

# Positive Interactions

Your growing child's expressions, management of emotions, and her every day experience play an important role in how she develops social and emotional skills. As part of your child's overall development, learning to understand one's own feelings, reading others' emotional states, developing empathy for others, and managing and regulating their own behaviors helps maintain relationships with others. Foundational skills of positive interactions support their abilities to become competent in increasingly complex social relationships.

There are many things that you as a parent can do to help facilitate social and emotional skills.

- Expose your child to different environments and to a variety of people. Encourage your child to engage with a variety of people and things including but not limited to babies, adults, peers, zoo animals, elders, people with special needs, people with diverse backgrounds, and farm animals. Varied social interactions allow children to find meaning and symbolize experiences.
- Engage with your child. Model appropriate behaviors; your child was born to learn and imitation is one form of learning. Use language to talk about feelings, narrate about different feelings (e.g., "mommy wants to run with you, but uncle doesn't."), facilitate different coping strategies to establish control in managing emotions, and talk about possible solutions in different situations.
- Facilitate play with children of all ages in one-on-one and group settings. Organize activities, games, and play that require following directions and cooperation.
- Create chores and "work" around the home. Specifying routine duties creates a sense responsibility and cooperation, and builds confidence and security.
- Establish predictable but flexible routines and expectations. Children who know what to expect are less likely to lose emotional control. For example, after lunch time every day, clean up the plates and utensils, read a short story on the child's bed, and turn off the light to initiate naptime.
- Establish rules in the home, in public outings, at preschool, and throughout life that your child must follow. Rules teach children about authority, to respect authority, and to take self-control.

