

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Social Development Basics

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Infants and toddlers learn about themselves and the world through their emotional development and social interactions. As a parent, you learn to observe your infant closely, respond to her needs, respect her individuality, and keep her healthy and safe. By doing this, your baby learns that she is valuable and appreciated. She also learns to trust that you will protect and care for her. When you build warm, respectful relationships with your infant or toddler, you give her the sense of safety she needs to feel free to explore and learn.

Talk to your infant and observe her for signs that she is listening to you. She might look at you, smile, kick her feet, or move her arms. When you cuddle and play with your baby, talk about the things

around her that she can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste. For example, if there is a loud noise and your baby startles in response, you might say, "Wow that was a really loud noise. Did it scare you?" Then give her a comfort item (special blanket or favorite toy) and say, "It's ok, you're safe." This helps your infant understand what is happening, reassures her that she is safe, identifies the feeling of fear, and gives her the opportunity to practice comforting herself.

Toddlers usually have a very clear idea of what they want, and they do not hesitate to let you know how they feel by smiling, crying, or having a tantrum. It is important to continue labeling emotions and behaviors so that your toddler learns to identify what she is feeling and

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DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS

Children learn about the world through relationships. In his book, *Friends Forever: How Parents Can Help Their Kids Make and Keep Good Friends*, Dr. Fred Frankel gives parents advice for supporting children in developing friendships. Parents can start by visiting the library to select one of the following books about friendship and reading it with their child. They can use these books to start conversations about friendship.

- *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* By Eric Carle (ages 2-4)
- *A Rainbow of Friends* by P.K. Hallinan (ages 3-6)
- *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev (ages 4-8)
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 5-8)
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig (ages 6-9)



Teaching Tolerance

Providing children with a variety of cultural and anti-bias experiences when they are young helps them develop healthy and positive attitudes about themselves and others. Children develop ideas about diversity by observing people, reading books, watching television, and listening to how others talk. Our world consists of many different talented and intelligent people who are capable of amazing things.

According to KidsHealth®, "Tolerance refers to an attitude of openness and respect for the differences that exist among people." As your child continues to grow and learn, he will interact and work with diverse groups of people. You can help your child develop acceptance and appreciation for other people with the following activities for preschool and school age children.

- Encourage your child to learn about similarities and differences. For example, talk about what is alike or different in his toys or nature. Two blocks may be the same size, but different colors. Two flowers may be different colors, but both have petals. Eventually your

child will apply this knowledge to observing people.

- Visit the public library for books about diverse cultures, genders, and abilities. As you make your book selections, evaluate how the book demonstrates tolerance. Ask yourself: Who is the book about? What culture or gender is represented? What lifestyles are shown? Who are the heroes? How do the characters treat each other? What is the purpose of the story?
- Allow your child to express how he sees himself and others through art by providing him with paper and crayons that represent different skin tones.
- Attend festivals in your community that celebrate cultural food, art, games, or music. Help your child identify the similarities and differences between your own family traditions with the ones you observe. Express appreciation for what is different.
- Be aware of your own attitudes or biases and model how you want your child to treat others. Answer any questions your child has about the way people look or sound, and encourage him to talk to you about his relationships with others.

Source: The website <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tolerance.html> was accessed in August 2018.



RECIPES Lentil Soup

This budget-friendly soup makes a delicious dinner on a cold night.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 2 medium celery stalks, chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 1 dash garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups dry lentils
- One 14 1/2 ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 6 1/2 cups water

Directions

In a large soup pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, celery, and onions. Stir them until the onion is tender, and then add the garlic, oregano, basil, and pepper. Cook spices for two minutes. Stir in the lentils and tomatoes and add the vegetable broth and water. Bring the soup to a boil. Cover the pot and reduce the heat. Simmer for at least one hour, or until the lentils are tender. This recipe makes eleven cups of soup.

Source: Adapted from the website <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/> in August 2018.





Be Involved!

Parents play a key role in the development and success of their child. Research has shown that children need nutritious meals, adequate sleep, appropriate exercise, and a regular routine in order to be effective learners. Parents prepare children for learning by making sure these needs are met and by showing them that education is valued. When parents ask children about school and help them with their homework, children understand that education is important.

When you enroll your child into a child care program or elementary school, be sure to read the parent handbook and other enrollment documents thoroughly. Check with your child's teacher to see what method of communication will work best for both of you. Teachers usually communicate by email or phone. Schedule a meeting at least twice a year to stay informed about your child's progress, special needs, homework projects, or events. You can also check in briefly with the teacher when you drop off or pick up your child. Setting up a communication system lets both your child and the teacher know that you value your child's development and want to be involved.

Establishing a good relationship with the teacher will help your child feel like you are working as a team. You can increase the level of your involvement by participating in special events, chaperoning a field trip, attending school meetings, or joining a parent group. Most programs also have events such as an open house, holiday celebration, or fundraising project. Ask the teacher for a calendar of special events and sign up to volunteer when you can.

Discuss other ways you can support your child's program with the teacher. You may be able to assist with preparing craft materials at home, bringing in recycled materials for projects, collecting or returning books at the public library, and more. If available, also consider joining a parent-teacher group. This can be the best way to learn about school board or state funding decisions that directly affect the quality of your child's education.

The most valuable gift you can give your child is time. When you involve yourself in your child's learning, you show him that he is important and that you are interested in what is happening in his world. This awareness allows your child to feel supported and to be more resilient when he encounters obstacles. Being involved in your child's education and development will help him cultivate a positive attitude towards learning and success.



understands what behavior you expect from her. Using a consistent routine, setting clear rules, and taking the time to talk about what you expect can often prevent emotional outbursts and other undesirable behaviors that often occur at this age. It also provides your child with a sense of predictability and safety that is necessary for her to feel comfortable with exploring social interactions.

Your child will continue to develop and begin to play next to other children. As her level of interactions increases, she will learn to share toys, take turns, and enjoy pretend play games with others. Pretend play is important because it allows children to explore social roles, act out feelings, and express themselves creatively. Your toddler will also express a wider range of emotions and initiate interactions with other adults and children. By developing friendships, she will gradually learn how to negotiate conflicts, work well in a group, and consider the feelings and viewpoints of others.

Play with your child and encourage her to express herself. You can make photo albums together and point out the people who look

similar and the ones who look different. Name people in the photos and talk about who they are. You can also act out stories with dolls and puppets. Take walks in your neighborhood and talk about the many people who work in your community. Practice taking turns by blowing bubbles (one person blows bubbles while the other person catches, and then switch) or using the slide at a park. Arrange for playdates with other children your child's age so that she has plenty of opportunities to interact with others and develop relationships.

Children learn about who they are and how to treat people around them by observing how the adults in their lives interact with them and others. Parents and caregivers are role models for social etiquette, conversations, and relationships. Support your child when she needs guidance or information, and celebrate her unique personality and accomplishments every day.

Source: *California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2012).

ABOUT CHS

For over 125 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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