



## NEWSLETTER

### Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

# 42 to 54 months

*Your child is enjoying real friendships with other children and can play for longer periods with close friends.* Your child's ability to regulate (or self-calm) when upset and negotiate with friends keeps conflicts to a minimum. However, there are still times they need your help to solve problems. Your child's ability to play with friends gives you some short breaks. Take a little time for yourself. What makes you feel good? Reading? Talking to a friend? Do a little something for yourself every day so you can be emotionally available to your child.

## "Empathy with Family and Friends"

You may notice your child trying to take care of you or someone else who is sick or has a big feeling. The ability to recognize another person's feelings and respond with care is called empathy. Your child is learning how to be empathetic from your example. Keep teaching them about this important skill: "How do you think Kevin feels when he has no toys?" "Your sister had a hard day. She is sad. I bet she'd love a hug from you."

### Real and Make-Believe

Your child uses their imagination to learn about who they are. They can try out different personalities through play. Your shy child might want to pretend to be a superhero. Your rough-and-tumble child might want to pretend to be a bunny. Your child's imagination is so vivid that it may be difficult for them to understand the difference between real and pretend. You can help them understand: "Pretending to be a bunny is fun. Being you is also fun. What fun did you have today?"

### Take Joy in Your Child

Your young child wants nothing more than to be seen and heard by you. They love to make you laugh. Notice your child when they are doing the right thing or being kind. Put away your phone and talk to your child about their thoughts and feelings. Your child is small for a short time. They have a lot to say. Enjoy these moments together.

### Just Hold Me

Your child may have very big fears or get scared easily. This is normal. When they are scared, they need you to help them know everything is all right: "It's okay. You are here with me. I will keep you safe." Your child will also get mad at times. When they are in the middle of a big feeling, they won't be able to listen. Wait until your child calms down—with your help, or by themselves. Now they can talk about their big feelings.

### What Is Social-Emotional Development?

**Social-emotional development is your child's ability to**

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

#### Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

## Your Child's Social-Emotional Development, 42–54 months

### Early Signs

Pay close attention to signs that your child might be getting tired, hungry, or bored. Are they rubbing their eyes? Fighting with a sibling? Starting to whine? If you can catch these early signs and address them, you may be able to prevent a tantrum. Make sure you offer healthy snacks every couple of hours. Mix up active and quiet activities. Try new things and explore new places.

### Bedtime Is Special Time

Your child enjoys bedtime routines when it means special time with you. They can listen to the same bedtime stories over and over for a long time. This may be a little frustrating for you, but it is very normal. The repetition helps your child learn new words. This time together helps them calm their body and fall asleep quickly. Relax and enjoy being physically close to your child. It is calming for you too.

### Family Mealtimes

Family meals are about more than eating. Mealtimes are about spending time together, listening to each other, and building relationships. Turn off phones, televisions, and other distractions. Find out about everyone's day. Your child can now share a lot of details about their day. Take turns talking and listening. Give your child ideas about what to talk about by asking questions. What was your favorite thing that happened today? The funniest thing? Did anything hard happen today? What did you do?

### What Do You Think?

Your child is developing an understanding of who they are and how they feel about themselves. If they make a mistake or do something wrong, try not to shame them. Let your child know that everyone makes mistakes and that you will always love them. You are the biggest influence on how your child feels about themselves. Remember to tell them how smart, kind, helpful, trustworthy, and funny they are. Watch your child light up with pride.

### I Can Help Too

Your child has more and more skills to help at home. Help them think of ways to help in daily routines. Your child can put away their toys, fold towels, or feed a family pet. Talk to them about what it means to be part of a family and how everyone helps take care of each other. Let your child know how important they are and how proud you are of them.



### Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. If your child does watch shows, watch and talk about the show together. Choose shows that include characters who are kind and who take care of each other.