

# PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Social-emotional health refers to a child's ability to recognize and develop control over their emotions, to form healthy and strong relationships with others, and to explore and learn about their world. Parents and other connected adults are key to helping children develop from birth and throughout childhood.

While there is no easy guidebook about how to perfectly develop a child's social-emotional health, there are some tips and resources available.

*Tip 1*

## Provide Children with Responsive Care

- As children interact with the world, initially through cries and body language and then through words and actions, they need consistent responses that help them develop a sense of self as an active agent in the world.
- Encourage this behavior by observing the child, considering what their behaviors might mean, and then respond.

*Tip 2*

## Be Affectionate and Nurturing

- By providing lots of hugs and cuddles, rocking and holding, touches and kisses, little children learn that they are loved for who they are. This is especially important when children are experiencing "big" or "negative" emotions so they learn they are loved no matter what.
- Learning that they are loved will help the child learn to love others.

*Tip 3*

## Help your Child Learn to Resolve Conflicts in a Healthy Way

- When children experience conflict with other children or with adults, parents and caregivers can help by labeling their emotions (e.g., "I see you are sad that John took away your toy.") and helping find a solution (e.g., "Why don't you take turns playing with it for two minutes.").
- Encouraging progressive steps in developing skills to resolve conflicts will help the child throughout their life.

Parents can also encourage social-emotional development by engaging in what are referred to as the PRIDE skills:

- P Praise:** Provide children with praise whenever they behave in ways you want to encourage
- R Reflect:** Think about what your children are doing and saying
- I Imitate:** Engage in play with children by imitating them and encouraging them to imitate you
- D Describe:** Talk with children about their experiences and their emotions
- E Enjoyment:** Find time and activities to enjoy together with your children.