

I Help My Child Learn Social Skills

GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

Children who exhibit social and emotional competence are likely to have better relationships and greater resilience to stress as adults. Social and emotional competence refers to children’s ability to form bonds and interact positively with others, self-regulate their emotions and behavior, communicate their feelings, and solve problems effectively.

Helping children to develop these skills can result in stronger parent-child relationships that are mutually rewarding. Parents grow more responsive to children’s needs—and less likely to feel stressed or frustrated—as children learn to say what they need, rather than “acting out” difficult feelings.

Children’s delays in social-emotional development can create extra stress for families. It is important to identify any such concerns as early as possible and to provide services to children and their parents that facilitate healthy development.

Key Points to Cover With Families

<p>Social skills are important for children to become successful adults. Social skills are defined and prioritized a little differently for each unique family and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give some examples of social skills, such as taking turns, sharing, or using manners. ▪ Ask: <i>Which social skills are most important in your family/community/culture? Why?</i>
<p>Children and youth develop social skills gradually. Share some information about social skills that they might expect to see at their children’s current ages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help the parent connect important social skills with typical child development. (For example, <i>I hear you saying that sharing is really important to you. Most children develop the ability to share their toys around age 5.</i>) ▪ Ask: <i>Which of these skills do you see your child doing well? Which would you like to help them improve?</i>
<p>Our children learn by watching us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>What are some situations where your child might see you using [chosen skill]?</i> ▪ For example, how does the caregiver use this skill with their coparent, family members, or friends?
<p>Parents can help their children learn social skills. One great way to teach children is by “catching them” doing something well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>When have you seen your child do [action/behavior] well recently? How do you let your child know you like what they’re doing?</i> ▪ Ask: <i>How else could you encourage this skill?</i>

More resources on building [social and emotional competence of children](#) can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

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CONVERSATION GUIDE

Children with strong social skills get along better with others. You are your child's first and most important teacher.

One social skill I would like to help my child improve:

I show my child these skills when I:

I encourage this skill by:

- Praising them when they do this well
- Reading books about emotions and/or social situations
- Pointing out when characters on TV use the skill
- Naming feelings (my own and/or my child's)
- Setting up play dates for practice
- Celebrating my child's unique self
- Teaching my child about his or her cultural identity
- Talking about and celebrating differences
- Having a "no technology" day
- _____
- _____

One thing I will do this week to encourage social skills:
