

TINY BITS (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER) FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Rocking and Rolling. Caring for the Mental Health of Infants and Toddlers

Social-emotional wellness is often known as infant mental health by early childhood professionals. In a nutshell, it is developing the capacity to experience and regulate emotions, form secure relationships, and explore and learn. Relationships are the way babies come to know the world and their place in it.

Relationships are the way babies come to know the world and their place in it. They provide the loving context necessary to comfort, protect, encourage, and offer a buffer against stressful times. It is through relationships that young children develop social emotional wellness, which includes the ability to form satisfying relationships with others, play, communicate, learn, face challenges, and experience emotions. In addition, nurturing relationships are crucial for the development of trust, empathy, compassion, generosity, and conscience.

Tips for Promoting Social-Emotional Development from Birth to Three:

Provide Your Child With Responsive Care. Taking time to really sit and observe what children do can tell us a lot. It provides us with clues about what makes our child tick. Those clues allow us to make better educated guesses about why they behave as they do and help us as parents and caregivers. Observing involves looking at what your child is doing, listening to what he is saying, and learning about your child's individual way of approaching the world (is he a jump in and "let's go" child or a sit back and "take it slow" child, etc.).

Be Affectionate and Nurturing. Feelings of affection can be a little harder to come by during prolonged crying spells or tantrums—but fortunately, most of us can find our feelings of love and desire to nurture little ones even during trying times. Touching, holding, comforting, rocking, singing, and talking to babies are things that may seem to be the natural way to play with a baby or to comfort a distressed young child. These interactions are more than meets the eye—they also provide precisely the stimulation their growing brains needs.

Help Your Child Learn to Resolve Conflicts in a Healthy, Appropriate Way. Around 2 years of age, toddlers are developing an awareness of "self" and sharing can be especially hard. They know what they want and when they want it, but their brains are not yet fully capable of understanding another person's feelings or point of view. Self-control is also just beginning to develop. Though toddlers can understand what you mean when you say not to take something from others, they have a hard time keeping themselves from acting on their impulses. Adults' impulse control gets tested from time to time; for toddlers the test occurs many times a day.

Helping babies learn lets them explore what they can do and also lets them know you are there to support their efforts.

Excerpts: [Rocking and Rolling. Caring for the Mental Health of Infants and Toddlers | NAEYC](#)
[Tips for Promoting Social-Emotional Development, www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

