

## **Social Emotional Development**

As children are growing up and discovering the people, places and objects in their environment, they are learning how they feel in different situations. Parents play a big role in supporting their child's social-emotional development because they can guide them in recognizing the different emotions that arise. Depending on the child's age, the support might look a little different, however being consistent and by their side is necessary for a lifetime. The following are strategies you may use at home:

### Supporting social-emotional learning for birth to two

During this stage, it is important to build a strong and loving bond by meeting your babies needs, nurturing them and comforting them when upset. The first step for healthy social-emotional development is for the child to feel safe and loved by the adult caring for them. There are other things you may try such as:

#### Talk, talk and talk!

Even though your baby or young toddler might not fully understand what you mean or cannot respond because they have not developed their language skills, it is still important to talk about their feelings. Describe the emotions and feelings as they happen and as your child grows they will understand it. In addition to talking, you may have pictures of the emotions and if your child is smiling you may show a happy face and say: Look, you are feeling happy.

#### Model behavior

Children imitate adult actions they repeatedly observe, so make sure if you are frustrated you can self-regulate appropriately. A good way to deal with frustration is to take deep breaths, for example if you are with your child at the table and knock a glass instead of yelling you can say oh no I knocked over the glass, I am going to take a few deep breaths and clean it up.

#### Read stories about emotions

There are many age-appropriate children's books that talk about emotions. For this age range, choose picture books and as you pass the page, point to the emotion and say it. For example, the kid looks upset, he is crying.

#### Provide soothing techniques

Sometimes emotions can feel overwhelming, especially for a young child who does not yet understand how to react to a situation. If this happens, it is important we are there to provide space if needed but comfort when they are ready. At this age, items such as stuffed animals, pacifiers, singing a song or just laying down can help your child calm down and be sure to reassure them you are there.

An important component to helping your children with their social development is making sure you take care of yourself. Life can be stressful and overwhelming, and being a parent is hard work. Find things that help you express your emotions whether its joy, stress or sadness. Some ideas are talking with other parents, family members, a counselor, exercising, or taking a day to yourself. If

you have any questions or would like more ideas, you may contact me at my office number: 402-821-2151 or my email: [ilindalchavarria2@unl.edu](mailto:ilindalchavarria2@unl.edu). I serve Saline, Gage, Jefferson and the Southeast area.