



Social Emotional Tips FOR Families with 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 parent shares a smile with their toddler son, hugs and cuddles him throughout the day, and gently responds to his needs, 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 Parents of Toddlers provides a set of (5) one-page posters that families can refer to during specific daily routines including: dressing, meal times, play time, resting and diapering. Putting these posters up around the house can serve as a reminder of what to say or do to nurture the social and emotional health of their toddlers every day. Each poster has (5) simple tips that parents can try with their child such as: Show her how to do new things. Each tip includes sample language that parents can try, “Dalia, you can hold the bowl with this hand and then stir.” Each poster also offers a rationale for using the tips based on research. The practical strategies, sample language and rationale in each poster can help families 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 Families with Toddlers

Intended Users and Examples of How to Use this Resource

This resource is primarily intended for use by those supporting families with toddlers. This may include staff such as, Early Head Start home visitors and center-based teachers, or early childhood mental health consultants.

Examples of how professionals can introduce these posters to families include:

- **Working together during a home visit**

For example, an Early Head Start home visitor might introduce one of the posters during a home visit as a way to expand conversations about building connections during daily routines. Together the home visitor and parents might look at the tips and highlight some of the things the parent already does to support social emotional health and discuss one new thing they might want to try.

- **Facilitating a small or large group training session for parents**

For example, an early childhood mental health consultant might use the posters to enhance a parent training on social emotional development.

- **Facilitating an ongoing group experience for parents**

For example, a teacher might introduce one poster at a time during monthly parent get-togethers, encouraging families 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 Your **Toddler's** Social Emotional Health During



Dressing

- 1 Let them help.**
"Mika, hold your arms up high, while I pull your shirt over your head!"
- 2 Offer choices.**
"Josef, do you want to put your shirt on first or your pants?"
- 3 Practice patience.**
"Anna, these socks are tough to get on! Let's take a few deep breaths and try again."
- 4 Leave extra time.**
"William, we are going to child care soon, let's go see what you want to wear today."
- 5 Offer positive words.**
"Nice going Elena! You got your shoe on your foot!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Together, you and your toddler can make dressing a special time for connecting. 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, Daddy is proud of you."*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** 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.**
"Daddy likes his rice; do you like your rice Jayden?"
- 4 Know when your child is hungry.**
"Maria, I see you frowning and you are getting frustrated, let's have a snack that is good for our body."
- 5 Be a role model for healthy eating.**
"Dana, let's share this banana."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

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





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** Social Emotional Health During



Play Time

- 1 Join in!**
"Ashton, Mommy, 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 her 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 Are Your Child's First Teacher!

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





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** Social Emotional Health During



Rest Time

- 1 Create a routine.**
"Abia, In ten minutes we're going to read a book and then it's time for bed."
- 2 Use routines across settings.**
"Eden, don't forget your cuddle bear for grandma's house so you can have it at nap time."
- 3 Offer choices.**
"Keri, what pajamas do you want to wear tonight?"
- 4 Take care of the basics.**
"Justin, let's change your diaper before you rest."
- 5 Take time to refuel.**
"Neal, Daddy has to take a break too so we can play again later."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Toddlers, need time each day to rest. Just like us! Gentle routines—doing the same thing every day, will help your toddler know what to expect and will help them ease into resting, *"Shana, it's time to pick out your stories for nap time."*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** 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 Daddy while you are on the potty or be by yourself?"
- 4 Follow your child's lead.**
"Marcelo, you are upset right now, let's try again later."
- 5 Prepare for toileting.**
"Angela, do you want to read Once Upon a Potty?"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Your child looks to you for support and guidance as they take on new challenges. As your toddler moves 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."*

