

# Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood

## I. Highlights

- A. Important to respect children's emotions. Recognize them, show empathy, teach the names for different emotions, and help them learn positive ways to handle their feelings.
- B. Ages 3-6 = Erikson's stage of initiative vs. guilt. When they're trying new things, it's important to give positive feedback to build self-esteem.
- C. TV/media can be a very negative influence and increase aggression, but used in moderation with adult input, it can have positive qualities too.
- D. Temperament = inherent patterns of being/ reacting, beginning from birth, can't be changed. Contributes to personality.
  - 1. 9 temperamental traits = activity level, biological rhythms, approach/ withdrawal, adaptability, mood, intensity of reaction, sensitivity, distractibility, persistence
  - 2. Three main temperaments = feisty / difficult, fearful / slow-to-warm, or flexible / easy (or can be a combination of these)
  - 3. First recognize my own temperament, then recognize the children's temperaments. Then put my own temperament on hold and meet the needs of the children in my care.

## II. Homework

- A. Read Chapter 7.
- B. Journal IV due next week.

### III. Discussion

- A. October (Halloween) is a great time to work with the children on what is real and what is not. Make masks, put them on and take them off repeatedly in front of the mirror. It helps make Halloween less scary.
- B. Child developmentalist on NPR this morning saying Barbie's lack of joints (stiff limbs) implies to girls that they shouldn't be athletic, aren't made to move, just to stand there and look pretty. Action figures' joints go every which way, 360 degrees, which implies to boys that they should move as much as they want to. Is another way we're sending hidden messages to our children based on their gender this young. (Can argue either way, but it's an interesting perspective.)
- C. Even if you do an observation in your own room, it gives you a different perspective. It can be valuable. Also valuable to see programs that are very different from your own, just to get new ideas.
- D. Grace Preschool in Los Gatos has a great inclusion program in their classrooms and has the "social thinking" training.

### IV. Social-Emotional Development

- A. Preschoolers usually:
  - 1. Stubborn, rigid, messy, don't share, repeat activities, possessive, like to help, love water, play alone, sensory, want control
  - 2. watch, imitate, observe, explore, wonder, even temperament motor skills, do and undo, friendly, talkative, agreeable, helpful
  - 3. energetic, imaginative, creative, expansive, testing, silly, profane, loud, exaggerate, play cooperatively, race around
- B. How do we deal with children's emotions?
  - 1. "You can't give what you don't have." If I don't know what to do with my own emotions, I can't help my children get through them.

2. A lot of adults tell children, "You're okay," or tell them to stop feeling that way, or forget to give kids time and space to calm down. We're denying children their own emotions.
3. Instead, try, "I see you're sad, I know it's difficult to say good-bye to Mommy." That's much better than smiling at them when they're crying and saying, "Come on, you're going to have so much fun, let's go do this great activity..."
4. How do I make sure that I'm respecting children's emotions?
  - a) Doesn't mean telling children it's okay to scream and kick (it isn't!), but telling them it's okay to be angry (name the emotion, acknowledge that it's real) and then help them find healthy ways to deal with it. Just as we adults go for a walk, take a bath, listen to music, etc. to process our feelings, we need to help our children learn what to do that helps.
  - b) First helps to teach them the names of the emotions they feel.
  - c) Show empathy for their feelings, then help them figure out ways to deal with it. Ex: "I see you're upset. I'm going to take care of you. Would you like to help me drive the boats here in the water table? The water feels good."
  - d) Provide space and time. Transitions can be hard for kids at drop-off, and they may want to be by themselves for a while before joining the group.
  - e) The younger they are, the harder it is for them to soothe themselves when they are overtired. We can show them where to lie down safely on their own, or let them snuggle in our laps, or hold a teddy bear or soft blanket.
    - (1) What about the feisty child who can't soothe himself, is spinning on the floor and pokes another child? Find things that help from the outside when they can't calm themselves from the inside. We can pat

their the back while they lay down to rest, hum to them, put the soft music on, read them a book, etc.

- (2) Be aware of children with special needs who may not be able to change their own position very easily, may need someone to massage their legs or back to help their muscles relax at rest time.
5. Sometimes children don't know why they feel the way they do. Asking, "Why did you do that? Why did you do that?" won't help. Begin by giving them words for the way they feel so that next time they feel that way, they have the vocabulary to use.

#### C. Two-Year-Olds

1. If I want it, it's mine.
2. If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.
3. If I can take it away from you, it's mine.
4. If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.
5. If it looks like mine, it's mine.
6. If it's mine, it will never ever belong to anybody else, no matter what!

#### D. Three-year-olds

1. Capable, cooperative
2. Wonder/explore a lot (indoors and outdoors)
3. Friendly, talkative, helpful
4. Know about 300 words on average
5. Is the age of new fears (one fly comes into the room, 3-year-olds are scared)

#### E. 4-year-olds

1. Expansive (talk about stuff over and over and over)
2. Cooperative (if they choose to be)
3. Boisterous, bossy, belligerent
4. Testing limits

5. Best friends, who can come to my birthday
6. Make believe, super heroes
7. Beginning to share and take turns because they have developed ownership (necessary development before can share)
8. Like to annoy friends (“boo boo head” “baby”)

F. 5-year-olds

1. Balanced, calm
2. Takes risks
3. Collectors (coins, shells, My Little Pony, leaves, paper scraps)
4. Humor (starting to tell knock-knock jokes)
5. Test strengths (happy to help you lift heavy things)
6. Self-help skills in place now (can meet the majority of their own needs)
7. Sophisticated language, good conversation
8. Cognitively transitional (can do a task, move onto another task, understand and retain knowledge and experience, remember it the next day)

G. Erikson’s preschool stages: initiative vs. guilt (3-6 years)

1. Self-starter / empowerment desire is naturally there at this age. They feel guilty that they’re not able to do it (not capable) when they get negative feedback from adults about the things they’re trying.
2. Example: Child decides to pour drinks for everyone, spills a lot, and teacher says, “You’re always spilling, you can’t do that.” This makes her feel guilty. POSITIVE messages are key at this age.
3. Children discover who they are and explore their world by the experiences they have.
4. A lot of the hours of the life of these children is spent at school. The school environment is a lot of their world, so the experiences and positive messages we give them matter a lot.

## H. TV and aggression

1. Before age 8, children don't understand that what they see on TV isn't real, so they think that's the way you should be behaving.
  - a) First year of life = best to have no television or screen time at all.
  - b) After that, adults should sit with the child, talk through the program with the child, then turn it off. Shouldn't be watching 7 hours of television a day by themselves.
2. Most of the programs and the advertisements are not positive influences.
3. TV influences on children
  - a) Keeps children from exercise, imaginative play, reading, family interaction
    - (1) Someone else's imagination came up with the show; watching it requires no creative effort from them.
    - (2) Takes the time they would otherwise be doing these things.
  - b) Influential messages!
  - c) Often even families who eat together are eating in front of TV. Usually passively watching, not talking about it or engaging with each other.
  - d) Saturday morning cartoons = people and objects get blown up a lot, shows unrealistic physics and unrealistic results of hurting each other
4. TV can have positives if used in moderation
  - a) Visual for children who are on the spectrum, can use it as a social lesson
  - b) Dora the Explorer teaches Spanish
  - c) English language through Sesame Street and similar shows
  - d) Gives common "culture" for young children, can help shy kids communicate with other kids if they can both talk about My Little Pony
5. Effects of media violence on children
  - a) Gives violent, negative role models

- b) Shows unrealistic consequences for violence (characters getting right back up after being shot, etc.)
6. What can parents do about this?
    - a) Watch together and talk about it.
    - b) Use it as a chance to scaffold. Example from Aime's daughter after talking about *The Little Mermaid*: "Ariel looked at the boat and saw Eric and thought she loved him, but really she just thought he was cute. She had to get to know him before she loved him."
    - c) Go to [CommonSense.org](http://CommonSense.org) and look at what they've listed for appropriate books and movies.
    - d) Monitor & control what programs the children watch
    - e) Read stories together, discuss the characters in the story, acknowledge the feelings expressed and the consequences of their actions
  7. By age 3, children imitate what is seen on TV.
  8. Ages 3-10 may still believe what they see on TV is real. (Brain development isn't done yet, may not be able to differentiate fantasy vs. reality.)
  9. By watching aggression, children learn how to be aggressive and don't understand that there are consequences to aggressive behavior.
  10. Questions
    - a) Average American child spends \_\_\_ hours per day consuming media? (radio, iPod, TV, internet, etc.)
    - b) What % of American kids under age two have TV set in their own bedroom?
    - c) What % of kids over 8 have a TV set in their own bedroom?
    - d) What % of American kids 10 and older believe TV and the media have an influence on their (...) behavior which encourages them to get into (...)

activities? May be an influence on puberty coming earlier. The things they see get the hormones flowing earlier.

- e) In one year, how many commercials would the average child see on TV?
  - f) When kids are asked today what their favorite form of media is, what do they choose? (Mommy's smartphone/iPad)
11. Society as a whole has failed to acknowledge our issues with child mental health.
- a) Have now seen depressed or bipolar infants from lack of nurturing human skin-to-skin interaction with adults. (Seen in group care or at home with inattentive parents/caregivers.)
  - b) Another school shooting yesterday.

## V. Temperament

A. Temperament treasure hunt (qualities to find in ourselves or others; these all relate to our temperament)

1. Foot is always wiggling
2. Has never met a stranger (extrovert)
3. Must eat and go to bed at the same time (needs to sleep on a full tummy)
4. Can sit and read for hours
5. Takes shoes off whenever she can
6. Gets really mad
7. Hates meeting new people at a party (awkward feeling, introvert)
8. Can't stand tight or itchy clothes
9. Can always find a problem
10. Likes plenty of alone time
11. Likes to watch a while before joining an activity
12. Loves a difficult, complex puzzle



13. Goes to bed at a different time every night
  14. Is on the go all day long
  15. Frequently drops what they are doing to do something else
  16. Is always in a good mood
  17. Never notices if it's hot or cold
- B. Don't force kids to wear or take off jackets based on whether you're hot or cold. Internal temperature has a lot to do with temperament. Don't assume the kids match you.
- C. Temperament graph worksheet: a child I know well vs. myself.
1. Take the survey for the child and for myself.
  2. Graph the two lines on the same graph.
  3. If the lines are very different in places, that shows where our temperaments are very different. It's important to recognize this so we can adapt the way we care for the child.
- D. Discussion points (we'll come back to these)
1. Emotional and behavioral challenges
  2. Children who lack self control
  3. Prevention through environment
  4. Children who are reluctant to participate
  5. Promote peer assistance
  6. Ignore, choose your battles
  7. Minimize the use of negative consequences
  8. Support positive behavior
- E. Temperament DVD: "Flexible, fearful, fiesty: The temperaments of infants and toddlers"
1. Better to understand temperament than to try to change children (because you can't!)

2. Kids are different because of their temperaments
  - a) Some are brash and feisty, some easy-going
  - b) Some like to be held, others don't
  - c) Some are generally cheerful, others cranky
3. Some parents think infants come into the world alike. They don't.  
Temperament is an unmistakable personal style apparent from birth.
4. Temperament + parenting + culture + environment = personality
5. It's okay and normal for infants to differ from each other. Can be challenging to deal with many different temperaments at once in group care.
6. 9 temperamental traits ("indicators" of temperament)
  - a) Activity level (low to high)
  - b) Biological rhythms (when child eats/sleeps/toilets, from regular to irregular)
  - c) Approach/withdrawal (go toward people/things or withdraw)
  - d) Adaptability (adapt quickly or slowly to new routine or situation)
  - e) Mood (positive to negative)
  - f) Intensity of reaction (mild to intense)
  - g) Sensitivity (to things like bright lights, loud noises, temperature, touch, ranging from low to high sensitivity)
  - h) Distractibility (easily distracted by noises or movement, or not)
  - i) Persistence (keep trying vs. giving up when it's difficult)
7. Research shows that child have distinct personal styles from birth, and that traits tend to come together in similar combinations. Thomas & Chess were the first researchers to identify these common combinations: easy, slow-to-warm, and difficult. (Others used other words later, such as "cautious" instead of slow-to-warm or "active" instead of difficult. Same idea.)
8. Flexible/easy temperament = most common

- a) Up to 40% of all children
  - b) Regular feeding and nap routines
  - c) Adapt quickly to new situations
  - d) Easily toilet trained
  - e) Generally cheerful
  - f) Regular rhythms, positive mood, quick to adapt, low intensity, low sensitivity
  - g) Seldom make a fuss, easily taken advantage of by other children (don't usually fuss when someone takes their toy)
  - h) Do have deep feelings and desires, just like anyone else, but aren't as vocal about them. Need special attention so they don't get lost in the group.
  - i) Wants attention, but doesn't demand it loudly. Shows his needs in quiet ways. Caregiver needs to check in from time to time, maybe just with eye contact, maybe with conversation or physical contact. Make sure to pay attention to these kids even if more demanding children are trying to draw your attention.
9. Fearful / cautious / slow-to-warm
- a) 15% of all children
  - b) Shy, timid, need more time and attention to warm up
  - c) If pushed to join in or adapt too quickly, they withdraw and may cry
  - d) Often become very attached to their caregivers, use caregiver as base for security when things get busy
  - e) Go slowly, little by little, step by step
  - f) Traits = slow to adapt, withdraws
  - g) Resists new things at first, but will enjoy them eventually. Just needs more time to warm up. Don't just send the kid to the sandbox. Go with her and draw her into the play. No pressure. Then stay for a while to make sure

the child has changed from cautious to enjoying the activity. Then back away gradually.

- h) Sequence for caregiver with these kids: be with them, take them to an activity, be with them there, step back but remain available, then move on.
- i) Environment needs to be stable to decrease the feeling of newness
- j) Assign a primary caregiver to have a special connection with someone (may withdraw more if no special person they can rely on)

10. Feisty/ fussy / active / difficult

- a) 10% of children (can feel like 50% because they're so intense in the group)
- b) Can be the most difficult and the most fun for caregivers
- c) Very intense, can be a handful
- d) Lives with zest and enthusiasm, lets everyone know when she is pleased or displeased
- e) Active, intense, distractible, sensitive, irregular, moody
- f) Sometimes things go really well, other times get out of hand quickly
- g) Techniques
  - (1) Use redirection: empathy, followed by redirecting the child's attention somewhere else (can become as intensely interested in something new as she was in the thing she's mad about)
  - (2) Fussy because sleeps, eats, and eliminates at different times every day. Even when seems tired, may not settle down to sleep right away. No set schedule, so it's the adult's job to be flexible and adapt.

F. Temperament is inherent. Children are born with this. It's not changeable, so don't try to change it. Respect that this is part of who they are.

G. First step is to recognize my own temperament, then recognize the temperaments of the children in my care. Put my own temperament on hold and meet the temperamental needs of the child.

1. Example: If I'm a feisty person, constantly on the go, rapidly changing activities, lots of projects going on at once, very loud, etc. How does a slow-to-warm child operate in this room? My job is to calm down to the level of the child's temperament. (Easy to say, hard to do.)
  2. Example: I'm slow-to-warm, take forever to set up something for the children, they only do it for two minutes and move on. I'm sitting down to eat, they're already done. It's my job to speed up to meet the children's needs.
- H. Often find that temperament is at least partly genetic. At least one parent is often similar to the child's temperament.
- I. These three options = 65% total. The other 35% would be a combination of these.
- J. So how do we deal with a mixture of temperaments in group care?
1. Recognizing children's temperaments, then providing individualized care (distractible children sit closest to you at circle, the fast eaters get lunch last, etc.)
  2. Can help to have distractible, feisty kids face the wall or the teacher, back to the wall
  3. Don't have feisty kid line up first. Will stir up trouble. Make him "boss of the books," and by the time he's done, the other kids will have lined up. He can join them and you'll all go outside together.
  4. Slow-to-warm kids often grab your skirt and want to be by the teacher. That doesn't help them learn independence or confidence. Get them interested in something, then step back a little. Be available, but not constantly present so they become dependent on you.
  5. Flexible, easy children fall through the cracks, become the "invisible" child because they don't make trouble. Teachers need to make a conscious effort to connect with them. Ask yourself, "Did I connect one-on-one with every child

today?" (Or for us directors, did we connect with every teacher in my care today? No one should feel invisible!)

- K. Know that certain things children do will push my buttons. Be aware of what those button-pushers are for me and deal with it. Young children don't know what they're doing, older children figure it out and push the buttons on purpose.
1. Recognize when I've bottled it up and I'm about to explode. Take a break and go leave the room for five minutes. It's okay to say, "I don't know how to handle this, this is too much. Give me five minutes for fresh air and a glass of water." Do not stay in a stressed situation when you know you may not be able to handle it properly. Get someone else to cover you in ratio for a few minutes.
  2. Emotions can be contagious. Bottling up my stress/emotion does not help the children in my care. They'll pick up on it.
  3. Meeting children's emotional needs, which helps develop their social skills, means I have to meet my own emotional needs too.