plays well with others!



A guide to the social and emotional development of young children



The information in this booklet is a guide to typical development, and what behaviors might be worth asking about. If a behavior seems unusual, happens over and over, or goes on for a long time, this may mean your child needs extra help. Accessing services at an early age can help a child reach the best outcomes possible.

If you are concerned about something you see your child doing or your child's development:



Contact your child's physician, or



Refer your child for a free screening or evaluation at **HelpMeGrowMN.org** or by calling **866-693-4769**

What is social and emotional development?

Young children (ages birth to 5 years) are learning and growing at a rapid rate. One part of this growth is their social and emotional development, which includes how well they manage their emotions and interact with others. Social and emotional development is important because it affects many parts of your child's life, including his or her behavior at home and with others, the ability to make friends, the willingness to try new things and handle frustrations, and future success in school.

Helping your child develop good social and emotional skills will make him/her more:

Happy and confident

Able to make and keep friends

Successful at school

Able to follow directions and learn new ideas

Ready to cope with stress

Willing to express needs

Read this booklet to learn more about:

Typical behavior at different ages (6 months to 5 years)

Behavior concerns

Tips on how you can help



**Remember:
All children benefit
from positive adult
interaction!**

These parenting tips help with children of any age

Parenting can be hard—it's okay to wonder whether you are being a good parent

It's okay to take a break and ask for help

Keep the rules clear and try not to make exceptions

Make sure the adults in your child's life are working together

Be firm with your child, but also respectful and patient

Listen to your child, and allow her to share her thoughts and feelings

Reward good behavior with praise instead of food

Limit your child's TV and video games—encourage playing with others instead

Model what you expect by sharing, taking turns and saying, "please," "thank you," "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you"

When your child acts out, remember that *she* is not bad, her *behavior* is bad

Stick to a daily routine as much as possible, like consistent mealtimes and bedtimes

You and your child may have different personalities—try to make them work together

Make sure your child gets plenty of exercise

Get to know the people your child spends time with, like teachers or child care providers

Learn to deal with your own anger—try taking deep breaths or calling a friend

All children benefit from positive adult interaction



In general, as children get older they will become more able to:

- Calm themselves down
- Follow rules
- Communicate their feelings
- Do things themselves
- Have sympathy for others
- Interact in a positive way with other people



6
MONTHS



By 6 months, a baby typically:

- Smiles and laughs
- Cries
- Makes eye contact
- Recognizes your face and voice
- Responds to other people's facial expressions
- Enjoys cuddling and hugging
- Can feel excited, happy, relaxed or upset
- Responds to sounds, like her name and the word "no"
- Enjoys both quiet and play times
- Begins to make sounds or babble

How to help your 6-month-old grow:

- Have fun with your baby by talking, reading, looking at books, singing, laughing, dancing and playing
- Learn and be attentive to your baby's cries—this makes him feel safe and will not spoil him
- Hold and tenderly touch your baby as much as possible, especially when feeding
- Remember that babies are interested in exploring the world and want to feel safe—this is a challenge for them
- Stay close to your baby around new people
- Child-proof your house, making it a safe place to move and explore
- Begin to stick with a daily routine—this helps her feel secure
- Talk in a soft and soothing voice, telling your baby you love her and how strong she is

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Does not smile or make other facial expressions on her own
- Does not cry
- Does not respond to sounds
- Refuses to cuddle
- Is fussy and cries most of the time
- Does not babble or make eye contact

YOUR NOTES:

12
MONTHS



By 12 months, a toddler typically:

- Cries when you leave and is fearful or shy with strangers
- Shakes head to show likes or dislikes
- Looks when his name is called
- Responds to “no” and other one-word directions
- Tries different ways to get your attention
- Enjoys playing alone and having your attention
- Can feel happy, sad, angry, scared and upset
- Starts to understand that objects “do” different things (like phones are for talking)
- Explores her own body through touch
- Imitates sounds, actions and facial expressions of others
- Prefers certain people and toys over others
- Babbles sounds like “mama” and “dada”

How to help your 1-year-old grow:

- Play with, have fun with and read, sing, laugh and talk to your child as much as possible
- Talk about what you are doing or seeing
- Help your child identify her feelings with phrases like, “You look like you’re mad!”
- Have a bedtime routine (for example: bathe, then sing, read, rock and sleep)
- Play on the floor with your child—he will feel special having all your attention
- Have enough toys when your child is playing with others, because she doesn’t know how to share yet
- Re-direct or distract your child from unwanted behavior and save a firm “NO” for when safety is the concern
- Introduce your child to things that encourage use of all five senses
- Let your child make as many choices as possible
- Hug and cuddle your child
- Tell your child every day how special he is

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Does not cry when you leave and ignores when you return
- Loss of eye contact
- Does not respond to your smile, your voice or her name
- Shows very little or a strong response to sound, light, touch or pain
- Does not sleep through the night
- Does not use simple movements like shaking head or waving to communicate
- Is always afraid to leave your side
- Says no simple words, or loss of babbling

YOUR NOTES:

2
YEARS



By the age of 2 years, a toddler typically:

- Has fears like bedtime, the toilet or large animals
- Is pushy and whines
- Shows emotions such as fear, sympathy, modesty, guilt or embarrassment
- Refuses to obey and often does the opposite of what you ask
- Wants everything her way and throws temper tantrums
- May insist on doing everything himself
- Plays briefly beside others, and does not understand how to share
- Likes to try new things when he knows you are nearby
- Copies the actions of others like driving, cooking, vacuuming, etc.
- Gets upset when you leave
- Uses simple phrases to tell you what he needs
- Says “no!” and “mine!” a lot

How to help your 2-year-old grow:

- Have fun talking about different emotions by making faces together in a mirror
- Read, sing, tell stories and encourage pretend play
- Remember the “Terrible Twos” are children forming their own personality and identity (and that’s GOOD!)
- Don’t tease your child about carrying a blanket or stuffed animal—these things help him feel safe
- Listen to your child, be understanding and allow her to express fear, anger and other emotions
- Remember that refusing to obey is not rejecting you, but usually a test to see how you react
- Let your child know what will happen next in the day, like moving from playtime to meals
- Develop and maintain consistent routines such as bedtime and meals
- Remember that toddlers usually cannot remember rules
- Make sure your toddler gets enough movement and sleep, and time to play with others
- Let your child make as many simple and meaningful choices as possible to help him gain self-confidence
- When she tantrums, protect her and others from harm by separating
- When she tantrums, help her calm down, remind her she’s safe and that you love her
- Hug and praise your child often, saying things like, “You’re so special!” or “Wow, you did it!”

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Rarely shows emotion or responds
- Is not interested in what other children are doing
- Needs constant contact with caregiver or cannot calm down after 15 minutes of comforting
- Does not understand simple instructions
- Does not speak, or loses speech
- Speaks less than 15 words or does not speak two-word sentences

YOUR NOTES:

3
YEARS



By the age of 3 years, a child typically:

- Changes moods quickly, especially with major changes in routine
- Shows concern and affection for others
- Enjoys pretend play
- May be bossy and may throw temper tantrums
- Starts playing with other children, and likes some better than others
- Can often stay with one activity for at least 5 minutes
- Begins to share and take turns
- Understands that some things are “mine” and some are not
- Makes simple choices for himself
- Is able to separate from you much more easily
- Knows her name, age and sex
- Answers “who,” “what” and “where” questions easily
- Uses four-to five-word sentences like, “I want to go outside,” or “I don’t like it!”

How to help your 3-year-old grow:

- Play and have lots of fun together
- Read and talk a lot about how different people or characters in stories feel about things
- Give words to feelings, saying things like, “When you hit that shows me you’re mad,” or “You’re smiling—are you happy?”
- Have a special reading time each day, and slowly lengthen the stories so she can sit a little longer
- Play games using simple two-step directions
- Take your child to get a free Early Childhood Screening at your local school
- Allow your child to do more for herself and help with household tasks
- Help your child include others in playing by sharing and taking turns
- Tell your child often that he is fun, awesome and a good helper

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Doesn’t look at you
- Shows limited facial expressions
- Shows little interest in toys or other children
- Cannot focus on one activity for longer than 3 minutes
- Doesn’t know how to “pretend”
- Hurts himself, like by biting himself or head banging
- Has a very difficult time separating from you
- Does not let you know when she is hurt
- Does not understand simple instructions
- Uses no two-word phrases (without imitating or repeating), or loses speech or social skills

YOUR NOTES:

4
YEARS



By the age of 4 years, a child typically:

- Expresses strong emotions and opinions at times
- Feels guilty about bad behavior
- Is beginning to control his frustration
- “Talks back” and challenges things you are teaching her
- Begins to understand danger and things that are dangerous
- Compares things by saying phrases like “I’m bigger” or “You have a dog and I don’t”
- Asks questions about his life and family after spending time with other families
- Has an active imagination and may have imaginary friends
- Likes everyone to do things the “right” way
- Becomes more independent and plays cooperatively with other children
- Can ask for help

How to help your 4-year-old grow:

- Have fun with your child
- Recognize good behavior and reward with praise—this makes her want to do it more often
- Keep helping your child talk about his feelings
- Express feelings using activities like drawing a “mad” picture or dancing an angry dance
- Keep a daily routine and let your child know what’s coming up next
- Make sure your child has a chance to play with other children and encourage taking turns
- Pay attention to your child when he is talking
- Let your child make daily choices like, “Do you want carrots or an apple for a snack?”
- Help your child feel important by giving her jobs like setting the table or feeding the cat
- Talk about how people are the same and different, and that it’s okay
- Make sure your child has had a free Early Childhood Screening at your local school
- Cuddle, hug and praise your child for all the new things she can do

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Is not interested in games or other children
- Repeats behaviors like rocking, hand flapping, spinning, etc.
- Cannot focus on one activity for longer than 3 minutes
- Uses sexual behavior or language you can’t get her to stop
- Tries to hurt other children, adults or animals
- Hits or bites others without any self-control when upset
- Still clings and cries when you leave
- Speaks very few words, loses speech or social skills

YOUR NOTES:

5
YEARS



By the age of 5 years, a child typically:

- Shows many emotions, including jealousy
- Can be demanding at times and cooperative at other times
- Will be sensitive to other children's feelings
- Is able to follow simple rules like waiting in line or using a quiet voice
- Wants to please you, but may go against your authority
- May make up excuses or stories for their behavior to stay out of trouble
- Can take turns and share, but doesn't always want to
- Plays in small groups and may choose to leave someone out
- Likes singing, dancing and imaginary play
- Wants to please friends and be with them
- Likes to make many independent choices about clothes, food and activities

How to help your 5-year-old grow:

- Be silly, laugh at her jokes and have fun together
- Encourage your child to ask for help instead of whining or pouting
- Don't be afraid to show a wide range of your emotions and how you deal with them in a healthy way
- Use magazines or pictures to point out real dangers (like guns or fire) and make-believe dangers (like monsters)
- Make sure your child gets enough exercise and rest
- Encourage your child to play games that involve working together
- Encourage creativity and understanding of others by acting out stories, playing dress-up and pretending
- Gently remind him of rules and why we have them
- Allow your child to help plan activities
- Give lots of praise, hugs and encouragement every day

What kind of behavior should I be concerned about?

- Does not express a wide range of emotions
- Seems sad or unhappy most of the time
- Is very aggressive, fearful or shy
- Refuses to go to school
- Is only interested in one or two activities
- Cannot focus on any one activity for longer than 5 minutes
- Is unable to make friends
- Does not understand that some things are not real
- Cannot separate from you without getting very upset
- Loses speech or social skills

YOUR NOTES:



Visit [HelpMeGrowMN.org](https://www.HelpMeGrowMN.org) for more information about early childhood development and social and emotional milestones, as well as other developmental milestones:



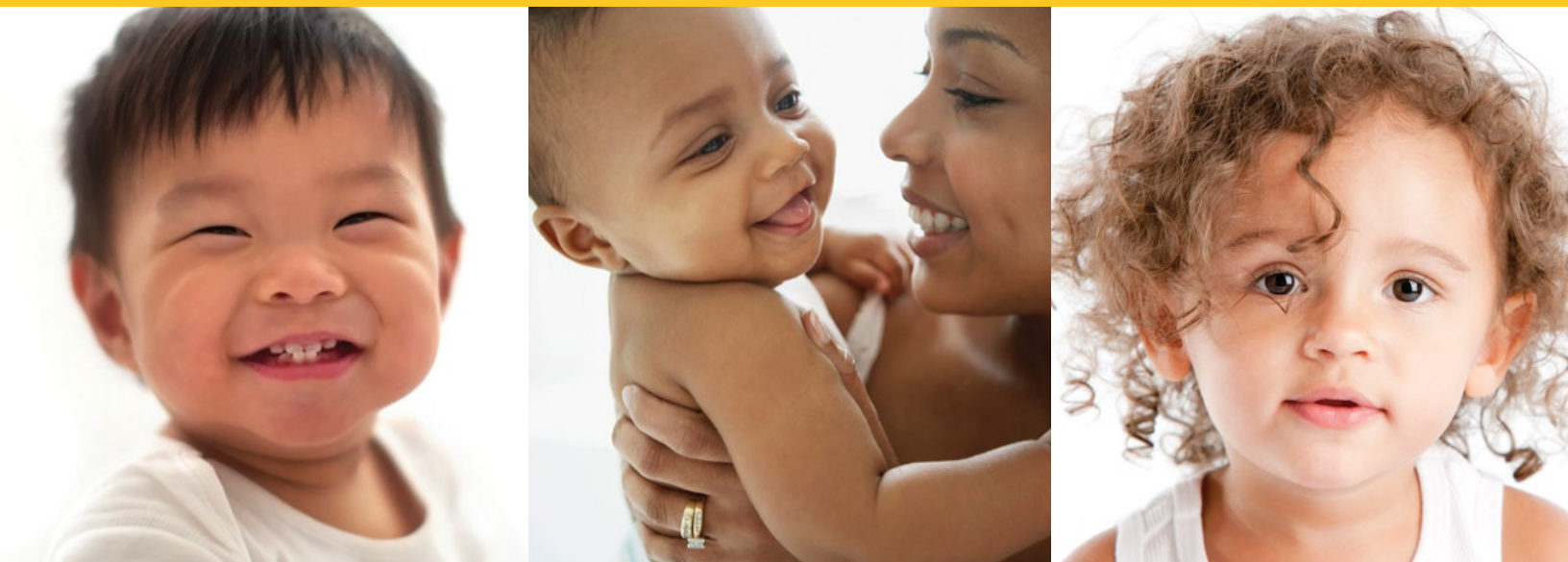
Cognitive
milestones



Motor
milestones



Communication
and language
milestones



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