

# I Help My Child Learn Social Skills

## GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

**Children who exhibit social and emotional competence are likely to have better relationships and greater resilience to stress as adults.** Social and emotional competence refers to children's ability to form bonds and interact positively with others, self-regulate their emotions and behavior, communicate their feelings, and solve problems effectively.

**Helping children to develop these skills can result in stronger parent-child relationships that are mutually rewarding.** Parents grow more responsive to children's needs—and less likely to feel stressed or frustrated—as children learn to say what they need, rather than "acting out" difficult feelings.

**Children's delays in social-emotional development can create extra stress for families.** It is important to identify any such concerns as early as possible and to provide services to children and their parents that facilitate healthy development.

### Key Points to Cover With Families

#### **Social skills are important for children to become successful adults.**

Social skills are defined and prioritized a little differently for each unique family and community.

- Give some examples of social skills, such as taking turns, sharing, or using manners.

- **Ask:** Which social skills are most important in your family/community/culture? Why?

#### **Children and youth develop social skills gradually.**

Share some information about social skills that they might expect to see at their [children's current ages](#).

- Help the parent connect important social skills with typical child development. (For example, I hear you saying that *sharing is really important to you. Most children develop the ability to share their toys around age 5.*)

- **Ask:** Which of these skills do you see your child doing well? Which would you like to help them improve?

#### **Our children learn by watching us.**

- **Ask:** What are some situations where your child might see you using [chosen skill]?

- For example, how does the caregiver use this skill with their coparent, family members, or friends?

#### **Parents can help their children learn social skills.**

One great way to teach children is by "catching them" doing something well.

- **Ask:** When have you seen your child do [action/behavior] well recently? How do you let your child know you like what they're doing?

- **Ask:** How else could you encourage this skill?

More resources on building [social and emotional competence of children](#) can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

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## CONVERSATION GUIDE

Children with strong social skills get along better with others. You are your child's first and most important teacher.

**One social skill I would like to help my child improve:**

**I show my child these skills when I:**

**I encourage this skill by:**

- Praising them when they do this well
- Reading books about emotions and/or social situations
- Pointing out when characters on TV use the skill
- Naming feelings (my own and/or my child's)
- Setting up play dates for practice
- Celebrating my child's unique self
- Teaching my child about his or her cultural identity
- Talking about and celebrating differences
- Having a "no technology" day
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**One thing I will do this week to encourage social skills:**

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