



**COLORADO**  
Office of Early Childhood  
Department of Human Services

## PROMOTING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Social, emotional and behavioral health begins at birth and lays a foundation for children to:

**MANAGE EMOTIONS • HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**  
**RESOLVE CONFLICTS PEACEFULLY • TAKE CARE OF OTHERS**

Children begin learning these skills from birth as they build attachments and trust with caregivers, learn how to calm themselves down, and later, to recognize emotions.

Just like other skills, children develop social and emotional abilities gradually - and they need plenty of support from adults as they learn.

Nurturing our children's social and emotional needs from birth helps ensure they will have good mental health throughout their lives.

We all have mental health - even babies! And just as physical health enables us to have the energy we need to work and live our lives, mental health allows us to have positive relationships with others, cope with life's challenges, and manage our emotions.

Just as we take care of our children's physical health - with healthy food, plenty of sleep and regular check-ups - we must also take care of their mental health by supporting their social-emotional development.

### BUT HOW?

Loving relationships with you and other adults are the foundation of children's healthy social-emotional development.

Positive relationships help children feel secure and encouraged. Through relationships we can teach children to understand and express their feelings, develop compassion for other people, and learn the difference between right and wrong. These social and emotional skills prepare children for success in school and throughout their lives.



## 9-18 MONTHS

Children age 9-18 months are learning to interact with adults and continuing to build trusting relationships with caregivers. Children this age seek the comfort of mom, dad or another close caregiver if they are tired or unhappy. They are beginning to understand how other people feel and are learning to respond. They may try to comfort someone who is upset.

### TRY THESE TIPS:

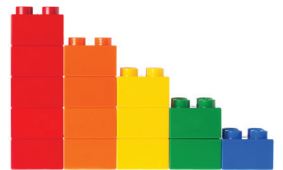
- Ask her if she wants to help; give her a spoon to play with while you cook
- When he needs attention or comfort, respond with hugs, smiles and laughter
- Recognize and encourage him when he tries to do things by himself
- Sit with her on the floor to play
- Let her have a special blanket or stuffed animal (comfort object) to help her calm down
- Talk about how other children show feelings: “Daniel is laughing because the puppet is funny”
- Show and talk about how you care for other children: “Ana feels better when I give her a hug”
- Talk to him about what he is doing: “You are showing me the ball - you want to play”
- Give her a choice between two options: “Do you want to wear blue socks or white socks?”
- Notice and support her when she comforts herself: “You found your blankie and now you feel better”

JUST AS WE TAKE CARE OF CHILDREN'S  
PHYSICAL HEALTH, WE MUST ALSO TAKE  
CARE OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

Challenging behavior - or acting out - is how children communicate that their social and emotional needs are not being met. Parenting is hard, and all families need help to prepare their children for success in school and beyond. It's normal to have questions and concerns about your child's development and behavior.

### THERE ARE SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

Talk to your child's health provider, child care provider, or other early childhood professional. Visit [earlylearningco.org](http://earlylearningco.org) to get practical tips and fun ideas to support children's learning. Visit [coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com](http://coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com) to learn about social-emotional development and community resources.



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