



Social-Emotional Strategies

4. Interacts with Peers (or adults)

- Label and talk about emotions and their causes, e.g., “Your brother is upset because you drew on his art project.”; “Your friend is sad because she lost her favorite toy.”
- Read books showing different emotions. Discuss why the people look and feel the way they do, e.g., say, “She’s smiling because she is happy. She’s happy because her friend shared the puzzle with her.”
- Discuss and read books about friendships, e.g., how friends treat one another, the things they do for each other.
- Model positive interactions by talking respectfully, being sensitive to the child’s feelings, and validating accomplishments and progress.
- Model respectful relationships with other adults, e.g., Tell the child about other adults who are helpful; “Mr. Jonas keeps our yard clean.”, or “Thank you, Ms. Kelly, for bringing our mail each day.”
- Help the child detect and interpret cues about how someone feels, e.g., “Your friend looks angry. His forehead is wrinkled and his mouth is turned down”.
- Read stories about various emotions. Discuss why the characters in the story look, feel, and act the way they do.
- Observe as the child tries to enter group activities. Help children who may need assistance, find play partners. Teach them positive strategies for entering and participating in group activities.
- Develop pro-social behaviors such as helping, sharing, and including others in group activities and play. Call attention to positives in the child’s behavior. Guide the child toward responding in new, more positive ways.
- Create spaces in the house where siblings can work together.
- Help the child learn how to enter a group by:
 - 1) waiting, watching, and listening without speaking
 - 2) imitating actions of the children in the group and
 - 3) saying something positive that relates to what the group is doing such as suggesting roles they could play.
- Explain that people have a variety of emotional responses to particular events (loss, injury, pain, birthday celebrations, missing home, etc.), and they do not always react the same way.
- Explain that people express the same emotion in different ways, e.g., “Sometimes when people are sad they cry.”; “Sometimes they turn the corners of their mouths down, like this, and furrow their brows, like this, but they may not cry.”
- Listen attentively while the child speaks, to model active listening.
- Label your own feelings as you share experiences from your life and how you felt. Talk about things that made you happy, sad, or excited. Explain and model some of the ways you express your emotions.
- Model how children can help each other and work through conflict situations.
- Read literature that depicts main characters experiencing social-emotional struggles. Encourage the child to recognize the social dilemma and/or the emotions found in the story, and lead a discussion about potential causes. Ask them to suggest possible coping strategies or situational solutions. Consider having the child role-play various social and emotional situations by identifying the problem, modeling the process of change, and proposing solutions to social-emotional challenges.
- Share photographs displaying various emotions and lead a discussion about recognizing other’s feelings via situational clues and cues.