


Growing Together: How Play Boosts Baby's Social-Emotional Development


Play is a wonderful way for your baby to explore their emotions and build meaningful relationships. Your support is key to helping them develop healthy social-emotional skills. The next time you're playing with your little one, ask yourself these questions to help your baby learn and grow for today and for the future.

What is your baby learning?




By playing together, you're not only helping your baby understand and express their feelings but also fostering their ability to interact with others and develop empathy for those around them.

What is your baby feeling?



Babies go through many emotions—joy, curiosity, frustration, and more—while exploring the world through play. As their caregiver, your support is crucial in helping them navigate and regulate these strong feelings.

What is your baby saying?



Before learning to talk, babies express themselves through movement. Movement in play helps them gain confidence and independence while deepening your bond. When your little one reaches out for you during play, it's not just about fun, it's their way of communicating feelings and seeking connection.



VCU
School of Education
Partnership for People
with Disabilities



DBHDS
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health
and Developmental Services



Play Strategies

Try these strategies to help boost your babies social-emotional development during play



Show Excitement

Boost your baby's confidence by celebrating their achievements with clapping, smiling, and cheering.



Read and Respond

Read and respond to your baby's cues and respond to their needs and attempts to gain your attention.



Remain Calm

Stay calm during stressful moments to help your baby manage their strong emotions.



Togetherness is Key

Provide opportunities to play together throughout the day, remembering that relationships are key.



Talk About Emotions

Label the emotions your baby or others may be experiencing to help your baby tune in and develop empathy.



Model Behaviors

Model the behaviors you want to see in your baby as they continue to grow and develop.

