

Intentional teaching of social-emotional skills establishes the foundation on which every other mental skill can flourish.



This resource has quick tips on how to support emotional development in toddlers. Program Leaders can use this Tip Sheet as an outline for a staff training or coaching session. Program staff can use this Tip Sheet as a reminder of how to support toddlers.

Embed Social Skills into the Routine

It is common to teach new social skills during a time of crisis. Although this is a teachable moment, it is not the most effective time for the children to acquire new skills.

Model Skills

- Show what you expect
- Use puppets or characters
- Role play
- Provide coaching
- Give opportunities for practice

Teach Social Skills

- Sharing and not sharing
- Taking turns
- Being helpful
- Delaying responses

Support and Encourage

- Use specific descriptive language to offer praise
- Fanfare for some (clapping and loud exclamations)
- Quiet for others (smile, thumbs up, high five, private statement)



Sharing &
Not Sharing

It is important to also teach toddlers how to “not share,” when appropriate.

For example:

If Amy is playing with two trucks and Rubin wants one, teach Amy to say, “I’m not finished” and teach Rubin to ask, “May I have it when you are finished?” Then help Rubin find another car or truck to use.

Provide Support vs. Pressure



Studies show that children who are heavily managed lack initiative and thinking skills.

Follow the Child's Lead

- Offer ideas to extend play
- Don't force participation

Ensure a Safe Environment

- Consistent, nurturing responses
- Materials easily accessible
- Toddler-sized furniture

Developmentally Appropriate Materials

- Provide a variety of options for children to choose from
- Rotate in new & interesting materials

Set Reasonable Limits

- Encourage physical abilities
- Offer options for climbing, jumping, exploring & extricating themselves

Maintain Reasonable Expectations

- Consistent responses from all caregivers
- Positively teach expectations