Snapshots of Your Child’s Social and Emotional Well-being

Helping New York’s children grow up healthy

Birth to Age 5 (early childhood)

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Resources

New York State Office of Mental Health
1-866-270-9857 (information and referral)
http://www.omh.ny.gov

The Children’s Plan
http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/engage

Local County Mental Health Department Contact Information
http://www.clmhd.org/about/countydirectory.aspx

Families Together of NYS
518-432-0333
http://www.ftnys.org

http://www.omh.ny.gov

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More is known now than ever before about how young children learn, think and grow. From birth to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any other stage of life.

Social and emotional learning is the way a child develops the ability to experience, regulate and express emotions; form close, secure relationships; explore the environment; and learn.

**Social and Emotional Milestones**

Children develop at their own unique pace, so it’s impossible to tell exactly when your child will learn a given skill. The developmental milestones below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don’t be alarmed if your child takes a slightly different course.

- **By the end of three months**, infants begin to develop a social smile and become more expressive with their faces and bodies. They enjoy attention and may cry when it stops.

- **By the end of 7 months**, they will respond to other people’s expressions of emotions.

- **By the end of one year**, they may become shy or anxious around strangers; prefer the company of their mother or primary caregiver and often cry when they leave; show specific preferences for certain people and toys; will test parental responses—especially during feedings; repeat sounds and gestures to gain attention; can finger feed themselves and may extend an arm or leg to help when being dressed.

- **By the end of two years**, babies are much more aware of themselves as separate beings; get more excited in the company of other children; and will imitate the behavior of adults and other children.

- **By the age of four**, children become much more independent; can dress and undress themselves; are able to cooperate with other children; can negotiate solutions to conflicts; are increasingly interested in new experiences and inventive in “fantasy” play; often cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality; and view themselves as whole persons—with a body, mind and feelings.

- **By the age of five**, children show more independence; like to sing, dance and act; are more likely to agree with rules; want to please and be like their friends; are aware of their gender; are able to distinguish fantasy from reality; can be demanding and eagerly cooperative.