



Social Skill Development

Social skills impact every part of our lives. We need to use and understand social skills at home, at school, and within the community.

The following is a list of indicators you might consider when thinking about your child's social development. You might want to get some assistance in this area if your child:

Early social development

- is not looking at faces
- makes fleeting or little eye contact
- doesn't smile in response to you as the caregiver
- doesn't respond and settle to the sound of a caregiver's voice
- doesn't seek comfort from caregivers and/or is not settled by the caregiver trying to comfort
- doesn't hold up arms to be picked up
- doesn't respond to their own name
- doesn't engage in social games such as pat-a-cake or peek a boo

Emotion perception

- doesn't understand or respond to changes in tone of voice (e.g. doesn't react any differently when you speak to them in an angry tone of voice to a calm tone of voice)
- doesn't recognise facial expressions of emotions
- is over 3 years of age and is unable to label simple feelings within themselves, such as when they are happy or sad
- appears to have little understanding of others' feelings

Nonverbal cues

- doesn't use communicative gestures, such as pointing, give-it-to-me hand gestures, shaking or nodding head, waving hello or goodbye
- is not able to use nonverbal cues (such as eye contact, facial expressions or body language) to facilitate social communication
- is unable to understand these nonverbal cues in others

Early play skills

- has difficulty engaging in basic turn taking and sharing activities
- does not seek out other children for play
- tends to play alongside other children rather than with them
- engages in play that is restricted to certain activities and involves little imaginary or symbolic play (e.g. taking a block and pretending it is a car)
- is unable to appropriately initiate play with other children
- has difficulty following social rules and behaviour in play
- has difficulty developing peer relationships



Early play skills continued.....

- has difficulty participating in two-sided conversations, which includes understanding both verbal and nonverbal cues (such as gestures, facial expressions and eye contact)
- is over 6 and cannot negotiate and start to resolve conflicts (with minimal adult input)

If you feel your child may benefit from assistance with the development of social skills, please contact a psychologist, speech pathologist, or occupational therapist for further support and advice.

Important Note:

These examples are based on typical developmental milestones, but it is important to remember that all children will develop in different ways and at different speeds. Please use this information as a guide only, and always discuss your concerns with a qualified professional who will help guide you in finding the best support for your child.