

Social, Emotional, Moral, and Language Development

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to cover the process of social development. You will also explore how your self and social awareness skill relates to this social development. You will do this by examining:

1. Social Development

Social development is the development of self-awareness, attachment to parents and caregivers, and relationships with other children and adults. This occurs as a sequence, beginning with the idea of an awareness of self. This then leads to an awareness of parents or caregivers and those immediately related to the child. It continues outwards, to an awareness of others, including friends, coworkers, etc. Your **self and social awareness skill** is part of your social development.

Social development is tied to many ideas within developmental psychology. Parents are major factors in a child's social development as well as in their development of language and emotion. This also paves the way for cultural development.

When talking about social development, it is good to look specifically at **developmental tasks**. Developmental tasks are the skills that have to be mastered and the changes that have to occur for development to progress in the optimal way. These milestones, or developmental tasks, in early social development occur specifically in infancy all the way up to early childhood.

It is important to remember that individuals develop at their own pace and their own time, and development occurs within ranges. Sometimes people do not develop within these ranges, but that doesn't mean that the person is abnormal or deficient in some way.

IN CONTEXT

Consider this scenario. There is a young boy that doesn't read seriously until he is 5 or 6. His parents may begin to think that maybe he is struggling to identify letters or words.

After this age, however, the boy not only begins to read, but his reading and grammar skills develop at a voracious rate. He may end up being a fast and avid reader. His early development wasn't necessarily indicative of his later skills and abilities.



TERMS TO KNOW

Social Development

The development of self-awareness, attachment to caregivers, and relationships with others.

Developmental Task

Any skill that must be mastered for optimal development.

1a. Early Milestones

Milestones begin to occur within 0 to 6 months after a child is born. During this early stage, children are developing a physical awareness and understanding of their bodies. They are also developing a kind of tactile awareness, and respond to touch.

➔ **EXAMPLE** They begin to recognize, for example, that this is their hand and this is their leg.

Now, in the early part of developments, when a child smiles, it might not actually be what we consider to be a smile. It might be caused by something physical, like gas. It's around the fifth month that the child develops what is called a **social smile**. This is a smile in response to another person, like a parent. This is one of the early forms of communication that a child has, and is one of the first ways that they develop as a social being.



TERM TO KNOW

Social Smile

Babies begin smiling deliberately at about 2 months, but by 8 to 12 months, babies smile more frequently when another person is nearby. This action is rewarding to parents; may communicate interest in an object.

1b. Middle Milestones

Middle milestones occur from 6 to 12 months of age. During this time, the child is developing more complex forms of communication. They start to recognize language and respond to it in certain ways.

Children also begin to imitate the actions of their parents and other people. They develop a range of emotion. They may be starting to show anger, sadness, or fear. They also start to show separation anxiety, which is distress as a response to parents or caregivers leaving the room or area where the children can see them. This is normal in development to occur and isn't something to worry about, necessarily.

1c. Later Milestones

In later development, there are still certain important milestones that need to occur. Around 18 months of age, children start to develop what is called self-awareness. Essentially, self-consciousness, or self-awareness, is a conscious knowledge of one's own self, character, feelings, motives, and desires. This also helps children to develop ideas of themselves versus others and concepts like empathy later on.

During this time, around the same age, children are starting to develop as more independent people. They play independently. They may begin to try to direct others. They try to show their parents what they want to do.

Around 2 to 3 years of age, they begin to show preferences. They begin to prefer certain types of food or colors. They also begin to say no to things.

At around 3 to 4 years of age, they begin to establish relationships with people outside of their caregivers,

such as friends or more distant relatives. They begin to share their toys with other children, and they begin to show an awareness of other people.

There are many more milestones that follow, but these are some key ones.

2. Importance of Emotional Development

Emotional development is another aspect of the early development of people. It is important on a number of different levels, because of its impact upon:

- **Social development:** Emotional development is important to social development because emotion is a sort of social cue.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Facial expressions are one way that people communicate with each other. In this manner, you can tell what each other are thinking or feeling without necessarily saying anything.

- **Biological development:** Emotional development is also important biologically, in that it links directly to one's physical arousal. It has certain ties to adaptive behaviors that help a person to survive.

➞ **EXAMPLE** When you feel fear, then you start to have a physical arousal and a rush of adrenaline, which helps you to realize that it's time to run, or to fly. On the other hand, when you're angry, you may have similar feelings of arousal, but it might signal a time that you want to fight, versus flight. As you can see, those biological connections help you to perform certain kinds of useful behaviors.

- **Evolutionary development:** Lastly, emotional development is important in an evolutionary sense, because there's a certain hereditary basis for emotions that are passed on from person to person. This is why, as you'll see, there's a certain regular development in people over time, throughout emotional development.

IN CONTEXT

Emotional development is particularly important evolutionarily to infants, because certain emotions, like happiness or smiling, help babies to survive, by making them appear more appealing. The parents may be more likely to pay attention to a smiling baby than they would a non-smiling baby.

Conversely, though, a crying baby may elicit feelings of annoyance or unhappiness in an adult, which in turn may encourage that adult to come to the aid of the child. Therefore, both emotions—smiling and crying—can help a person to survive, and overall, help the species to survive.



TERM TO KNOW

Emotional Development

Important aspect of development, tied closely with maturation, important in social interaction with others, and survival.

3. The Eight Basic Emotions

A psychologist named Robert Plutchik refined an idea that there are eight basic emotions that all people have and that all people are able to express and generally recognize:

1. Fear
2. Surprise
3. Sadness
4. Disgust
5. Anger
6. Anticipation
7. Joy
8. Trust or Acceptance

These can vary in intensity to produce all the other kinds of emotions that you have.

➞ **EXAMPLE** For example, if someone feels anger, they can also feel a lesser degree of annoyance, or a greater degree of rage.

These eight basic emotions are almost all universally recognized. This means that, while there is a degree of cultural variation in how they're expressed, generally when people see the facial expressions related to emotions like disgust, anger, surprise, or happiness, then they're able to recognize it, regardless of their culture or the culture of the person who is expressing it.



Self and Social Awareness: Why Employers Care

While there are some cultural difference around when and why these emotions are conveyed, knowing they are universal can help encourage diversity and connection in the workplace.



DID YOU KNOW

The smile is likely the most universally recognized symbol of emotion.

4. The Theory of Moral Development

Moral development is an area that's focused on both social and emotional development. Kohlberg's theory of moral development is divided into six stages, which can be grouped into three different levels with two stages at each level. To demonstrate these stages, Kohlberg created a moral dilemma, a thought experiment, with a character that he called Heinz.

Heinz, in this thought experiment, is a man whose wife is dying of a disease. The wife needs a particular drug in order to be cured. However, the pharmacy is charging much more for this drug than it should be. Heinz can't pay because he is too poor. Thus, Heinz decides to steal the drug for his wife.

In this thought experiment, Heinz's actions are important for determining right and wrong, but even more important is the reasoning behind his actions.



THINK ABOUT IT

What is right or wrong in this situation? What should Heinz have done? What would you do?

Your answer to this question about whether or not it was morally right for Heinz to have stolen the drug is important in the stages of Kohlberg's theory.

The three levels that Kohlberg divided his theory into are **preconventional**, **conventional**, and **postconventional**.

In Kohlberg's theory, everybody starts at a preconventional level of morality, and not everybody necessarily progresses to the final stage of postconventional.



TERMS TO KNOW

Preconventional

First level of moral development—focused on consequences, self-centered.

Conventional

Second level of moral development—focused on what society expects, rules.

Postconventional

Third level of moral development—focused on universal principles and social contracts, individuals have differing views.

4a. The Preconventional Stage

Preconventional thought is particularly concerned with consequences of actions. It's a sort of self-centered stage, where people are concerned with what is going to happen to them as a result of their actions. Thus, this is very common in children.

1. The first preconventional stage is the obedience or punishment stage, where the person determines the right or wrong of an action according to the consequences to themselves. Generally they try to follow the rules in this way. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was wrong for stealing that drug because he will go to jail for it. Because of his actions, he will receive some consequence or punishment.

2. The second preconventional stage is the self-interest stage, where the person is more concerned with what's best for the individual and not with what is best for other people. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was wrong in his action because his wife needed a drug and not him, so he shouldn't have done something that helped other people. He should just be worried about himself.

4b. The Conventional Stage

The second category is the conventional stage, where people are more outwardly concerned. In this stage, you might be looking at other people and around your society and wondering, "What would they say about me? What do they think of me?" For this reason, this stage is governed in many ways by rules of appearance.

1. The first conventional stage is the personal relationship stage, where you want approval, especially from the people that are close to you. You want to be a good boy or girl; you want those close to you to look at you

favorably. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was wrong because people would call him a thief, and that would be a bad thing. In particular, his wife, whom he's stealing for, would call him a thief for doing what he did, regardless of the outcome.

2. The second conventional stage is the societal order stage when people have generalized thoughts about society as a whole. In this stage, you feel a duty to respect authority and follow the rules of society. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was wrong because everyone needs to obey the laws. Laws are general rules that apply to everybody, regardless of the circumstances, so Heinz should have done what the law says.

Notice some of the reasoning at the various stages is similar, but there are different nuances in the reasoning that change the level of thought.

4c. The Postconventional Stage

The third category is the postconventional stage.

1. The first postconventional stage is the social contract stage, where the law is thought of not as something that's made by society but by the people, and is therefore responsive to the people. In this stage, you understand that individuals have different views and different opinions about the law. Therefore, the law might be a little bit different in its application. In other words, some people might be allowed to break the law. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was right to steal the drug. While it was against the law, in a situation like his where somebody will die, the individual's right to live is more important than laws against stealing.

2. The final postconventional stage, which is the stage that not everybody will necessarily get to, is the universal principles idea, where a person has an individual sort of moral code, and they determine moral behaviors based on their abstract reasoning. At this stage, people have created universal principles to guide their behavior that are self-chosen but also are grounded in an idea of justice. Thus, these universal principles are based not just on what's best for the person, but on what's best considering one's thoughts and moral codes. At this stage, the thinking would be:

Heinz was right in this situation because, according to him, it is more important to save a life than not to break the law. However, he should also probably turn himself in, because he did break the law and should still do what's right.



Self and Social Awareness: Skill Reflect

How might moral development inform how you develop your self and social awareness skill?

5. Language Development

Language is important to humans as social creatures. In psychology, the **language development** of people is tied closely to development and maturation, especially cognitive and social development.

There are several important milestones to take note of when it comes to development of language. Development of language occurs even before the child is born, in the prenatal stage. Children begin to understand and recognize the rhythm and the cadence of a particular language.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A child will recognize and respond to Spanish if Spanish is spoken around them more than they will respond to, say, Chinese. This is because it recognizes it even within the womb at a prenatal stage.

It is important to note at this stage that children can understand before they're able to produce.



DID YOU KNOW

This is why sign language has become very popular for babies, recently, because children are able to communicate things through sign language that they aren't actually able to vocally communicate.



TERM TO KNOW

Language Development

One of the most important events in development; closely tied to cognitive development; important to humans as social creatures.

6. Language Milestones

The following are major language milestones:

- **5 months of age:** Around this time, a child begins babbling. This starts off initially as single sounds, like “uh.” Eventually, it becomes more complex forms of repeated syllables. It might sound like “buh buh buh buh” or “buh duh puh kuh.”
- **10-13 months of age:** Around this time is when a child finally says their first word. These are usually single-word phrases; they're very simple and the child knows very few of them. They might know things like “mama,” “dada,” “up,” or “mine.”
- **After 2 years of age:** Around this time there is what's called a language explosion. The vocabulary and the grammar of a child expands greatly over a short period of time. This is also when they begin to use multi-word sentences.
- **6 years of age:** By this time, a child can generally understand up to 8,000 words and produce 4,000.



SUMMARY

In this tutorial, you learned about **social development**, **emotional development**, **moral development**, and **language development**. The stages of development for all of these follow some specific trajectories. You learned that your self and social awareness skill is part of your social development as

well as your development of morals. You also considered how your understanding of emotions can lead to a stronger self and social awareness skill and this can benefit you at work.

Good luck!

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Emotional Development

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Language Development

One of the most important events in development; closely tied to cognitive development; important to humans as social creatures.

Postconventional

Third level of moral development—focused on universal principles and social contracts, individuals have differing views.

Preconventional

First level of moral development—focused on consequences, self-centered.

Social Development

The development of self-awareness, attachment to caregivers, and relationships with others.

Social Smile

Babies begin smiling deliberately at about 2 months, but by 8 to 12 months, babies smile more frequently when another person is nearby. This action is rewarding to parents; may communicate interest in an object.