

# Supporting Social and Emotional Development

– WHAT ALL EARLY INTERVENTION PROVIDERS CAN DO –

Strategies	Examples	Why is it important?
<b>Boost the parents' confidence.</b>	Specific praise such as, "I love how you grabbed Mario's attention by bringing the snack near your face."	This is a hard time for many parents. Parents may feel responsible for their child's developmental delay. Building their confidence empowers them to feel competent. When someone feels good, it makes them happy. This helps promote positive parent-child interactions.
<b>Support the child's self-esteem.</b>	Start with easy tasks a child can perform well before challenging them. Make each success a party by smiling and clapping.	Children tend to avoid difficult tasks. After all, nobody likes failing. Boosting a child's self-esteem gives him/her confidence to explore and try new things.
<b>You can never give too much information.</b>	"When you ask Enrique a question and pause, you are giving him an opportunity to process the information and respond."	Explain what you are doing and why you are doing it. This helps parents understand the reasoning behind the intervention strategies you suggest or model." Give parents plenty of opportunities to ask questions.
<b>Focus on increasing positive parent- child interactions.</b>	Playful interactions such as peek-a-boo, bear hugs, singing songs, being silly throughout the day (placing an item in your head and saying "ach-oo" when it falls).	Many children may resist demands placed on them. A positive parent-child interaction removes the feeling of a demand and makes the interaction playful and fun. It enhances the bond between the caregiver and child.
<b>Read cues and intervene before a child is in his/ her red zone.</b>	Ask parents to reflect on their child's cues with a question like, "What are some signs that she is getting overwhelmed?"	There are four stress responses a child may experience: Green zone, red zone, blue zone, or combo zone. Click <a href="#">here</a> to read the checklist that identifies different behaviors associated with each zone. Positive emotions are associated with the green zone and negative emotions are associated with the other stress responses. Children are more likely to come back and stay in the green zone when parents are attuned to their moods and feelings. Becoming a detective for your child's stress cues can be a great tool to improve attunement.
<b>Model the behaviors you wish to see.</b>	Model empathy by being responsive to baby brother crying and labeling emotions for your child. For example, "Baby is sad because he is hungry. I am going to feed him to make him happy."	We can help parents learn to model behaviors they want to see in their children as they grow into adults. Children learn how to manage big feelings in large part by watching their adults manage big feelings.
<b>Explain the importance of comfort.</b>	We can help parents with this by encouraging comfort. We can say things like, "Oh look how he calms and molds to you when you hold him. That hug really helped him feel calm."	Comfort is a big part of secure attachment. So often parents get mixed messages about comfort from society – sometimes it seems as if comfort is the same as creating a weak child. We can bust that myth by sharing the information we know about the role of comfort in early brain development.
<b>Provide structure and routine.</b>	We can talk with parents about routine in terms of a child's need for predictability. We can ask questions like, "How does your child know when the next thing is going to happen?"	Routines are the safe walls around a child's day. There is no RIGHT kind of routine but whatever it is, the more predictable for the child, the better. Routines that are repetitive for a child help them make sense of the world. They will always have another chance to practice the things they struggle with most.



Strategies	Examples	Why is it important?
Use <a href="#">positive behavior supports</a> .	Use positive affirmations, redirection, modeling, provide a safe place to calm down, pick and choose battles, set limits, give choices, and/or celebrate successes throughout the day.	A positive and proactive approach to <a href="#">supporting behaviors</a> helps reduce parental stress and increase positive behaviors in children as they aim to please their parents. These strategies decrease reactivity and should be individualized for each child and situation.
Label emotions.	Labeling feelings is just as important as labeling items in a book or around the house.	Language is a major learning tool for children and during the young toddler and preschool years, we learn and use language as a way of making sense of the world. Putting words to feelings helps children learn that feelings are generally transient and aren't a permanent state of being. This is something we should be regularly talking about with our parents.
Increase parent responsiveness.	Providing gentle touch and closeness, observing and responding to child's non-verbal cues, and following the child's lead are some examples.	Parent responsiveness nurtures a safe, secure attachment allowing a child to explore and thrive in their environment as the child becomes more resilient and independent. Wonder with the parents about what their child may be feeling or thinking so they can respond in an intentional and positive way.

Developed by Leah Davidson, Infant & Toddler Connection of Arlington and Lisa Terry, Partnership for People with Disabilities at VCU.

