

# Social-Emotional and Cognitive Development

## Cognitive Development:

Our cognition serves as the foundation for learning and interactions. Children use cognition to reason, explore, and make sense of their world.

Cognitive Skills:

- Memory
- Attention
- Communication and language
- Problem solving
- Social interaction skills
- Emotional behavior



## Social Emotional Development:

Children's first social experiences happen within their home and their relationship with parents and siblings. They learn so much from observation and exploration in that family environment. The experiences of these first years serve a huge role in the development of positive and adaptive social-emotional skills.

Social Emotional Skills:

- Understanding feelings and emotions
- Expressing feelings and needs in a healthy way
- Being able to regulate emotions
- Building relationships with others

## Why are these skills important?

Challenges in social emotional or cognitive skills can impact a child's ability to learn, engage with others, and participate in all the occupations that bring them joy. A child may have difficulties with the following:

- Self soothing or allowing others to help with comfort
- Adapting to new environments or situations
- Playing with others or establishing relationships
- Remaining motivated to explore their environment
- Maintaining attention

# Social and Cognitive Milestones:

It is so important to note that every child and their development is **unique!** It is unlikely that your child will reach these milestones at the exact time as another child. Milestones should be used as a *guide* and not a *strict timeline*.

Below is a list of social and cognitive developmental milestones:

| 1-2 years   | 2-3 years  | 3-4 years   | 4-5 years   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finds hidden objects</li><li>• Looks at correct picture in book when asked</li><li>• Imitates gestures</li><li>• Understands simple instructions</li><li>• Uses several individual words</li><li>• Begins to use objects correctly</li><li>• Shows specific preferences for people/toys</li><li>• Repeats sounds or gestures</li><li>• Babbles</li><li>• Responds to "no"</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begins to sort by shapes and colors</li><li>• Begins make believe play</li><li>• Parallel play</li><li>• Two to four word sentences</li><li>• Follows 2-step instructions</li><li>• Names simple objects in a book</li><li>• Points to body parts and clothing when asked</li><li>• Answers yes/no questions</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understands what and where questions</li><li>• Using present-progressive "ing"</li><li>• Copies others</li><li>• Takes turns</li><li>• Strangers can understand 75% of language</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooperates with other children</li><li>• Engages in fantasy play</li><li>• More independent</li><li>• Correctly names colors</li><li>• Knows numbers and can start counting</li><li>• Follows 3 part commands</li><li>• Understands same/different</li><li>• Views self as a whole</li><li>• Uses possessives</li><li>• Picks up an object and describes it</li></ul> |

## How can we help support these skills?

There is strong evidence that parent-led intervention and play supports the acquisition of social and cognitive skills. Below are a few examples of how we can support social and cognitive skills at home:

- Respond to the needs of your child and be sensitive to stress cues
- Read to your child
- Encourage dress up and pretend play
- Provide new toys or environments for your child to explore
- Give children simple tasks to complete to target attention and memory
- Play games and introduce turn-taking and win-lose case scenarios
- Model naming emotions and asking your child how they feel

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