



Toddler Sociability

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Presentation Outline

- Context, Definition & Relevance
- Development
- Underlying Brain Maturation
- Key Messages

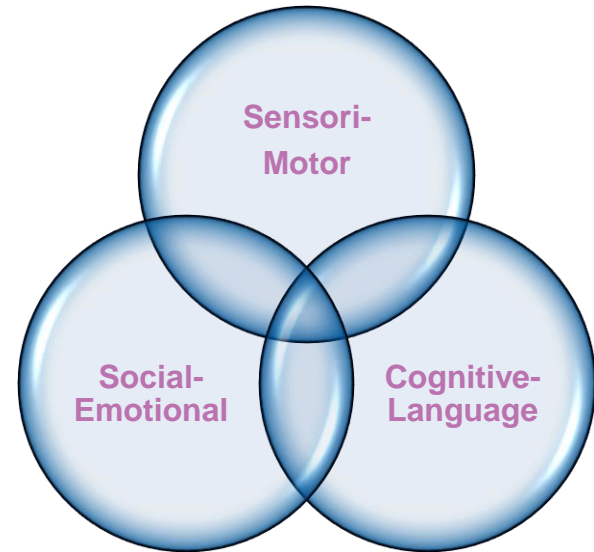
Context, Definition & Relevance

Context Child Development

Typical toddler & child development

Continuous learning process of gaining:

- Sensory
- Motor
- Cognitive
- Language
- Social &
- Emotional abilities



Context Child Development

- Social–emotional skills develop early in life
- Foundational to the development of cognition, language, and adaptive life skills
- A young child’s development of social competence allows him or her to participate in a range of social environments at home and in the community
- These social environments continue to grow exponentially throughout childhood into adolescence

Definition Social-Emotional Development

Healthy social and emotional development refers to a child's capacity to

- experiencing, managing, and expressing a full range of positive and negative emotions;
- developing close, satisfying relationships with others;
- and actively explore environments and learn

Areas of Social-Emotional Functioning include Sociability & Autonomy

E.g. as described in ASQ:SE-2

Self-regulation - ability to calm down or adjust to environment or stimulation

Compliance - ability to conform to the direction of others and follow rules

Adaptive functioning - ability to cope with physiological needs like sleeping, eating

Affect - ability to demonstrate his/her own feelings and empathy for others

Social-communication - ability to interact with others by responding to or initiating verbal or nonverbal signals to indicate interest or needs, feelings, and affective or internal states

Interaction → **sociability** - ability to respond to or initiate social responses to parents, other adults, peers

Autonomy - ability to self-initiate or respond without guidance, i.e. independence

Relevance of Social Skills for Toddlers

In preschool age

- children are faced with various social challenges, characterized by the transition from a familiar environment with primary caretakers to a peer-dominated environment and new caretakers

→ Therefore, children must develop new self-regulation and social competence skills in this age

→ Thus, preschool age is a sensitive period for the development of social competence

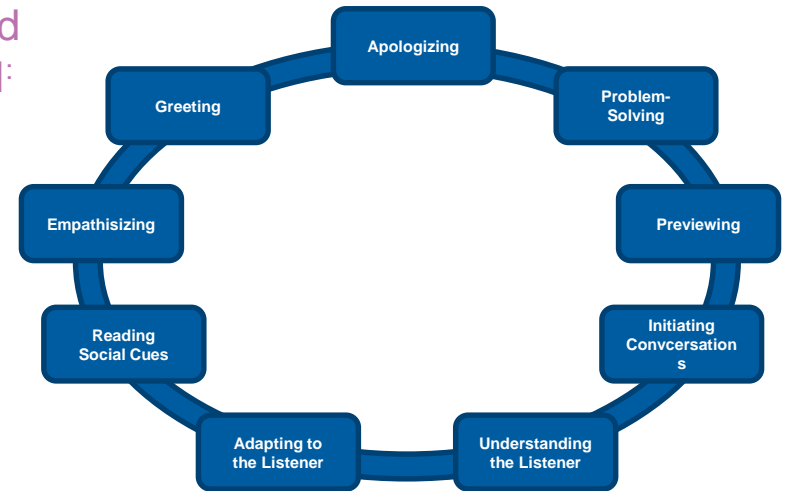
Relevance of Social Skills for Toddlers

Social skills are needed in learning environments.

But many toddlers and young children are ill-equipped with social skills when entering kindergarten & school:

- In a US survey of more than 3,000 teachers
 - 30% of kindergarten teachers reported \geq half of the children in their classes lacked academic skills & had difficulty following directions and working in a group
 - 20% reported \geq half of the class had problems with social skills

Social Skill examples:

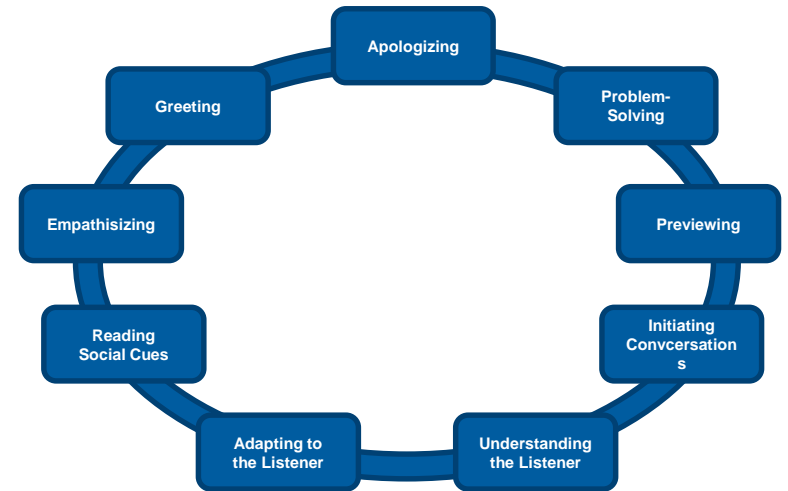


Relevance of Social Skills for Toddlers

Social skills are important for life & learning

- School readiness & later academic skills
- Emotional well-being,
- The ability to adapt in school
- Conflict management skills
- Life satisfaction
- Responsible & ethical decision-making
- Mental health
- Work place functioning

Social Skill examples:

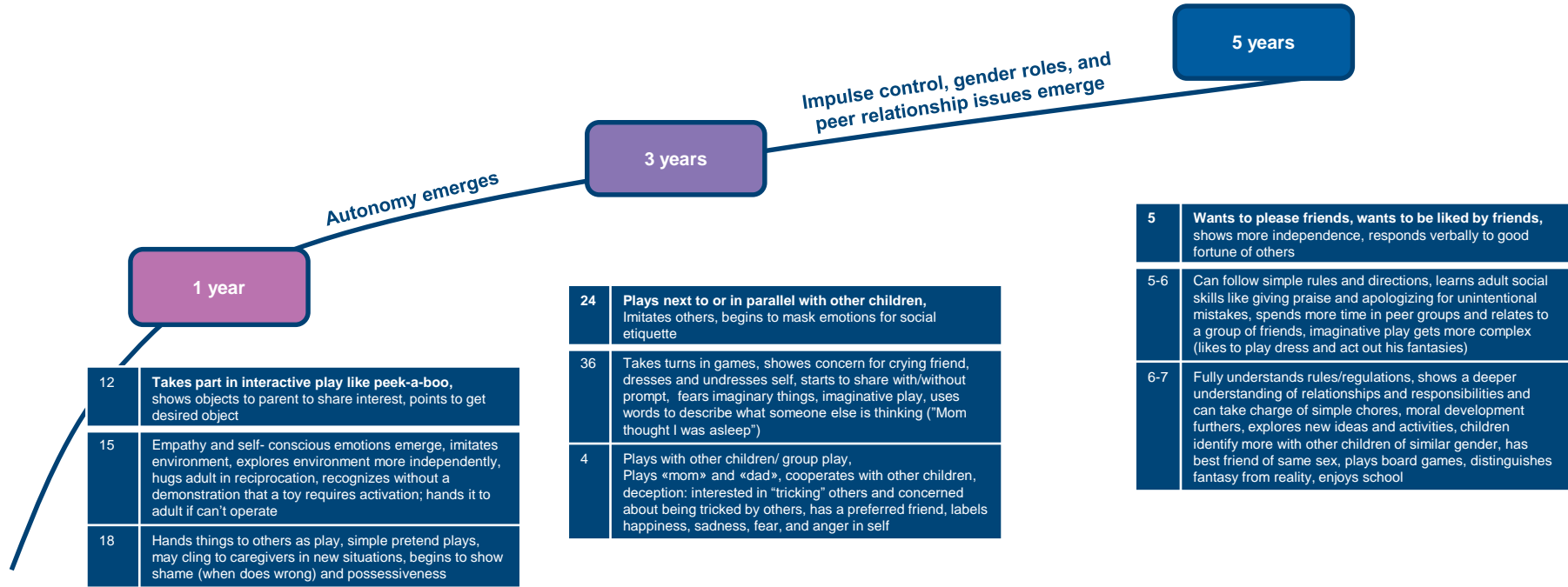


Development

Behavioral Development – Toddler Social Milestones

- Acquiring social competence is
 - a major developmental task, and
 - a central component of healthy functioning of toddlers
- The development progresses along a developmental trajectory;
 - in interaction with physical and cognitive development, and
 - marked by a continuum of milestones (= physical skills or behaviors)

Behavioral Development – Toddler Social Milestones



Social Behaviors are Complex and Are Regulated by a Network of Specialized Brain Areas

Social skills & behaviors mature alongside **brain connections** that process social information

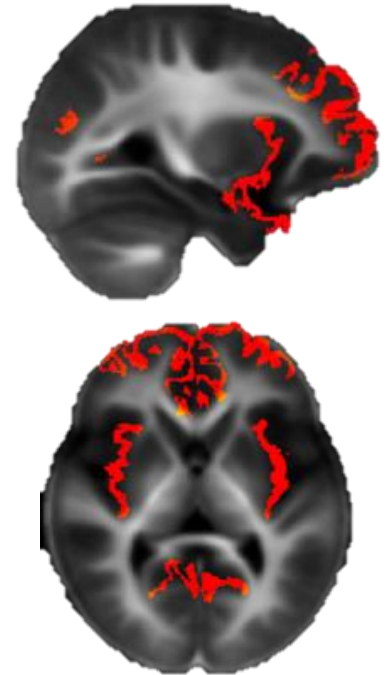
- The increase in children's cooperation and social connections is orchestrated by an increase in cooperation and connections in the brain (functional connectivity & myelination in social brain)
- In turn, brain connectivity deficits in the social brain have been linked to abnormal social cognition (e.g. as seen in Autism Spectrum Disorders)

→ The **Social Brain** thus refers to brain areas involved in social information processing

Underlying Brain Maturation

Key Areas of the “Social Brain”

- the superior temporal sulcus (STS) → recognition of others
- anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) → emotion & response selectivity
- medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) → knowledge of self & others
- inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) → self-other mapping
- the anterior insula → specialized emotion area
- the amygdala → specialized emotion area



Key Messages

Key messages

- Social skill development is fundamental to success in school, life and health & well-being
- Social skills include sociability (connecting with others) and autonomy (independence)
- Emerge during infancy and mature through childhood and adolescence when social interactions and social learning environments grow exponentially
- Social skills & behaviors mature alongside brain connections that process social information
- During toddlerhood a significant increase in myelination found overall in the brain but especially in those social behavior brain areas
- Myelination supports fast & efficient social information processing, underpinning complex social behaviors