



TAKE A MINUTE... Relationships **MATTER!**

Provider Tips for Supporting Social-Emotional Development

The parent-child relationship is the most important and influential relationship in a child's life, and it's key to healthy social-emotional development for infants and toddlers. As an Early Start service provider, you can support the parent-child relationship through your relationship with the parent or caregiver. Use relationship-based strategies to support the parent to

- interact with and observe their child,
- embed activities that support development into everyday routines, and
- access information about social-emotional development.

Use this checklist as a guide to supporting the parent-child relationship, and promoting social-emotional development, in your regular interactions with families.

Take a Minute to make a difference in a child and family's life!

- Check in.** Take a few moments before you begin your time with a child and family to assess your own emotional state. What you bring to the interaction has impact. Your words and actions may influence interactions between the parent and child. Remember, "How you are is as important as what you do."¹
- Ask the expert.** Parents know their children best! Regularly ask parents or caregivers about their observations of their child's social and emotional development. Ask about their child's behaviors, responses, and interests. Ask about when things work or don't work for their child. Involving the family in this way shows respect for their expertise and helps you know what's happening outside of the few hours you spend with the child each week.
- Do unto parents as you would have parents do unto their children.**² Your relationship with the parent supports the parent's ability to assist their child; the parent's relationship with their child shapes their child's behavior and promotes social-emotional development. Provide emotional support and encouragement to parents, and recognize and acknowledge their strengths, efforts, and contributions. If they are doing something positive, let them know!
- Be with, not do for.** "Being with" a family means supporting the parent or caregiver to support the child, instead of providing direct intervention to the child, or "doing for."³ "Being with" builds the parent's confidence and competence to support their child's development every day, not just during your time with them. Comment on positive interactions between the parent and child. Share your observations about the child's positive social skills and developmentally appropriate emotional behavior to help the parent recognize and support their child's development.
- Improvise.** Instead of bringing toys and equipment into the family's environment, use the things that they already use during their daily routines and activities. Support them to make adaptations that will help their child be successful in his home and community.
- Pick a routine, any routine.** Ask the parent to identify a few everyday routines or activities. Everyday routines provide natural opportunities for learning and development. Model some strategies to support social and emotional development during these activities. Give positive feedback and encouragement as the parent practices these strategies and comes up with their own!
- Share your expertise.** While parents know their own child best, your education and experience makes you a great resource for families. Provide parents with guidance and resources (such as the Take a Minute: Relationships Matter brochure) about positive social skills and developmentally appropriate behavior in children at different ages and stages of development.
- Check out.** Take a few minutes to reflect on your time with the child and family to make a few notes about your visit. What went well? What do you need to do between now and the next visit? What do you want to remember to look for the next time you are together? How do you feel about the visit?

¹Jeree Pawl and Marie St. John. (1998). How You Are Is as Important as What You Do...: In Making a Positive Difference for Infants, Toddlers and Their Families. Zero to Three. Washington, D.C.

²Adapted from Pawl and St. John. (1998).

³Kristen Swanson. (1993). Nursing as informed caring for the well-being of others. Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 25(4), 352-257.

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