

# Foster Social and Emotional Competence

## Podcast Transcript

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It's amazing how early we can begin to see our babies' personalities. Those first smiles and nervous cries are the best ways that they can communicate happiness, fear, and everything else in between before they can control their hands and find words to explain their feelings.

We already know that much of what we do as parents can influence our children's development, and social and emotional traits are no exception. Before our children can truly talk to us, they're watching and listening. They see how we handle strong emotions, they hear how we talk to other adults, and they pick up on our body language—you may even notice you have a little copycat on your hands.

Beginning during their infancy, we can model appropriate social behavior so that our children learn by example what is acceptable and how to act when meeting a new person or interacting with friends.

Like any other area of development, remember that our children have a lot to learn about socializing and handling emotions. Many children go through typical phases, including an extremely outgoing phase, fear of strangers, and the dreaded hair-pulling, biting, or screaming at playmates phase. While these may not be completely unavoidable, check with reliable resources, like your child's pediatrician, teachers, and credible parenting materials, to better understand your child's level of development. Taking these simple steps really can help you model appropriate behavior and use words and gestures that make sense to your child.

Let's keep talking, listening, and laughing with our developing children. Basic social skills that we may overlook as part of our daily interactions can be major teaching tools for impressionable minds. Let's take extra care to act and react the way we would expect our children to because they're always watching and learning!

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