Supporting Social Skills Development
Parent Support Pack #1, 2015

General Strategies for Building a Foundation in Social & Emotional Skills

Our ability to develop positive self-esteem and a strong sense of self are critical skills for furthering our social and emotional development. Our social proficiency has a huge impact on our quality of life throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Social skills allow us to form relationships with others, maintain conversations, express our ideas effectively and present ourselves assertively. This is invaluable knowledge for our children to have in all communication situations. This Parent Support Pack will outline some general information about social development across early childhood and provide some basic strategies for supporting this in the home.

Early Social Development

In the early years, children develop their ability to:

- Recognise a range of emotions within themselves and others
- Respond appropriately to the emotions of others, and listen to others
- Form friendships with peers, and social relationships with others
- Demonstrate empathy and caring attitudes towards others
- Begin managing their emotions with support
- Act independently as self-awareness and self-esteem develop

These skills underpin positive social behaviour, and can have a continuing impact on our self-esteem across the lifespan.
What does this look like?

Children develop social and emotional skills by drawing on their experiences in secure and nurturing relationships. Every child’s skills will develop at different rates, however giving your child the opportunity to develop relationships with a variety of different children and adults allows them to practice their social behaviours and note the reactions of others. As children grow in their relationships, you may notice them:

- Showing care and concern for others
- Smiling and greeting familiar others
- Starting conversations by saying, “Hi!” or “Hello!”
- Starting to share and take turns in play
- Changing their behaviour based on your reactions

General Strategies for Supporting Social Development:

There are many things that we can do to nurture a child’s social development. Much of this comes down to creating a positive environment in which your child can experiment, and feel comfortable to do so. We can create this positive environment by:

- Being warm, affectionate and approachable
- Being consistent and predictable in our responses to children
- Having frequent, positive interactions whereby we sit face-to-face with the child, make eye contact, change facial expressions appropriately, etc.
- Responding to a child’s signals, desires and needs
- Talking openly about what is happening around us, and what will happen next
- Talking openly about feelings, and helping children to manage difficult feelings
- Supporting and encouraging children when trying new experiences and playing
- Modelling appropriate social behaviour
- Talking through social problem solving, and making the implicit, explicit (i.e. describing how others are feeling and why)
- Playing and talking with lots of different people!

If you have any questions about your child’s social development, please don’t hesitate to contact us at the LDC!

North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre
18 View Street Dianella, WA, 6059
P (08) 9275 5511 F (08) 9275 5319