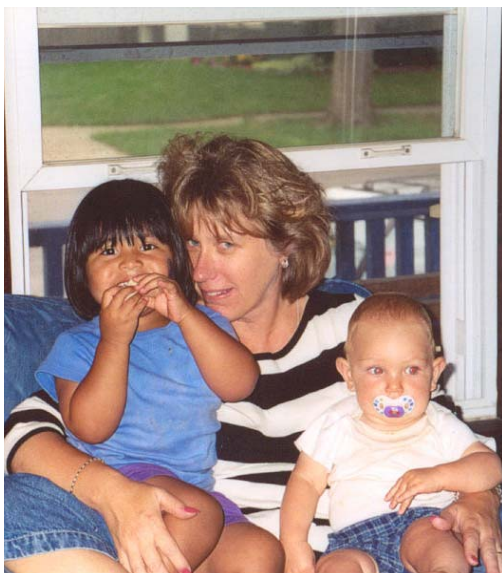


## What Can Caregivers and Parents Do to Build Social-Emotional Skills?



### Tips for Caregivers

- **Choices**—Let them make decisions about what to play, read or eat (giving them a choice of healthy snacks). This helps them feel in control and will make them more compliant.
- **Praise**—Give verbal encouragement when they complete a task. Make the praise specific to things they have done. Instead of saying, “Great job” say, “It is wonderful how you waited for your friend to be done with the toy before you played with it.”
- **Anticipate behavior**—Read the child’s cues. You want to talk to the child before they reach a high level of frustration and help them resolve their frustrations.
- **Humor**—Keep a sense of humor by making light of things and redirecting negative actions.
- **Distraction**—Use a book or toy and sing or talk with your child before doing something they may resist (such as being dressed).
- **Positive approach**—Take a positive approach instead of a negative approach (i.e., “Please stay on the sidewalk” instead of “Don’t walk on the grass”).
- **Label and recognize your child’s feelings**—Let them know you understand their feelings and help them calm down and regain control (i.e., “I know you want to play with Sarah’s doll, but hitting her is not a good choice”).
- **Sharing**—Initiate games of sharing and taking turns.

Parents will often notice that their child behaves differently when they are around more children. Places such as the park, birthday parties, amusement parks, museums, and school will prove to be much more stressful for some children. The child may be calm and play well at home but become anxious when they are in public places with other children around. This is natural. It is good for children to be exposed to these places so that they will learn how to deal with an environment different from home. Children are much more excited and it is sometimes hard for them to control their emotions. As parents and caregivers we must be there to help support our children. We are not born with social skills. We learn them by watching people and by how we are taught. This page gives you some tips on how to build social-emotional skills in your child or the children in your class.

**Kindergarten teachers say that 20% of children entering kindergarten do not yet have the necessary social emotional skills to be “ready” for school.**



### Skills to Teach

- Following rules, routines, and directions
- Identifying feelings in oneself and others
- Controlling anger and impulses
- Problem solving
- Suggesting play themes and activities to peers
- Sharing toys and other materials
- Taking turns
- Helping adults and peers
- Giving compliments
- Understanding how and when to apologize
- Expressing empathy with others' feelings
- Recognizing that anger can interfere with problem solving; learning how to recognize anger in oneself and others and how to calm down
- Understanding appropriate ways to express anger

### How To Teach Social Skills

Model—demonstrate the skill as you explain what you are doing and give the child words to solve the conflict through actions and/or words	<i>“Oh, I need a blue crayon, can I use that blue crayon after you?” “Why don’t you ask her if you can help build the rocket ship?”</i>
Model with puppets	<i>A puppet can tell stories on different topics. Have the puppet ask questions and the child answer the question to help solve the puppet’s problem.</i>
Sing—introduce a new skill with a song	<i>Change the words to “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” to a song about sharing.</i>
Use a flannel board to teach a story	<i>Many nursery rhymes teach social skills.</i>
Use visual, verbal or physical prompts	<i>“Remember to...”</i>
Give verbal or visual encouragement	<i>“I like the way you are sharing the blocks”; use a thumbs up signal.</i>
Use incidental teaching	<i>“I see that you are angry that all the swings are being used. What can you do when you are angry?”</i>
Discuss children’s literature	<i>Read books about friendship, sharing, etc.</i>