



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

We All Need Somebody to Lean On

Friendship is one of life's joys. Since children spend much of their daily lives interacting with other people, especially other children, a big part of their learning and development occurs within these relationships. According to Quill and Stansberry Brusnahan, friendships and social play skills are key capabilities for children to develop in the early years — they form the foundation of long-term success in school and in the community.

You play an important role in creating opportunities for your child to interact with others, setting the foundation for him to develop friendships. You can do this by introducing activities that allow him to play with others. As with any activity, it's helpful to slowly build up the complexity and difficulty of play. Start with parallel activities in which each child has their own set of materials, and then introduce structured, predictable activities with a clear set of rules. Then, as your child learns to engage in these activities, move on to support more interactive play with peers.

Here's some things to keep in mind:

- ♥ Development of peer relationships starts with secure attachments with families and care providers in infancy.
- ♥ Children's play, as well as how they interact with others, becomes more complex and cooperative as children age.

This newsletter will discuss ways to support children's developing social skills at each age level — infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and present activity ideas for each age group.



This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Infants are inherently social. Research shows that as early as six weeks they prefer people's voices and within the first three months they begin to smile and coo, attempting to gain attention from others. Through consistent positive interaction with their families and care providers, infants develop strong secure attachments with these important people.

According to "Social and Emotional Development" by Dave Riley et al., children who experience secure attachment relationships have more success fitting in and getting along with others. They are more empathetic and make friends more easily, and are less likely to become bullies or victims of bullies.

You can continue to build a strong attachment with your child as well as encourage his social development by:

- ♥ **Establishing a routine of taking turns.** After you say something, wait for a response (gurgle, wiggle). Repeat for as long as the infant is interested.

- ♥ **Talking about what others nearby are doing or playing with.**
- ♥ **Encouraging his early attempts at social behaviors,** such as when he smiles or points at another baby. You can then model appropriate social behaviors, such as waving and saying hello or allowing your baby to sit next to another baby while they each play with their own toys.



Activity for Infants: *Reading to Baby*

What You Need:

Book about babies (e.g., *Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller, *Global Babies* from Global Fund for Children, *I Am a Baby* by Kathryn Madeline Allen)

What to Do:

1. Choose a book about babies to read to your little one.
2. When reading, read the words on the page, but be flexible to your child's needs. Talk about the pictures and other things you see in the book. Call attention to the babies in the book and what they are doing or feeling. For example, "She's wearing a pink hat. She looks so happy. See her smiling face?"

Don't worry if your baby has a short attention span or if he is more interested in putting the book in his mouth. The most important thing is to read often with your child. Making the time to cuddle with him, as you read, he hears your soothing voice and sees new things; which, promotes bonding with him and building on his love of reading.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

As toddlers gain more skills, they show more interest in others and they make deliberate attempts to gain peers' attention to get them to respond. You can see this in the way their play develops as they age. A younger toddler may engage with another child by sitting next to him and exchanging toys every so often, perhaps even reaching for a toy and saying "mine!" However, older toddlers will engage more with peers and their play may involve doing things together, such as jointly filling a bucket with sand, playing various instruments together, or games like run and chase.

At this age, toddlers are working on lots of things, in particular how to get along with others, problem solving skills, and understanding feelings in themselves and others. When your child is with others, you can help him practice these skills by:

- ♥ **Using role-playing activities** by providing dress up clothes, puppets, or various scenarios. Allow your child to "become" other people and experience what they do and how they feel. For example, taking a baby to the doctor, being a chef at a restaurant, or going grocery shopping.



- ♥ **Creating activities that take the pressure off sharing.** Suggest a toddler band by giving each child an instrument or scarf to shake along to the music. Or giving each child a paint brush and using a large cardboard box so everyone has a place to paint.
- ♥ **Modeling the words your child should use when playing with others,** including "Hi! I'm Logan," "Can I play?," "My turn?," and "Thank you." Toddlers will need to hear these words many, many times before they learn to use them.

Activity for Toddlers: *Let's Paint*

What You Need:

- Small containers, or buckets (e.g., empty and clean sour cream container)
- Water
- Paint brushes

What to Do:

1. Give your toddler a small container of water and a paint brush.
2. Find a suitable wall outside for him to "paint."
3. Show him how to dip his brush in the water and "paint" the wall.
4. Then, let him do it by himself.
5. Talk about his movements, for example, "up and down," "side-to-side."

*If other children are participating, have them work next to each other to paint the whole wall together. Encourage them to take turns and talk about how they are working together.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

As your child engages in more peer interactions, either with cousins or neighborhood children – to more formalized settings such as a family child interaction learning program or play group, you may see that he engages in more complex social pretend play and more cooperative joint activities. For example, a child may say, “You be the mommy and I be the teacher” or you will see children using blocks to make a castle together.

These peer interactions help your child learn important social skills such as sharing, taking turns, cooperating, and communicating clearly. When your child is with others, here’s some activity ideas to try:

♥ **Greeting game.** Have everyone in the group take a turn going around the circle, say “Hello,” and do a special greeting such as clap



their hands or jump in place. Have everyone copy the special greeting in response.

♥ **Turn-taking games.** Have the children play board games in a group, participate in a musical Hot Potato game with a beanbag, take turns following the musical pattern of the game Simon, play an instrument as part of a marching band, or listen to audio tracks with peers.

Activity for Preschoolers: *Scavenger Hunt*

What You Need:

Simple list of items for children to find

A sample can be found at: <https://first5sandiego.org/newsletter-march-april-2018-a-springtime-scamenger-hunt/>

What to Do:

1. Read over the list with your child, making sure he understands what items he is looking for. If playing outdoors, possible items can be: cloud, white flower, grass, rock, sticks. If playing indoors, possible items can be: block, napkin, something with a wheel, and a slipper.
2. Have him be the detective to find the various items on the list.
3. You can have him look at the list to decide which item to find or you can give him clues such as, “We’re looking for something green that grows on the ground.”
4. Have him search for all items on the list or you can take turns and have him tell you what to find.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn to use his body with intention
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions



Cognitive Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening, and understanding skills
- ♥ Develop his thinking and problem-solving skills

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Stone Soup

Adapted from scholastic.com

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 small whole potato (red or yukon variety)
- 2 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- 5 cups chicken broth (or water)

Directions:

1. Read the book "Stone Soup" retold by Heather Forest together.
2. Have your child place the small whole potato into a large pot. Tell him that it represents the stone from the story.
3. Then, ask your child to pass you the ingredients as you cook on the stove. Start with the onion and cook it in the oil for five minutes.
4. Ask your child to pass you the cut potatoes and carrots for you to stir, cooking for another 5 minutes.
5. Add in the broth, then the corn, tomatoes, meat, beans, peppers, and seasonings.
6. Stir well and bring to a simmer for 20 to 30 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Adjust seasonings.
7. Talk about how all the ingredients come together for a tasty soup!

- 15.5 ounce can corn, drained
- 14.5 ounce can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 to 2 cups cooked meat
- 1 cup cooked beans
- 1/2 cup chopped bell pepper, peas, or beans
- 1 teaspoon seasonings (Italian seasoning mix or Taco Seasoning Mix)
- salt and pepper to taste



Helpful tip: To make it even more fun for little ones, place the pre-chopped veggies in separate bowls in various areas of the kitchen. That way, as you call out what you need for the soup, your child can take turns finding the requested ingredient.

Resources

The Ups and Downs of Friendship <https://www.misterrogers.org/episodes/the-ups-and-downs-of-friendship/>

This video from Mister Rogers' Neighborhood helps young children understand that even though friendships don't always run smoothly they're an important and healthy part of life.

Supporting Young Children's Friendships <https://illinoiseearlylearning.org/podcasts/podcast-friendships/>

This podcast contains an interview with Dr. Michaelene Ostrosky discusses why friendships are



important to young children as well as strategies for helping young children, including those with disabilities, develop the skills for making friends.

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

I Can Share by Karen Katz

This book features simple, repetitive text and adorable illustrations of toddlers. This playful little book is the perfect way to introduce the magic of sharing.

My Friends by Taro Gomi

This book uses simple words and bright illustrations to tell a story of one young girl and how she learned how to be a good friend from the many animals she encounters as she explores the land around her.

Preschoolers

My Friend Bear Jez Alborough

Eddie's feeling sad, and so is the bear. They both wish they had a friend to talk to. All they have are their teddies, and teddies can't talk. This is a warm and funny story about an odd-sized, lovable pair, a small boy and a rather large bear!

How Do Dinosaurs Play with Their Friends by Jane Yolen & Mark Teague

This board book is a fun guide to friendship and playing nicely with others. It's a perfect read aloud that is humorous and instructive.



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