

Tip Sheet: *Explicitly Teaching Social and Emotional Skills with Toddlers*



SE Skills to Focus On

- Social Skills
- Recognizing and Talking about Emotions
- Exploration

To teach Social Skills, try these strategies:

- Provide lots of opportunities for group play activities.
- Use daily routines to help teach children how to share (i.e. having a child choose one toy to play with and one to give to a friend).
- Encourage early friendships – during play, encourage children to share, take turns, and enjoy their time together.

To teach Recognizing and Talking about Emotions try these strategies:

- Identify and discuss emotions throughout the day, using opportunities to identify both real and play activities. Using stories is another great way to talk about the connection between emotions and behavior.
- Help children to discuss their own feelings. Some children may not yet be able to put their feelings into words and could use teacher support: “I think you are feeling angry...”
- Model talking about feelings and behaviors.
- Teach children strategies for how to manage their emotions.

To teach Exploration, try these strategies:

- Set up your classroom space so that children have access to developmentally appropriate books and materials they can explore.
- Create and maintain daily routines – consider posting a visual schedule for children to see, and let children know if there is going to be a change in schedule.

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Some things to think about:

As children at this age are learning to play with their peers and interact with the environment, it is important to help them to develop positive behaviors. This can be done through setting limits in appropriate ways, and providing lots of encouragement.

This can be done by:

- Ensuring that your expectations are developmentally appropriate by familiarizing yourself with typical developmental milestones, and adjusting as necessary in the classroom.
- Praising children when they are engaging in a positive behavior.
- Help support children by discussing what they can/should do in the classroom, rather than what they cannot/should not. For instance, “Let’s use walking feet” rather than “Don’t run”.
- Model everyday behaviors such as kindness and patience so that children in your classroom can learn to treat others the same way.

Ideas borrowed from US Department of Education: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/talk-read-sing/feelings-teachers.pdf>; these ideas and more can also be found through our UNM ECSC Training A Look at Classroom Management: www.nmels.org.