

What to Expect: Social and Emotional Skills



Sometimes it is hard to imagine that very young babies are actively learning all the time, especially when they seem to spend most of their time sleeping, spitting up, or dropping strained carrots off the side of the high chair. However, these early years are a critical time of learning for babies and toddlers. They are developing a foundation of social-emotional skills that they will build on for the rest of their lives. Here is a table that highlights the social-emotional skills your child is learning and practicing at different ages. You can use this information to track how your child is growing and changing from birth to age 3.

GREENSPAN'S ESSENTIAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

| Developmental Goal | Age Range | What's Happening? |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| <p>1</p> <p><i>Stage One:</i> Being Calm and Interested in All the Sensations of the World</p> | Approximately birth to 3 months | <p>Your baby is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how to be calm, how to accept soothing and comfort from a loved caregiver. • learning to feel secure and interested in the world around him. • trying to organize the information he is receiving from his senses. |
| <p>2</p> <p><i>Stage Two:</i> Falling in Love</p> | Approximately 2 to 10 months | <p>Your baby is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becoming more focused on parents and other persons and things outside herself. • expressing emotional reactions of her own (e.g., smiles and frowns). • expressing pleasure in others' company. |
| <p>3</p> <p><i>Stage Three:</i> Becoming a Two-Way Communicator</p> | Approximately 3 to 10 months | <p>Your baby is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purposefully using gestures (facial expressions, actions, and sounds) to communicate. • responding to others' gestures with gestures of his own. • realizing that he can use sounds and gestures to get his needs met by loved caregivers. |
| <p>4</p> <p><i>Stage Four:</i> Learning to Solve Problems and Discovering a Sense of Self</p> | Approximately 9 to 18 months | <p>Your baby is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning to solve problems, like how to stack blocks in a tower. • communicating in increasingly complex ways, using language, expressions, and gestures. • learning what to expect from others, based on interactions and experiences with parents and caregivers. • developing a sense of self. |
| <p>5</p> <p><i>Stage Five:</i> Creating Ideas</p> | Approximately 16 to 36 months | <p>Your toddler is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becoming skilled in symbolic thought (e.g., labeling images with words: "Cookie!"). • using verbal means to communicate needs and desires. • engaging in pretend play. • learning to recognize and communicate her feelings. • learning to understand others' feelings. |

(Greenspan 1999)