



SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your child's social and emotional development (mental health) — how he or she manages emotions and relates to others — is as important as physical health. Social and emotional development is not as obvious as physical health, but it's vital for future success — in school and in life.

WHY IT MATTERS

Your child's social and emotional development affects every part of his or her life. Children who develop good social and emotional skills:

- Make and keep friends
- Understand and express emotions
- Are ready for school
- Think clearly and learn new things

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your love and attention are as important as food and a place to live. When you cuddle and play with your child and praise good behavior, you're supporting your child's social and emotional development — and building a foundation for a lifetime of success.

INSIDE YOU'LL LEARN ABOUT:

- Social and emotional milestones for your child
- How to support your child's social and emotional development
- When to be concerned
- Where to go for help

HOW TO GET HELP

If you have concerns, talk to your doctor. Your pediatrician or family doctor can provide health information, developmental and medical health screenings and referrals.

**OMH CUSTOMER RELATIONS:
800-597-8481**

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL OMH FIELD OFFICE:

Central New York Field Office	(315) 426-3930
Hudson River Field Office	(845) 454-8229
Long Island Field Office	(631) 761-2886
NYC Field Office	(212) 330-1650
Western New York Field Office	(716) 533-4075



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Promoting Your Child's Social and Emotional Development

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF ONE TO FIVE YEAR-OLDS



BUILDING HEALTHY FOUNDATIONS FOR A LIFETIME OF SUCCESS

IF YOUR CHILD IS...	12 TO 18 MONTHS	18 MONTHS TO THREE YEARS	THREE TO FIVE YEARS
WHAT TO EXPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to you when distressed and accepts comfort from a parent or caregiver • Explores with enthusiasm and is curious about other people • Likes to be around children but may be afraid or anxious around strangers • Enjoys books, songs and simple games • May have temper tantrums when she doesn't get her way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows affection by hugging you or holding your hand • Comforts self using objects, such as a blanket • Expresses feelings, by smiling or crying • Gets upset and cries when you leave up until age two, and in other stressful or unfamiliar situations after that age • Starts understanding and uses “no” • Feels proud of what she can do, such as running or kicking a ball, and shares accomplishments with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys imaginary play • Wants to do things without your help • Plays and shares with other children • Learns to name and express feelings • Becomes aware of your feelings • Asks a lot of questions • Tests limits but accepts them most of the time
WHAT YOU CAN DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold and cuddle your child so he trusts you to protect him • Praise good behavior; use positive words and encourage your child • Notice when your child wants to be close or wants to explore • Use everyday activities — bath time, meal time — to connect with your child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read books together • Sit on the floor to play; allow your child to lead • Help your child find a blanket or stuffed animal she can turn to for comfort • Stay near your child as she explores the world • Discipline with kindness; try using timeouts and follow through consistently • Label feelings, especially when setting limits, such as: “I can see you're angry but it's not okay to hit.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play “make-believe” games together • Listen and talk to your child— Help him name his feelings and talk about yours • Find a balance between talk and play • Encourage your child to play with siblings and other children • Supervise play times • Stay involved in your child's friendships
WHEN TO BE CONCERNED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is difficult to comfort or cries most of the time • Rarely makes eye contact • Reacts the same way to parents and strangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is too comfortable with, or overly fearful of, strangers; doesn't show preference for any one adult • Seems sad or withdrawn; lacks interest in people or toys • Has temper tantrums, often hits, bites or punches, or destroys toys or other objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't focus on or finish activities • Clings or gets upset when you leave • Witnessed violence or had a traumatic experience • Doesn't play with you or others • Is too aggressive

YOUR CHILD DEPENDS ON YOU

It is important to take care of yourself, too. Talk to your doctor if you:

- Feel tired, depressed, worried or overwhelmed, and these feelings don't go away
- Don't enjoy spending time with your child
- Are having a hard time with your own emotions and relationships
- Witnessed violence or had a traumatic experience

