**SCHOOL AGE**

**Social and emotional growth:**

**By pbsparents.org**

**The significance of social and emotional development is seen in every area of a child’s life. A child will have a strong foundation for later development if she can manage personal feelings, understand others’ feelings and needs, and interact positively with others. Differences in social and emotional development result from a child’s inborn** [**temperament**](javascript:showGlossary(1520);)**, cultural influences, disabilities, behaviours modelled by adults, the level of security felt in a child’s relationships with adults, and the opportunities provided for social interaction.**

Five-year-olds can manage feelings and social situations with greater independence. They might decide on their own to go to another room to calm down, or try strategies like negotiation and compromise to resolve a conflict before seeking adult help. They also have improved skills for forming and maintaining friendships with adults and other children. Being accepted by ‘the group’ is becoming more and more important.

**Emotional development**

* Continues to expand her circle of trusted adults. At the same time, maintains a closeness to a few special people. For example, she might say, ‘I love my teacher, Mrs. Benotti!’
* Gains self-esteem from feeling capable and demonstrating new skills; for example, ‘I know how to read this!’ Is increasingly aware of her own characteristics and skills.
* Uses more complex language to express her understanding of feelings and their causes; for example, ‘I sort of want to try riding on that, but I'm sort of scared, too’.
* Uses physical, imaginative, and [cognitive](javascript:showGlossary(2738);) resources to comfort self (e.g. goes to her room voluntarily when upset) and to control the expression of emotion; however, continues to need adult guidance in this area.

**Social development**

* Enjoys interacting with other children and adults. Has developed a broader repertoire of social entry skills (e.g. suggests something to do together, joins in an existing activity, shares a snack). Engages in more complex and sustained cooperative play, including pretend play and simple games with rules; for example, ‘How about if we play draughts. I'll give out the pieces’.
* Continues to establish and maintain friendships with other children. Seeks others' acceptance and friendship; for example, ‘We're friends, right?’ May join a group to exclude others.
* Uses a wider array of words or actions to demonstrate awareness, understanding, and concern for what others are feeling. For example, goes over to a child whose block building has fallen down and says, ‘Don't worry, Vince. I'll help you build it up again’.
* Uses a broader repertoire of strategies, including negotiation and compromise, to resolve conflicts before seeking adult help. For example, ‘I have a great idea, Henry! You be the bear, and I'll be the lion. Then we can switch!’ Still has difficulty at times.

**Younger Preschoolers**

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Three-year-olds need familiar adults nearby for security as they explore and play. As they develop more independence, children this age begin to have real friendships with other children. When conflicts arise with peers, three-year-olds will typically seek adult assistance. They are learning to recognize the causes of feelings and will give simple help, such as a hug, to those who are upset. Three-year-olds can better manage their emotions, but may still fall apart under stress.

**Emotional development**

* Continues to develop preferences for special adults. Uses familiar adults as secure bases for exploration and play (e.g. wants mum to stay at friend's house when invited over, even though child seldom looks for her during play).
* Begins to develop and express a sense of individuality and personal preferences; for example, says, ‘See my toys!’
* Labels own feelings and those of others based on their facial expression or tone of voice. For example, looks at a picture in a book and says, ‘She's scared’. Understands, at least on a basic level that feelings have causes: ‘Sammy is sad because he can't find his blanket’.
* Shows progress in expressing feelings, needs and opinions in difficult situations or conflicts, without harming self, others or property. For example says, ‘I really, REALLY need that swing!’ May still fall apart under stress.

**Social development**

* Shows an interest in other children and copies what they do (e.g. Luke jumps off the couch; his neighbor Odelia does exactly the same, laughing). Plays cooperatively with another child for a time (e.g. pretends to talk on the phone with the child).
* Begins to have real friendships, even though child may not understand the concept of friendship or that these relationships may not last. For example says, ‘My best friends are Nathan, Sharon, Enrique, Cassidy ...’ and others in the class.
* Gives simple help to peers who are in need, upset, hurt or angry (e.g. hug, comfort object, pat, encouraging word). Such attempts to give aid may not take into account the other child’s characteristics or needs (e.g. offers a crying classmate a stuffed animal, even though the child has another comfort object).
* Accepts compromise when resolving conflicts if it is suggested by an adult. For example, mum says, ‘Jackson, you can use that swing as soon as Jana gets off’. Seeks adult help in resolving a conflict; for example, goes to dad and says, ‘Jacob took my truck!’. Continues to learn simple alternatives to aggressive ways of dealing with conflicts. For example, trades one doll for a desired one by saying, ‘You have THIS dolly, OK?’