

Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Children

Social-Emotional Need

Ways to Meet Children's Needs

To feel safe and secure

- Be with me, both physically and emotionally
- Watch me as I play
- Talk to me about what I am doing
- Comfort me when I am upset
- Help me make sense of my negative feelings
- Structure my day and my environment
- Give me limits or boundaries for my behavior

To feel worthy and loved

- Tell me how special I am
- Say my name often
- Notice me, even when I am quiet
- Accept and celebrate my unique feelings and characteristics
- Share your love with hugs and gentle touches
- Play with me
- Listen to and respond to me

To feel acknowledged and understood

- Pay attention to me and try to understand what I'm saying with my words and my cues
- Respond sensitively to my needs
- Reflect my feelings through your voice, touch, and facial expressions
- Accept all of my feelings, even the negative ones

To feel noticed and receive attention

- Give me attention for positive behavior
- Redirect my negative behavior—show me something else I can do
- Appreciate my accomplishments and my efforts
- Initiate interactions with me; invite me to play
- Welcome me back when I need some attention
- Let me be your helper
- Touch me in loving, gentle ways
- Smile and let me know you enjoy me

To feel a sense of predictability

- Structure my days so that I know what to expect
- Use loving rituals that give me a positive, familiar feeling about the activity we're doing
- Help me to anticipate changes or transitions
- Try to limit multiple changes at once or be sensitive if they happen
- Try to keep me with caregivers that I know and trust
- Give me choices
- Be consistent in how you take care of me
- Gently remind me about limits and expectations



Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Children

Social-Emotional Need

Ways to Meet Children's Needs

To understand and be able to manage my upset feelings

- Welcome me back when I need your help
- Be loving and take charge to help me get through disappointment, anger, frustration, and other negative feelings
- Stay with me and comfort me
- Speak to me so I know you are close
- Hold me if it helps to soothe me
- Reflect my feelings with your words, touch, and facial expressions
- Help me learn to express my upset feelings in okay ways
- Help me move on to a different activity
- Help me learn to self-soothe

To feel a sense of control

- Give me lots of appropriate choices
- Help me make choices, if I need help
- Let me do as much as possible for myself
- Let me feel like my actions have an impact
- Decide what is important for you to control and what I can control
- Help me explore by providing just enough support

To feel safe and stimulated in my exploration

- Help me explore new objects, people, and surroundings
- Watch and comment as I play or play with me
- Structure my environment so I can focus my learning and play
- Be clear about expectations and limits that help me to be safe
- Give me gentle reminders of the rules—be consistent but flexible
- Welcome me back when I need to touch base with you before I explore some more

To feel competent

- Teach me in a way that encourages me to make discoveries on my own
- Encourage my efforts, including times I'm not successful
- Give me lots of opportunities to learn something new or try to do something by myself
- Give me just enough support so I can succeed at something new and not feel too frustrated while trying
- Recognize any progress I'm making in learning something new

To have mutually enjoyable relationships and feel a sense of belonging

- Interact with me, enjoy me, and accept my feelings
- Recognize, accept, and admire my unique feelings and characteristics
- Respond sensitively to my feelings, needs, and attempts to interact with you
- Empathize with me and help me understand my feelings
- Tell me about your feelings and others' feelings so that I learn to care about others
- Be willing to adjust how you interact with me to keep our relationship running smoothly
- Help me learn to work through conflicts by negotiating with me when we have conflicts
- Help me get to know other children and guide us as we learn to share, be kind, and cooperate with each other