



The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

Facilitator Guide

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Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

Nemours Children’s Health is currently funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under a 5-year Cooperative Agreement (6NU38OT000304-05-00). Through this effort, we support statewide early care and education (ECE) organizations to integrate best practices and standards for healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding support, and reducing screen time in ECE systems and settings. The views expressed in written materials or publications, or by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services. Any mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood is a companion training to the Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS). The session content is suitable for early educators and providers regardless of past participation in PALS trainings. The session can be facilitated as a 1-hr session or two 30-minute sessions. Trainers who want to extend the training to a 2-hr session could facilitate some or all of slides 22, 25 and 26 as experiential and have participants engage in the suggested physical activities before discussion.

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<https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/trainers/pals/>

Training Overview and PD System Information

The following information is provided to assist trainers in entering the session in state professional development registry systems, creating session certificates and marketing training sessions. Reach out to the PALS team for assistance if your state system requires information not provided below.

Title: The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

Time: 60 minutes

Description: Young children start learning social emotional skills from birth. Like skills across developmental domains, social-emotional skills are learned best in safe spaces with nurturing adults. Active play allows children to practice developmental skills as they follow their interests. This session content explores four social emotional skills and identifies how active play can encourage skill development. Participants will be challenged to identify practices and activities they can bring to their programs.

Core Content Area(s): Child Growth & Development

Objectives:

1. Recognize the impact of active play on the brain
2. Recall four social-emotional (SE) skills developing in early childhood and discuss how active play supports growth of social emotional skills
3. Identify one strategy to incorporate into practice that supports social-emotional skill development

Session Handouts: Early Social-Emotional Development from Pathways. This brochure is available in English, Hindi, Italian Oriya, Persian, Spanish and Turkish. <https://pathways.org/print/social-emotional-brochure/>

Training Methods: Large and small group discussion, lecturette, video clip, brainstorming, optional pre/post assessment

Adjusting slides and adding state specific content

Slides with state specific content will strengthen the overall training. Trainers may choose to add slides with state licensure standards on active play, outdoor play, and discipline guidance.

In certain states the term social-emotional learning has become controversial, and use of the term has been discouraged. Trainers may choose to adjust the title of this workshop and slide content using terms such as 'key life skills,' 'social skills,' or terms preferred in their communities.

Consider including slides or information on available social-emotional training in your state. Many states have additional trainings available on guiding children's behaviors and nurturing social-emotional growth including workshops on the pyramid model, trainings from the Center for Advancing Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL), and Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) behavior coaching.

Incorporate any state materials for families on early childhood social-emotional development. Early Intervention Programs, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists and Child Care Health Consultant Networks are agencies that may have resources tailored to communities. Trainers may add state materials as additional resources for participants or replace the Pathways materials.

Images

Trainers are free to edit images to better represent the providers and families in the communities served. Microsoft stock images are available at no charge. Additional sites to access free images include:

- [Public health image library](#) from the CDC (not all are creative commons -- check under each image before downloading!)
- [Pexels](#)- Free stock photos, attribution required.
- [Snap-Ed Photo Gallery](#)
- [Nappy](#)- Beautiful photos of Black and Brown people, for free
- [Burst by Shopify](#)- Free stock photos.

Using the presentation and notes

- **Trainer Notes** are provided to assist trainers in facilitating the session. These notes are not designed to be read. They describe activities, provide web links to resources, offer discussion prompts and videos.
- **Suggested Speaker Notes** are provided as a summary of the key concepts to be conveyed to participants. Trainers are encouraged to bring their own experiences and expertise to the speaker notes and to use their own voice.

The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

Training Agenda

Content	Slides	Estimated Time
Welcome, Intro, Disclaimer, Objectives	1-3	3 minutes
Icebreaker-Stretching and Serotonin	4	4 minutes
Objective 1- The impact of physical activity on the brain	5-7	4 minutes
Video Clip- Physical Activity and the Brain	8	3 minutes
Objective 2- Recall four social-emotional skills of early childhood & describe how active play can support skill development	9-10	2 minutes
Emotional Literacy	11-13	4 minutes
Brain Break-Silly to Calm by Bari Koral	14	4 minutes
Friendship Skills	15-19	5 minutes
Problem Solving Skills	20-22	4 minutes
Behavior Regulation	23-27	10 minutes
Objective 3- Identify one strategy to incorporate into your practice that supports Social Emotional skill development	28	1 minute
Caregiver & Classroom Strategies	29-30	3 minutes
Family Engagement Resource	31	2 minutes
Withholding Active Play	32	3 minutes
Summary Activity-TAKE Back	33	6 minutes
Q&A, Closing	34-36	2 minutes
Total Full Content		60 minutes

Slide 1

Healthy Kids, Healthy Future

PALS

Physical Activity Learning Session


Add your agency logo here

The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

Add trainer contact information here

- Be considerate of differing opinions.
- Share your knowledge and experience.
- Minimize side conversations.
- Take care of your needs
- Celebrate accomplishments.

Trainer notes:

Welcome your participants to the session, introduce yourself and share housekeeping information such as restroom locations and request that cell phones to be silenced. Trainers are welcome to add a slide with group norms as desired.

Sample group norms you might include:

Slide 2

Disclaimer

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Suggested Speaker Notes:

Development of the Physical Activity Learning Session (PALS) materials including today's session was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this session do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Slide 3



Objectives

- 1 Recognize the impact of active play on the brain
- 2 Recall four social-emotional skills developing in early childhood and discuss how active play supports growth of skills
- 3 Identify one strategy to incorporate into practice that supports social-emotional skill development

Suggested Speaker Notes:

The session objectives are listed on the slide.

1. Recognize the impact of active play on the brain
2. Recall four social-emotional skills developing in early childhood and discuss how active play supports growth of skills
3. Identify one strategy to incorporate into your practice that

supports social-emotional skill development

Our session will use the terms physical activity and active play. Active play is the way that young children engage in physical activity.

Slide 4



Trainer Notes:

This opening activity is a movement activity. This goal of the activity is for participants to experience how a physical activity, stretching, can influence their emotional state or impact their physical feelings such as stress and tension.

Invite participants to stand or sit to join you -whatever is comfortable and accessible for them. Let them

know they can opt out of the activity but encourage them to participate in the introduction breathing activity and closing reflective piece.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Take a moment to think about where you are right now physically and emotionally. In your mind, name the physical sensations you notice in your body and the main emotion you are feeling at this moment.

- Take four deep breaths in and out through the nose. Count to four as you inhale and again as you exhale.
- Gently tilt your ear toward your shoulder to stretch your neck, hold the stretch as you reach your hand toward the floor, repeat on the other side
- Turn your head to the right as far as you can and hold for a full breath cycle. Repeat turning to the left.
- Lift your arms to make a T. Make several slow, large circles forward to stretch the shoulders.
- Now reverse the direction for a few circles.
- Extend your arms in front of your body and gently rotate your hands stretching your wrist, reverse the direction.
- Reach your arms above your head and interlace your fingers. Extend and stretch up high then lean slightly reaching to one side stretching the side body for a few minutes. Repeat stretching to the other side.
- Release your arms beside your body and take another few deep breaths.

Debrief the activity-

- What is the main emotion you are feeling after stretching? What physical sensations are you feeling?
- Did you notice any changes after stretching?

Ask all participants to introduce themselves and share one word on how they feel physically or their main emotion after stretching.

Photo PowerPoint Stock Images

Slide 5



Objective 1
Recognize the impact of active play on the brain

Suggested Speaker Notes:

There are distinct areas of the brain that govern our social-emotional skills. In early childhood, brain development is impacted by many factors including nurturing relationships, nutrition, sleep, the environment, and experiences. In our first objective we will look at how physical activity and active play strengthen the brain.

Slide 6

Physical Activity (PA) and the Brain

- PA increases our heart rate sending more oxygen and nutrients to the brain
- PA increases the levels of chemical messengers in our brain which play an important role in mood regulation, reducing stress, mental alertness and focus
- PA increases levels of Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor (BDNF)



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Physical activity causes several immediate impacts on the brain.

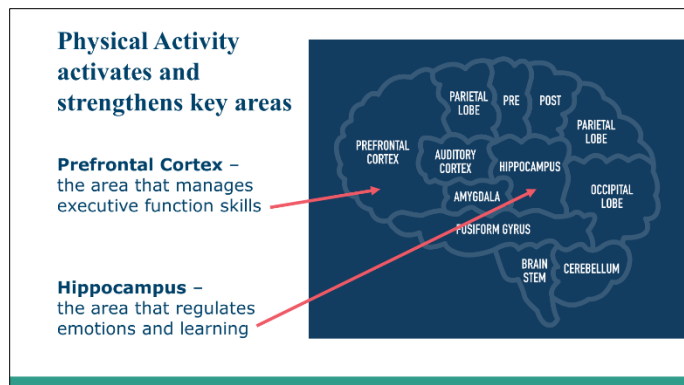
- When we are engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity, we breathe harder, and our hearts pump faster. This increases blood circulation (the movement of blood in the body). This increase in blood circulation leads to more oxygen and nutrient rich blood

reaching the brain. Our brains use oxygen to metabolize nutrients for energy and growth. This helps children (and adults) grow neurons and build neural pathways.

- Physical activity has been shown to increase levels of neurotransmitter such as such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Neurotransmitters are the body's chemical messengers that carry signals from one nerve cell to the next cell. One type of messengers is known as endorphins. These messengers carry signals that offset stress hormones such as cortisol. This type of messenger (endorphins) can help stabilize mood, make us feel good, and decrease depression and anxiety. In our opening activity you may have experienced the impact of increased serotonin levels.
- Physical activity increases levels of Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor (BDNF). BDNF helps our brains grow, create new cells, and build new connections.

Let's look a bit more at the brain and how being physically active impacts the brain.

Slide 7



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Researchers have identified that regular physical activity appears to boost the size of two areas of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, and the hippocampus.

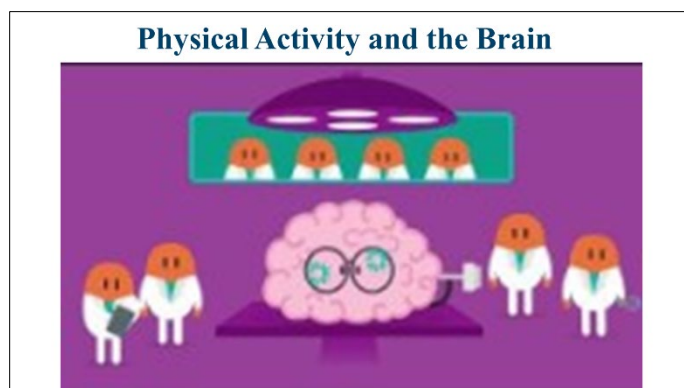
Prefrontal cortex-The prefrontal cortex is the front lobe of the brain. It regulates our thoughts, actions, and emotions through connections

with other areas of the brain. The prefrontal cortex plays an important role in executive functions such as impulse control, decision making and planning.

Hippocampus-The hippocampus is located deep in the brain. The hippocampus plays a role in short and long-term memory and learning as well as playing a role in regulating emotions. The hippocampus is larger in children who are more fit. A larger hippocampus is linked to better memory.

The neural circuits in the brain, including in these two areas, are important in the regulation of emotions. Emotional self-regulations is the ability to respond to the demands of an experience with healthy strategies.

Slide 8



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Prompt - As we watch this video, look for the way physical activity impacts the brain that interests you personally or in your work with young children. After the video I will ask a few volunteers to share what stood out for them.

Debrief- What did you hear in the video that interests you?

We can see that physical activity

has several positive impacts on the brain throughout the lifespan. Next, we will explore how the physical activity can have a positive role in the development of Social-Emotional skills in early childhood.

Trainer Notes:

Video link- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyCsDsBGfKw> (2023, 1:52) from ParticipACTION- Canadian non-profit_

Closed captions in English are available for this video by tapping on the CC icon in YouTube. Trainers are encouraged to preview the video and identify their response to the prompt.

Slide 9



Objective 2
Recall four social-emotional skills
developing in early childhood
&
discuss how active play can
support skill growth

Suggested Speaker Notes:

In this objective we review four social-emotional skills and examine how active play can support developing skills.

As early care and education providers, you play an important role in helping young children develop skills ranging from dressing and toileting to communication, early literacy, and social-emotional

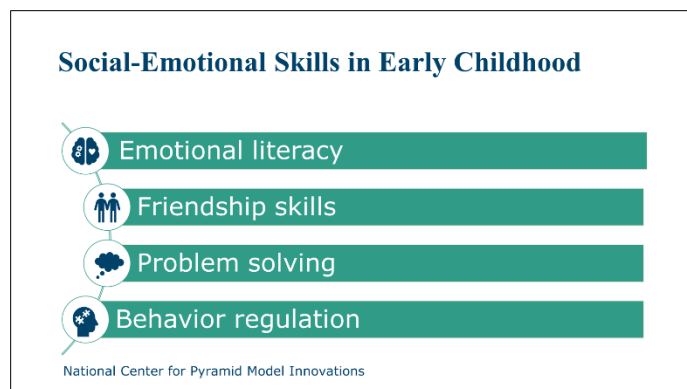
skills.

Play is serious business for young children as their learning happens when they are playing as they explore and interact with others. During play children practice skills, try out different possibilities, and build relationships. Active play gives children the opportunities to build gross motor skills, use balance skills, learn concepts and to practice social emotional skills.

Trainer notes:

A quote from Fred Rogers, a.k.a. Mr. Rogers, captures this concept nicely.
“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.”

Slide 10



Trainer Notes:

This slide introduces the 4 Social Emotional skills covered in the content.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Social emotional skills are the skills that help us understand who we are, what we are feeling and what to expect when interacting with others. These skills are used in our interactions with the world and

others. Social-Emotional skills are also known as social skills, soft skills, and key life skills. These are the skills that help children and adults interact with others and build connections.

The development of these skills begins at birth and continues throughout the lifespan. Social emotional skill growth in early childhood lays a foundation for future growth.

Babies start learning these skills as they interact with families and caregivers, observe caregivers' responses in situations.

Toddlers and Preschoolers continue skill growth as they interpret their experiences and begin to understand what others are feeling.

During the preschool years, children develop more emotions and begin to use language to communicate their feelings.

Children who don't become proficient at social emotional skills can display challenging behavior which can impact learning. Early care and education settings are rich environments to teach social emotional skills and for children to practice skills with their peers.

The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

(<https://challengingbehavior.org/>) categorizes the social emotional skills developing in early childhood into four categories.

Emotional literacy is the ability to identify, understand and express emotions in a safe and healthy way. Child care settings can support children by helping them develop a vocabulary to label feelings and learn to appropriately express feelings.

Friendship skills- Children with friendship skills demonstrate several behaviors including include organizing play (let's play with the ball-we can kick it back and forth), sharing, assisting others (helping a peer balance on a log) and complimenting others. Having friendship skills allows opportunities to practice other social skills including cooperation and resolving conflicts.

Problem solving skills include the steps to overcoming challenges such as recognizing the problem, thinking about solutions and past experiences with similar situations, and asking for help.

Behavior regulation is the use of executive function skills. In early children this involves impulse control, paying attention, and applying information learned (for example remembering directions).

Slide 11

Emotional Literacy Skills

1. Recognize emotions in self
2. Label emotions and understand what events led to this feeling
3. Express emotions
4. Regulate emotions
5. Recognize emotions of others



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Emotional literacy is the ability to identify, understand and express emotions in a safe and healthy way. Emotional literacy involves the skills listed on the slide.

- Recognizing emotions in self
- Labeling the emotions and understanding their cause
- Expressing emotions

- Regulating emotions
- And lastly recognizing emotions of others.

As children learn to recognize emotions of others they begin practicing empathy. Empathy can be seen in children as young as 3 years but may not be consistently displayed. We continue to refine our emotional literacy skills throughout our lives. Helping children develop a vocabulary to label feelings and learn to appropriately express feelings while in child care settings lays a strong foundation for emotional literacy.

Let's take a moment to consider our personal emotional literacy skills. The picture on the screen is of a traffic. What are your processes for handling emotions in this situation.

What emotions might you feel here? Maybe you feel anxiety at being late, frustration you were not notified of construction, worry or concern over those involved in a possible collision, anger and how other drivers are navigating in the stall, maybe you feel peaceful that you have a few moments to yourself to sit and relax.

How do you recognize these feelings and label them? Do you sense tension in your shoulders, notice an increased heart rate? Do you reflect on the events that are connected to your emotions and physical sensations?

What regulation strategies do you use?

Deep breathing (focusing on the sensations of breathing or an exercise such as box breathing)

Self-talk (I can't control this situation, but I will get through this)

Reflection and Perspective taking (That driver appears to be having a bad day, I should give them some space)

As caregivers the ways we talk with children and help them learn to label and process emotions builds emotional literacy.

Slide 12

Co-regulation

Co-regulation involves

- Warm responses
- Calming presence and voice
- Verbal acknowledgement of emotion
- Modeling of behaviors
- A structured safe setting (emotionally and physically)



Suggested Speaker Notes:

One important way to build emotional literacy in children is through co-regulation. Co-regulation is the process through which children develop the ability to soothe and manage emotions and sensations from the beginning of life through connection with nurturing and reliable caregivers. Caregivers who are attuned to the

child's cues and respond consistently to cues.

Co-regulation involves Warm responses, Calming presence and voice, Verbal acknowledgement of emotion, Modeling of behaviors, A structured safe environment (emotionally and physically)

In infants coregulation can look like the caregiver picking up a fussy child, cuddling and calming them with a soothing voice. The adult is providing calm responses to their distress and helping the child to regulate. Adults may talk with the child, oh your diaper is wet, that is uncomfortable and may be making you unhappy. Let's put a fresh diaper on and see if that helps you feel better.

In toddlers' co-regulation can involve changing activities-from active play to calmer activities and helping the child adjust to changes in the tempo. Caregivers provide cues such as changing tone of voice, providing transition cues or warning and encouraging children to identify emotions with words to label emotions.

In preschoolers' co-regulations continues with labeling emotions and learning to manage their emotions. Becoming proficient at emotional literacy skills requires practice and coaching and observing adult model the ability to self-regulate.

Coaching emotional skills can sound like a sports announcer. A caregiver can state what is observed, comment on how that might make the child feel, discuss ways to express the emotion and resolve the situation. Keep in mind that young children frequently mirror the emotions of caregivers. If caregivers are calm and even-keeled children become calm.

Slide 13

Promoting Emotional Literacy Skills

- Plan fun experiences
- Offer physical challenges
- Set up safe play spaces with boundaries and rules
- Read children's cues and provide support
- Model expression of emotions



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Active play, such as running in tag, is associated with many positive emotions such as laughing and smiling. Active play with peers offers children opportunities to experience emotions and practice expressing and managing those emotions.

Providers can promote emotional literacy skills through active play.

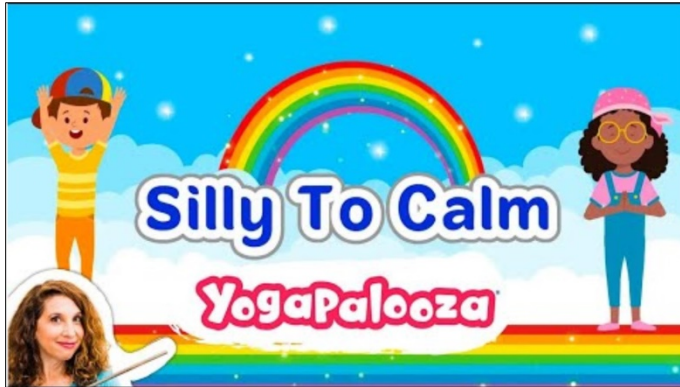
- Plan fun experiences--Children will want to engage in activities that are fun.
- Offer physical challenges--activities that offer a developmentally appropriate level of physical challenge afford opportunities to test emotions such as frustration, practice persistence leading to greater self-esteem when they are successful at tasks and skills. Develop new motor challenges through obstacle courses and introducing new active games.
- Set up safe play spaces with boundaries and rules--caregivers should set up safe play spaces and environments that are supportive and promote success.
- Read children's cues and provide support. Cues can be facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. Coaching and feedback from nurturing adults can help children develop skills. For example:
 - I see your arms crossed and an expression on your face. I cross my arms when I am angry.
 - What are you feeling?
 - What happened to make you feel this way?
 - Empathizing and helping the child understand the emotion and identify a safe and appropriate way to express the emotion.

Model expression of emotions

More information on Emotional Literacy Skills:

<https://www.easternct.edu/center-for-early-childhood-education/about-us/publications-documents/moving-with-feeling.pdf>

Slide 14



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29DQJWGwEnY> (3:16)

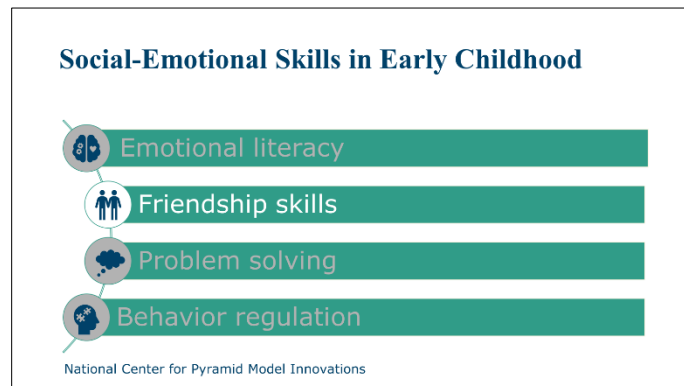
Suggested Speaker Notes:

This brain break is Silly to Calm by Bari Koral. Bari is singer songwriter and yoga instructor who has songs, videos, and albums for children. Please stand or remain sitting and participate as you are able.

Trainer Notes:

This is a physical activity break for your participants.

Slide 15



Suggested Speaker Notes:

The next Social Emotional Skill we will discuss is Friendship Skills

Children with friendship skills demonstrate several behaviors including include organizing play (let's play with the ball-we can kick it back and forth), sharing, assisting others (helping a peer balance on a log) and complimenting others.

Having friendship skills allows opportunities to practice other social skills including cooperation and resolving conflicts.

Slide 16

Friendship skills in early childhood

- Organizing play
- Sharing and taking turns
- Cooperating
- Negotiating
- Helping others



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Active play like all play gives children space to practice social skills. For play to continue in a fun way – each child must follow rules, control their impulses and be nice to the others in play so play can continue.

The slide lists 5 friendship skills that are emerging in early childhood.

- Organizing play

- Sharing and taking turns
- Cooperating
- Negotiating
- Helping others

to

Consider the two children playing in the foreground of this picture in the dirt. They appear to be digging and moving earth with trucks they are pushing.

What friendship skills can you imagine them practicing while playing?

Possible responses include:

- Coordinating and organizing play-discussing roles, rules, and sequence of play
- Negotiating to reach agreement
- Working toward a common goal
- Practicing Communication skills
- Resolving conflict

More information at You've Got to have Friends- Gail E. Joseph, Ph.D. & Phillip S. Strain, Ph.D. Center on Evidence Based Practices for Early Learning University of Colorado at Denver

Slide 17

Promoting friendship skills in structured activities

- Sharing space
- Interacting in close spaces
- Cooperating
- Helping others in noncompetitive play



Trainer Notes:

The PALS curriculum shared information on the Online Physical Education Network (OPEN) early childhood curriculum.

<https://openphysed.org/> This free resource promotes movement exploration for children 3-5.

This short video from OPEN of a trainer instructing caregivers on musical hula hoops may be useful to

view as you prepare for the micro training.

https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=7dcd546513c970a8&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS1076US1076&tbm=vid&sxsrf=ADLYWII5QqPCfDcmqQ5jhzv8Z_AiTVtoEA:1715722000786&q=musical+hula+hoops&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi2mI_Dio6GAxUcv4kEHRZPA94Q8ccDegQIFBAH&biw=1366&bih=607&dpr=1#

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Caregivers can incorporate non-competitive games and activities that involve peer interactions. These type of adult-led or structured activities and allow children to practice friendship skills.

One active game that promotes friendship skills is musical hula hoops, a non-elimination game where children play and move together.

Supplies needed for this game are hula hoops and music.

The game can be played indoors or outdoors.

Hula hoops are placed on the ground. If supplies support this, start with one hoop per child. If you have more children than hula hoops, this game can also be started without a hoop for each child. Pair children or form groups of 3. Children are instructed to listen to the music and move around the area. When the music stops, the children quickly move to stand inside a hula hoop. You can instruct them to move in different ways such as on tip toes, hopping like a bunny, or walking like a crab. The adult can remove one hula hoop periodically. As the number of hoops decrease children can stand with one foot in the hoop. Since this is not competitive, it prompts children to work together to achieve the task of getting in a hoop when the music stops.

Can you imagine other ways that musical hoops promotes friendship skills?

Slide 18

Active Play Equipment to build Friendship Skills

- Balls, baskets & other targets
- Wagons or sleds
- Rocking toys
- Loose parts for building & creating
- Hula hoops



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Another strategy caregivers can use to promote practice of friendship skills during active play is to provide equipment designed for cooperative play.

Cooperative play is where children engage in activities together working towards a common goal. This type of play typically develops between the ages of 3 and 6.

The equipment listed supports active cooperative play. Loose parts such as sticks and small logs support creative play and allow children to be creative, encourage cooperation and communication. Portable play equipment that is easily accessible allows children to engage in play without a caregiver leading or directly play. Caregivers may pair children to encourage cooperative play and join in play on the children's terms role modeling friendship skills. What equipment and items are popular for cooperative play in your program?

Slide 19

Caregiver Strategies to Support Friendship Skills

- Pair children
- Lead structured noncompetitive games and activities
- Provide equipment that supports collaborative play
- Praise the positive
- Schedule free play



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Let's recap some of the strategies that support Friendship skills in active play.

Pairing children encourages them to interact and work together.

Noncompetitive games encourage children to work together for success.

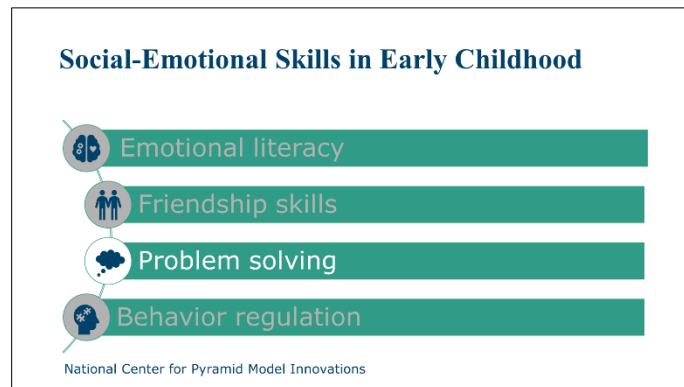
Certain **equipment** can inspire

collaborative play.

Praise or acknowledge from caregivers when children demonstrate friendship skills helps children recognize and understand the skill. "I see how you and Amy negotiated the space on the slide. That is using your friendship skills!"

Schedule free play-Free play encourages children to follow their interests and practice skills in that context.

Slide 20



Suggested Speaker Notes:

The third social emotional skill we will discuss in relation to active play is problem solving skills.

Slide 21

Problem Solving Skills

- Identify the problem
- Think of solutions
- Evaluate solutions for safety, fairness, and the feelings of others
- Ask for help

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Problem solving skills include the steps to overcoming challenges such as recognizing the problem, thinking about solutions, evaluating possible solutions based on past experiences, and asking for help.

Trainer notes:

Encourage a large group discussion using the prompt “**What can the**

caregiver in this image of a playground of wheeled toys do to assist children with problem solving in this situation?”

Notice that several children are using different types of wheeled toys in a small space.

Consider providing one or two examples as a starting point.

- Providing clear boundaries of play using cones
- Encouraging children to move, in this case ride, in a similar direction-for example clockwise in the boundaries to reduce blocks in the traffic flow.
- Verbally describe problems to help children identify problem solving steps.

Uh oh looks like we have a problem here.

How can we solve this problem?

Remind children of boundaries/rules.

Slide 22



Promoting Problem Solving Skills with Parachute Play

- Identify the problem
- Think of solutions
- Evaluate solutions for safety, fairness, and the feelings of others
- Ask for help

Trainer Notes:

Read the directions for **one** of the games listed below. Ask participants to brainstorm how the game promotes problem solving skills listed.

If you have access to a parachute or large sheet, consider conducting one of the games as a physical activity break. Debrief the activity encouraging participants to reflect

on how the game supports problem solving skills.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Parachute play encourages children to work together to accomplish a task. Many group games with a parachute are cooperative and are non-competitive. Parachute play is great for gaining strength and skills in the arms, shoulders, and hands. Large piece of fabric such as a tablecloth or sheet can be used for parachute play. Many vendors have parachutes around \$30 that have handles for little hands. Games with parachutes are great for friendship skills and problem solving.

The Wave

Have children hold one or two handles and move their arms up and down. Like water in the ocean, the parachute will move in waves. Shake the parachute slowly for small waves and quickly for giant ones. This game can be done sitting on the floor or in chairs as well as standing.

Changing Spots

Have the children spread themselves evenly around the parachute and each take hold of a handle. As the kids lift the parachute high above them, call out a detail that some players will have in common. Whichever players share that detail must run and trade places with each other before the parachute falls.

Examples could include everyone wearing a blue shirt, everyone whose name starts with the letter C, or calling two children's names.

Popcorn

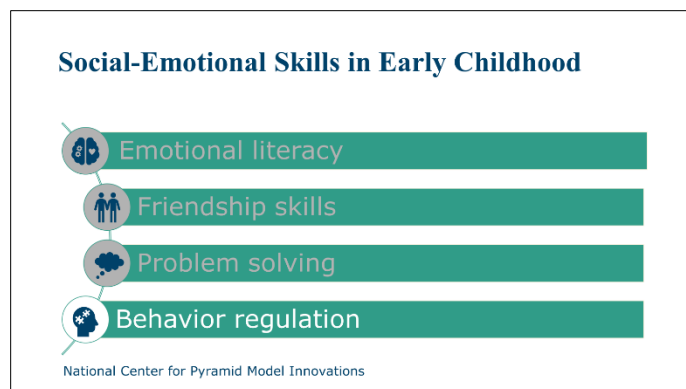
Lay the parachute on the ground and place light objects such as balls or stuffies in the center. Have the children pick up one or two handles and on the count of three, begin shaking the parachute up and down. The toys will bounce up like popping popcorn! Can the kids work together to keep the toys from bouncing off the parachute?

Merry Go Round

Have the children hold a handle with their right hands so they're all facing in one direction. Start by having them walk in that direction and on cue (could be your voice or a pause in music if you're playing some), have them take the handle in their left hand and walk in the opposite direction. Can they shuffle in a circle with the parachute? Slide step?

More parachute games can be found at <https://activeforlife.com/parachute-games-for-kids/>.

Slide 23



Suggested Speaker Notes:

The final Social-Emotional skill we will discuss today is behavior regulation. Behavior regulation develops gradually beginning in infancy and involves using other social emotional skills including emotional literacy and problem solving. Co-regulation is an important strategy to help young children develop behavior

regulation.

Challenging behavior is a common training request and concern among providers. As professionals it is important to recognize that challenging behavior has many causes and one of our roles is to reflect and try to understand each child individually and consider possible causes such as change in routines, transitions, sensory overload, physical discomfort, or unmet needs. Equipping children with social-emotional skills, including behavior regulation, can reduce the incidence of challenging behavior as it equips children with tools.

Slide 24

Behavior Regulation

- Develops rapidly between the ages of 3 and 7 years
- Experiences influence development
- Active play activates the prefrontal cortex-the same area of the brain responsible for behavior regulation
- Research show positive links between the amounts of **MVPA** experienced and behavior regulation



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Behavior regulation involves the use of executive function skills. In early children this involves impulse control, paying attention, and applying information learned (for example remembering directions). In simple terms, behavior regulation is the ability to manage emotions and behaviors to meet the situations and settings. Behavior

regulation skills grow with experiences.

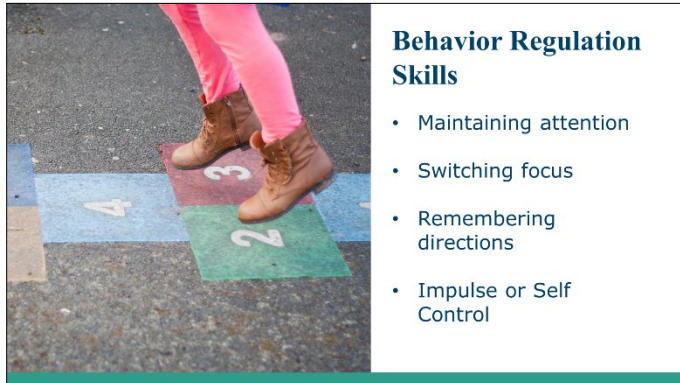
Children develop self-regulation through nurturing, responsive relationships and watching the adults around them model self-regulation.

Having opportunities to practice regulation is important.

The video we watched earlier in our session described out active, energetic play activates the part of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex; this is the same area of the brain responsible for behavior regulation.

Trainer Notes: MVPA is Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity which refers to the intensity level of physical activity. MVPA is the combination of moderate activity, such as a brisk walk, and vigorous activity, such as running MVPA is a typical pattern in early childhood active play. We might see a child might run to a play structure and climb or ride a tricycle or strider bike fast then slow. MVPA is positively linked with behavior regulation skills.

Slide 25



Trainer Notes:

Hopscotch grids can be made outdoors with chalk or paint as shown on the image or indoors with painters' tape or carpet squares. Trainers will talk through the examples of how hopscotch supports the development of behavior regulation skills and on the following slide will challenge participants to independently

consider examples from a different active game.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

The ability to regulate one's behavior requires using several skills including the four listed on our slide: maintaining attention, switching focus, remembering directions and self-control.

Let's consider the game of Hopscotch and how this game can give children opportunities to practice the four skills.

You recognize the traditional hopscotch grid on the slide with numbered squares. Let's review simple rules of hopscotch for young children.

Read the directions for hopscotch

Each player tosses a small object such as a bean bag inside one of the squares on the hopscotch grid. Next the player hops from square to square, hopping over the square where the bean bag rests using one foot in single squares and both feet in side-by-side squares. At the end of the grid the player turns and hops back, stopping to pick up the bean bag on the return. Rules can become more complex as children get older. Hopscotch could be simplified further by omitting the tossing and having children hop through the pattern.

The goals of hopscotch are to hop without losing balance, to jump in the squares, not on the lines, and to pick up an object while balancing. We can see the change to practice fundamental movement skills of tossing, hopping balancing and turning.

How does hopscotch gives children an opportunity to practice the behavior regulation skills listed on the slide?

Maintaining attention- Child maintains awareness of the square where the bean bag lies in order to hop over it as well as the pattern for jumping one foot, both feet. What else is the child attending to?

Switching focus- Hopscotch requires the child to stop movement and change direction at the end of the grid and to pause hopping to bend over and pick up the bean bag. These activities are a change in focus. What other examples of switching focus are there in hopscotch?

Slide 25 continued

Remembering directions- While playing hopscotch children follow simple rules (directions) and take turns. Caregivers can advance rules as children develop skills and are able to remember more rules.

Impulse or self-control- Children are practicing physical control of their bodies in hopscotch as they become aware of their movements and understand where their body is in space (proprioception). There may be chances for emotional control as they experience frustration at losing balance or excitement at their success.

Slide 26

Behavior Regulation Skills

- Maintaining attention
- Switching focus
- Remembering directions
- Impulse Control

A photograph of two children, a girl and a boy, standing in a room. The girl is on the left, wearing a pink shirt and blue jeans, holding a green streamer. The boy is on the right, wearing a green shirt and dark pants, holding a red streamer. They are both smiling and appear to be in the middle of a dance or play activity.

Trainer Notes:

Read the directions for this variation of freeze dance with streamers and challenge participants to describe how this active game can allow children an opportunity to practice the skills on the slide.

Suggested facilitation techniques include a large group discussion or pair and share activity.

Facilitate a large group discussion encouraging participants to think about the skills on the slide and this active game allows children to practice the skill.

or

Ask participants to gather in groups of 2 or 3 and identify an example of how freeze dance supports two of the skills making up behavior regulation.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

In freeze dance, everyone dances as the music plays and waves their scarf or streamer in the air. Before children start moving, they should be given directions on the boundaries of the dance or play area and expectations on keeping everyone safe 'pay attention to where you are moving and personal spaces. When the music stops, children must freeze and hold the position until the music begins again. If a player does not freeze, they draw three big circles in the air with their scarf when the music starts before they begin dancing. In freeze dance the caregiver can change the way children move each time the music starts.

What behavior regulation skills are children experiencing with freeze dance?

Maintaining attention:

Staying attuned to the music starting and stopping

Maintaining awareness of where their body is in space (proprioception) and the movement of others to avoid collisions

Holding the 'freeze' position

Switching focus

Changing from movement to stillness

Changing the type of movement (sliding, hopping, tip toes, heels, etc.

Remembering directions:

Freeze dance 'rules' are simple, but children must also remember the safety rules.

Impulse Control:

Holding still when there is no music

Slide 27

What are some active games or movement activities that provide opportunities to practice behavior regulation skills?

Maintaining Attention
Switching focus
Remembering Directions
Impulse Control

"Simon Says" Red light, Green light Yoga & Balance Poses

Trainer Notes:

This is a brainstorming activity asking participants to think of games they use with children that support the behavior regulation skills. Three games are listed on the slide. Speaker notes have one example of how each game supports one behavior regulation skill. Encourage participants to consider games they do or have done with children.

Note that there are several ways to play no-elimination Simon Says including dividing the children into two or more groups. When a child is tricked, instead of falling out of the game they simply move to the other group. Active games should allow all children to play as they are interested.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Simon Says encourages children to maintain attention to the caller's instructions and listen for 'Simon Says.' Children practice impulse control to listen and think before moving.

*Note that there are several ways to play no-elimination Simon Says including dividing the children into two or more groups. When a child is tricked, instead of falling out of the game they simply move to the other group. Active games should allow all children to play as long they are interested.

During games of **Red Light, Green Light**, children practice switching focus from movement to stillness and maintain attention on the caller's instructions.

Yoga & Balance Poses encourage children to maintain attention on their position and breathing.

Slide 28

Objective 3

Identify one strategy to incorporate into your practice that supports Social-Emotional skill development

Suggested Speaker Notes:

The final objective of the training challenges you to identify a something you will bring back to your program. This might be active games we have discussed that you will share with children, changes to your schedule to allow more opportunities for active free play or caregiver practices.

Slide 29

Caregiver Strategies to Nurture Skills

- Practice co-regulation
- Role model the use of social-emotional skills
- Teach, coach, and guide as children are learning skills
- Provide experiences to practice skills

Active play offers opportunities for social interactions where children practice social-emotional skills by taking turns, playing with others, and following instructions

Suggested Speaker Notes:

The content today has presented several strategies providers can use to nurture the development of social-emotional skills in young children. Families and caregivers influence social emotional skill development in children by role modeling use of skills, providing experiences for children to practice skills, and coaching as children are

learning skills.

While leading structured active play and observing free play caregivers can guide children through situations where they use skills. During these interactions acknowledge and reinforce positive behaviors, teach expectations and behaviors in different settings, and discuss replacement behaviors when challenging behaviors are presented.

Slide 30

Classroom Strategies

- Use stories to talk about different social situations and how each person might be feeling Ask "What would you do?" to help develop problem solving skills.
- Encourage kids to try new things and learn how much they are capable of.
- Play games to teach kids how to take turns, share, and negotiate.

Adapted from Early Social-Emotional Development Pathways.org



Suggested Speaker Notes:

Early care environments and classroom are rich places for social-emotional learning. Three strategies are listed on the screen.

What strategies do you use with children?

Slide 31



Trainer Notes:

Distribute the handout in the Trainer Materials from on social emotional skills. The brochure from Pathways is available in English, Hindi, Italian Oriya, Persian, Spanish and Turkish. <https://pathways.org/print/social-emotional-brochure/>

Trainers are encouraged to incorporate any state materials for

families on early childhood social-emotional development. Early Intervention Programs, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists and Child Care Health Consultant Networks are agencies that may have resources tailored to communities. Trainers may add state materials as additional resources for participants or replace the Pathways materials.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

Developmental milestones give caregivers and families a general understanding of when children will learn certain skills. While all children develop at their own pace, understanding the milestones can help caring adults be on the watch for new skills and aware of any skills they are missing. The brochure distributed shares a continuum of social emotional skill development for children birth to 5 years old. Take a few moments to look at the age group you work with. How might you share this resource with families?

Slide 32

Taking away active play as a form of discipline

"Active play should never be withheld from children who misbehave (e.g., child is kept indoors to help another caregiver/teacher while the rest of the children go outside). However, children with out-of-control behavior may need 5 minutes or fewer to calm themselves or settle down before resuming cooperative play or activities."

Caring for our Children 4th edition.



Trainer Notes:

The picture on the slide is intentionally selected to depict a Black child as Black children, especially Black boys, are more likely to suffer this form of discipline which removes them from classroom and activities than their peers. Black preschoolers are 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more suspensions relative to White

preschoolers. This is particularly concerning as Black children make up only 19% of preschool enrollment but comprise 47% of preschoolers suspended one or more times. Similarly, boys are three times as likely as girls to be suspended one or more times. When a child is removed from the classroom sent to the director's office for behavior challenges, this is in-school/in-program suspension. Child care programs may not use the same language (expulsion or 'suspension) as is seen in K-12 settings, but the practice of being sent to the director's office has the same impact of removing a child from the learning environment, learning experiences and opportunities to be physically active.

*Note that many states have additional trainings available on guiding children's behaviors and nurturing social-emotional growth including workshops on the pyramid model, trainings from the Center for Advancing Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL), and Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) behavior coaching.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

The statement on the screen is taken from Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs

"Active play should never be withheld from children who misbehave (e.g., child is kept indoors to help another caregiver/teacher while the rest of the children go outside). However, children with out-of-control behavior may need 5 minutes or fewer to calm themselves or settle down before resuming cooperative play or activities."

Throughout today's training we have discussed the many ways that active play can promote the social emotional skills children need, skills that equip a child with the ability to communicate and express feelings, make friends, and practice behavior regulation. These social emotional skills are essential to reducing challenging behaviors. Our content today has also shared how active play releases hormones (endorphins) that counter the effects of stress hormones such as cortisol. Physical activity benefits children and adults by regulating mood, reducing stress, and improving mental alertness and focus.

Taking away active play can impair relationships between children and caregivers and can impact a child's sense of self-worth.

Supporting resources:

- Dombro, A., Jablon, J., Johnsen, S., & Children, Y. (2016). *Coaching with powerful interactions : a guide for partnering with early childhood teachers*. National Association for The Education of Young Children.
- California Department of Education. (2022). *BEST PRACTICES FOR PLANNING CURRICULUM FOR YOUNG CHILDREN Creating Equitable Early Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes for Young Boys of Color*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/boysofcolor.pdf>
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- U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Right. (2016). *2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection: A first look KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS ON EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY GAPS IN OUR NATION'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS U.S. Department of Education | Office for Civil Rights | Issued: June 7, 2016 | Revised: October 28, 2016 NEW RELEASE FOR 2016 2*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>

Slide 33

TAKE Back Activity

Talking Point What is something from this session you will share?

AHA moment What new information or ideas did you hear?

Keeper List a new activity you want to keep and try with children, families or co-workers?

Energy What energizes or excites you about social-emotional learning and active play?

Trainer Notes:

TAKE Back is the summary activity for the session.

This activity guides participants to consider the content that stood out and resonated for them and to identify the concepts, activities, and materials they will incorporate into their practices.

A participant handout for the activity is included in the Facilitator

Guide materials. This activity can also be done with an index card or sticky note.

The activity can be facilitated as a small group activity, a pair and share, or a large group discussion. If you are facilitating the session virtually, break out rooms can be effective.

Suggested Speaker Notes:

In just a moment I will ask you to group in twos or three to identify a response for each of the prompts on the screen.

T- Talking Point- what is something from this session you will share with peers or the families of children in your care?

A- AHA Moment- What new information or ideas did you hear today?

K-List a new activity or resource you want to keep and try with children?

E- What energizes or excites you about social-emotional learning and active play?

After 3 minutes we will regroup to share responses.

Trainer Notes:

TACK BACK is the summary activity for the session.

This activity guides participants to consider the content that stood out and resonated for them and to identify the concepts, activities, and materials they will incorporate into their practices.

A participant handout for the activity is included in the Facilitator Guide materials.

This activity can also be done with an index card or sticky note.

Slide 34

Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning...They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play.

Fred Rogers



Trainer notes:

Share this quote statement from Mr. Rogers on play.

Slide 34

Questions and Comments



Trainer Notes:

Invite your participants to raise any remaining questions or share other comments on physical activity and social emotional learning. Share dates and information on any upcoming PALS sessions or micro trainings.

Slide 35

Thank you for joining today's training!



Insert Trainer
Contact information



Trainer Notes:

Thank your participants for their engagement during the training.

Suggested Participant Handouts

Social-Emotional Development Is Important for:

- Understanding thoughts and feelings to help communicate and act appropriately
- Developing healthy relationships with friends and family



Social-Emotional Skills Impact Daily Life

Social-emotional skills allow us to express ourselves appropriately in different environments and with different people. Developing these skills helps boost your child's confidence and can help them in school, work, and life.

- Succeed in school
- Make friends and maintain friendships
- Resolve conflicts
- Manage stress and anxiety
- Learn social norms
- Make appropriate decisions
- Resist negative social pressure
- Learn our strengths and weaknesses
- Gain awareness of what others are feeling

Where To Go for Help

Recognizing an issue early is always best. Children may show different warning signs for social-emotional issues.

If you have a concern talk to your healthcare provider. There are many specialists who may help including:

- Child psychologist
- Social worker
- Neuropsychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Occupational therapist
- Speech-language pathologist
- Developmental and behavioral pediatrician



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Social-Emotional Development By Age



FIRST YEAR

0-3 Months	4-6 Months	7-9 Months	10-12 Months
○ Begins to smile in response to their caregivers, also called a social smile ○ Develops more facial and body expressions ○ Can briefly calm themselves, e.g. sucking on thumb ○ Recognizes they are having fun and may cry when playing stops ○ Makes eye contact and looks at people while interacting	○ Is usually happy when surrounded by cheerful caregivers ○ Responds to and copies some movements and facial expressions ○ Develops an awareness of their surroundings and expresses a desire to engage, e.g. banging objects or toys	○ May show anxiety around strangers ○ Plays social games, e.g. peek-a-boo ○ Learns the meaning of words when they're used consistently ○ Enjoys looking at self in a mirror ○ Becomes more "clingy" when leaving caregiver, e.g. reaches for caregiver when being held by someone else	○ Attempts to display independence, e.g. crawling for exploration or refusing food ○ May show fear around unfamiliar people and objects ○ Tries to get attention by repeating sounds and gestures ○ Enjoys imitating people in play



1-2 Years

1-2 Years	2-3 Years	3-4 Years	4-5 Years
○ Shows defiant behavior to establish independence, e.g. having tantrums ○ Does not understand what others think or feel and believes everyone thinks as he does, e.g. gets upset when no longer the center of attention ○ Enjoys being around other children, but not yet able to share easily ○ Can play independently for brief periods of time	○ Copies others in more complex tasks, e.g. cleaning, cooking, self-care ○ Shows affection towards friends ○ Shows an increasing variety of emotions ○ Upset when there are major changes in routine ○ Seems concerned about personal needs and may even act "selfishly"	○ Starts cooperating more with others during play, e.g. sharing toys ○ Can sometimes work out conflicts with other children, e.g. taking turns in small groups ○ Uses words to communicate needs instead of screaming, grabbing, or whining ○ Becomes more independent in daily activities, e.g. may choose own clothes to wear	○ Has more developed friendships and maybe even a "best friend" ○ More cooperative with rules ○ Understands and is sensitive to others' feelings ○ Understands the difference between real life and make believe ○ Has changes in attitude, e.g. is demanding at times and cooperative at times

Social-Emotional Development Tips

- ▶ Model the emotions and behavior you want your child to show
- ▶ Use stories to talk about different social situations and how each person might be feeling
- ▶ Be responsive to your child's emotions and behaviors. Respond quickly to basic needs to develop trust, e.g. feeding, playing, soothing, and comforting them
- ▶ Ask "What would you do?" to help develop problem solving skills
- ▶ Encourage kids to try new things and learn how much they are capable of
- ▶ Help your child work through negative emotions by asking simple questions, offering choices and avoiding power struggles, e.g. "Would you like to brush your teeth or take a bath first?"
- ▶ Play games to teach kids how to take turns, win and lose, share, and negotiate
- ▶ When using screens after 18 months (not recommended earlier), sit with your child and make it a social activity, e.g. asking them questions or playing
- ▶ Point out and talk about your child's emotions and how to cope



Remember to correct your child's age for prematurity.

Please visit www.Pathways.org to find more FREE resources on child development.

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TAKE Back Activity

Thinking about the training content and discussions, identify and note a response for each rectangle below.

Talking Point

What is something from this session you will share with others?

AHA moment

What new information or ideas did you hear?

Keeper

List an activity you want to keep and use with children?

Energy

What energizes you about social-emotional learning and active play?

Optional Sample Pre/Post Assessment Questions

Optional Sample Pre/Post Assessment Questions

Assessment questions are provided for trainers in states with Professional Development systems that require pre/post assessments to award training credits. Use of the questions is not required.

1. Physical activity releases chemical messengers, known as neurotransmitters, which offset stress hormones. This type of messenger can help stabilize mood and decrease depression and anxiety.

True or False

2. Co-regulation occurs when caregivers who are attuned to a child's cues and respond consistently to cues. Co-regulation involves
 - a. Warm Responses
 - b. Calming presence and voice
 - c. Verbal acknowledgement of emotions
 - d. Modeling of behaviors
 - e. All of the above**
3. _____ increases our heart rate sending more oxygen and nutrients to the brain.
 - a. Sleep
 - b. Physical activity**
 - c. Sedentary activities
 - d. Eating
4. Social-emotional skills begin to develop at birth and help us interact with others and build connections. Social-emotional skills that begin to develop in early childhood include:
 - a. Emotional Literacy
 - b. Friendship Skills
 - c. Problem Solving
 - d. Behavior Regulation
 - e. All of the above**
5. Active play with other children provides opportunities to practice social-emotional skills. Some provider roles in active play includes all of the following **EXCEPT**
 - a. Providing equipment and experiences that support active play
 - b. Excluding children from play as a form of discipline**
 - c. Teaching, coaching and guiding children as they are learning
 - d. Role modeling use of social-emotional skills

6. Research shows positive links between the amounts of moderate to vigorous physical activity children experience and behavior regulation.

True or False

7. Collaborative games and activities that provide opportunities to practice social-emotional skills include:

- a. Red Light, Green Light
- b. Simon Says
- c. Musical Hula Hoops
- d. Freeze Dancing
- e. Parachute Play
- f. All of the above**

8. Emotional Literacy involves recognizing emotions in self, _____ emotions, expressing emotions, regulating emotions, and recognizing emotions in others.

- a. Labelling or naming**
- b. Suppressing
- c. Blaming others for emotions

9. Social-emotional development begins at birth and continues throughout the lifespan.

- a. True**
- b. False

10. List one activity or practice from this session you will use in your work with children.

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<https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/trainers/pals/>



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