



Social Emotional Tips FOR Providers Caring for Toddlers

Introduction

The quality of each toddler's relationships with familiar adults—especially their parents—sets the foundation for social and emotional health. Social and emotional health is a child's growing ability to:

- express and manage a variety of feelings
- develop close relationships with others and
- explore his/her surroundings and learn (adapted from Zero to Three, 2001)

Children who experience the world as responsive to their needs, predictable, and supportive develop the social and emotional foundations that help them become ready to learn (Norman-Murch, 1996). For example, when a familiar caregiver offers encouragement to a toddler, comforts him with a gentle hug and laughs together with him throughout the day, the child learns that he is safe. This sense of security allows the child to explore, learn and engage in the world and with people around them. A child who can do these things has an easier time being successful in school and life. Research tells us that attending to the social and emotional needs of very young children throughout the day—as part of their every day rituals and routines—promotes positive attachments that are critical to their developing trust for others and empathy.

Social and Emotional Tips for Providers Caring for Toddlers provides a set of (5) one-page posters that staff can refer to during specific daily routines including: dressing, meal times, playtime, resting and diapering and toileting. Putting these posters up around the classroom can serve as a reminder of what to say or do to nurture the social and emotional health of toddlers every day. Each poster has (5) simple tips that staff can try with each child in their care such as: “Talk about what you see.” Each tip includes sample language that staff can try, “Mia, you are jumping up and down with a big smile! You are excited.” Each poster also offers a rationale for using the tips which are based on research. The practical strategies, sample language and rationale in each poster can help staff to:

- Practice using behavior and language that supports healthy, positive connections with children
- Learn more about social and emotional health and
- Understand the importance of social and emotional health to school readiness.

Acknowledgements

This resource was created by Mary A. Mackrain, Kathy S. Hepburn and Deborah F. Perry with guidance from the director and parents of the Lake Orion, MI. Early Head Start Program.



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CENTER
FOR CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

MARCH 2012

This product was developed with funding provided by the Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through an Innovation and Improvement Grant (90YD0268).



Social Emotional Tips for Providers Caring for Toddlers

Intended Users and Examples of How to Use this Resource

This resource is primarily intended for use by those supporting infants within group settings. This may include staff such as, Early Head Start center-based teachers, family, group and center-based childcare providers and early childhood mental health consultants.

These posters align closely with the Social and Emotional Tips for Parents of Infants posters and can be used together to create consistent practices for children between home and care settings.

Examples of how an early childhood mental health consultant can introduce these posters to staff include:

- **Facilitating a small or large group training session.**
For example, an early childhood mental health consultant might use the posters to enhance a staff training on social emotional development.
- **Facilitating an ongoing group experience.**
For example, a consultant might introduce one poster at a time during monthly get-togethers encouraging staff to try several tips and report about their experiences at the next meeting.

For more information about social and emotional health of young children, visit the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation website at <http://ecmhc.org>.

Examples of additional social and emotional resources found on <http://ecmhc.org> website include:

- **Everyday Ideas for Increasing Children's Opportunities to Practice Social Skills and Emotional Competencies**
<http://ecmhc.org/ideas/index.html>
The Everyday Ideas are available in a variety of formats including, Twitter postings ("tweets"). The Everyday Ideas offer strategies that can be used in a classroom and supplemental materials that can be sent home for families to use. The ideas are organized by the type of skill that would be targeted when using the strategy: emotions, friendship skills, problem solving, and handling anger and other difficult emotions.
- **The Infant Toddler Temperament Tool (IT³)**
<http://ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html>
The Infant Toddler Temperament Tool includes a short on-line survey that allows parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers to recognize and explore their own temperament traits and those of a child for which they provide care. The IT³ generates personalized results, which support parents and caregivers in understanding how adult and child similarities and differences in temperament traits may affect "goodness of fit." Along with these personalized results, the IT³ describes best practice tips adults can use to foster the unique temperament of each child within their care.

- **Recognizing and Supporting the Social and Emotional Health of Young Children Birth to Age Five**
<http://ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/index.html>
This on-line tutorial provides professionals with a detailed definition and understanding of the milestones related to social and emotional health in infants and young children (birth up to age five) as well as strategies that adult's (parent's and other caregivers) can use to support these behaviors within every day routines in the home and within early care and education settings.



5 Simple Tips

To Support **Toddlers'** Social Emotional Health During



Dressing

- 1 Let toddlers help.**
"Mika, hold your arms up high, while I pull your shirt over your head!"
- 2 Offer choices.**
"Josef, do you want to put on the blue or red socks?"
- 3 Practice patience.**
"Anna, these shoes are tough to get on! Let's take a few deep breaths and try again."
- 4 Leave extra time.**
"William, we are going outside soon, let's get your jacket and hat."
- 5 Offer positive words.**
"Nice going Elena! You got your leg in your pants!"

You Help Children Grow!

Dressing can create a special time for connecting with toddlers. Toddlers like to show that they can do it—"All by myself!" When you offer choices and show patience they learn that you value their efforts. This will help them to keep trying and eventually learn to dress themselves. Toddlers look to you for encouragement. Let them know their efforts matter, "Tamika you pulled your pants up! You are doing new things, Mrs. Kendall is proud of you."





5 Simple Tips

To Support **Toddlers'** Social Emotional Health During



Meal Time

- 1 Let them help.**
"Hey Talia, I bet you could hold your spoon!"
- 2 Offer choices.**
"Derek, do you want the red cup or the blue cup?"
- 3 Eat together.**
"I like the carrots; do you like the carrots Jayden?"
- 4 Know when a child is hungry.**
"Maria, I see you frowning and you are getting frustrated, let's have a snack that is good for your body."
- 5 Be a role model for healthy eating.**
"Dana and Patrick, let's share this banana."

You Help Children Grow!

Meal Time offers an opportunity to connect and learn with toddlers. Take time to talk about the day together. Offering choices lets toddlers feel in control. Noticing cues that let you know a child is hungry or full, fussing, crying, etc. helps them feel understood.





5 Simple Tips

To Support **Toddlers'** Social Emotional Health During



Play Time

- 1 Join in the play!**
"Ashton, I will run with you, let's go!"
- 2 Stay close by.**
"Michael, I am right here, I see you playing with trucks."
- 3 Talk about what you see.**
"Mia, you are jumping up and down with a big smile! You are excited."
- 4 Show toddlers how to do new things.**
"Dalia, you can hold the bowl with this hand and then stir!"
- 5 Have fun and laugh together.**
"Brady, that's so silly, you make me laugh!"

You Help Children Grow!

Toddlers love to learn. Toddlers learn by looking, touching and interacting with things around them. When you join in and encourage learning through play, it supports children's brains to grow—getting them ready for school and life! So, take time to have fun every day with the children in your life.





5 Simple Tips

To Support **Toddlers'** Social Emotional Health During



Rest Time

- 1 Create a routine.**
"Abia and Fay, in ten minutes we're going to read two stories and then it's time for napping."
- 2 Offer toddlers choices.**
"Kate, do you want me to rub your back or sing you a song?"
- 3 Take care of the basics.**
"Justin, let's change your diaper before you rest."
- 4 Encourage comfort items.**
"Angelique, here is your bear for rest time."
- 5 Learn tips from families.**
"Can you tell me more about how you get Harris ready for bed time at home?"

You Help Children Grow!

Toddlers, need time each day to rest. Just like us! Gentle routines—doing the same thing every day, will help children know what to expect and will help them ease into resting, *"Shana, it's time to get your blanket for nap time."* Incorporating simple tips from families will link children's home and school experiences, helping them to feel safe and secure.





5 Simple Tips

To Support **Toddlers'** Social Emotional Health During



Diapering and Toileting

- 1 Create a routine.**
"Li, let's sit on the potty and then we can wash our hands."
- 2 Know the signs.**
"Tamesha, I see you pulling on your diaper, do you need to be changed?"
- 3 Offer choices.**
"Grace, do you want to talk with Ms. Lena while you are on the potty or be by yourself?"
- 4 Follow a child's lead.**
"Marcelo, you are upset right now, let's try again later."
- 5 Prepare for toileting.**
"Angela and Marisa, do you want to read Once Upon a Potty?"

You Help Children Grow!

Children look to you for support and guidance as they take on new challenges. As toddlers move from diapers to using the potty they need your patience and support as there may be many accidents along the way. Each child moves at their own pace and when you read their cues and find ways to support them, this stage can be less frustrating for everyone, *"Shana nice job pulling up your pants! Thanks for trying, let's go wash our hands."*

