

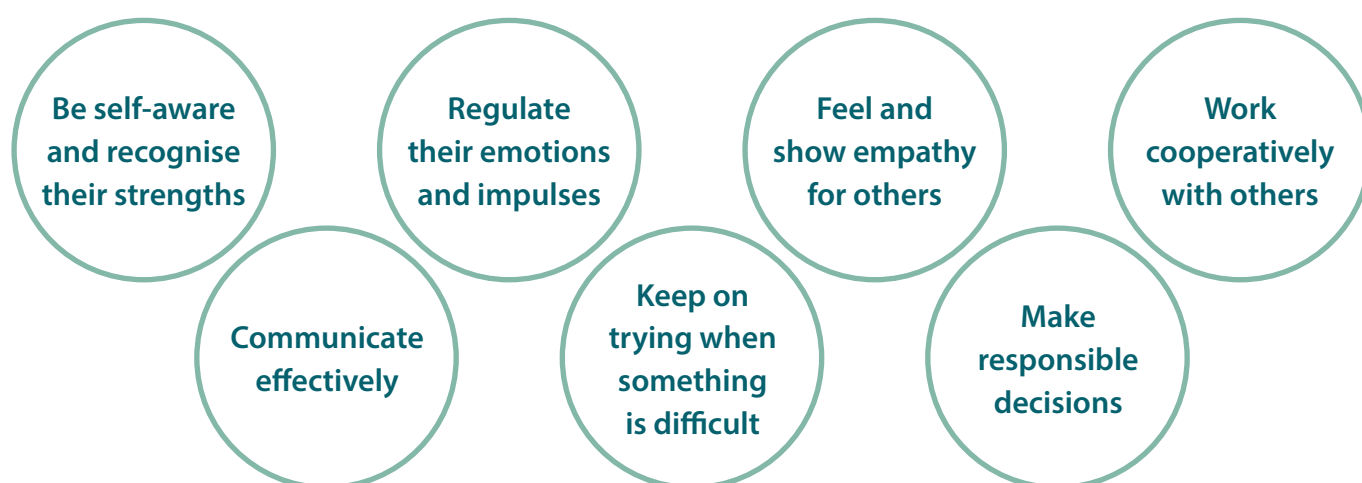
Early Years Library

SERIES INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social skills are necessary to develop and maintain satisfying relationships. Emotional skills are used to identify and manage our thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and to understand the thoughts, emotions and behaviours of other people.

Before their first birthday, children develop attachment with key people in their lives, and they begin to express their emotions, and understand that people's faces and voices can tell you something about how they are feeling. This development continues through to adulthood.

Social and emotional skills help children to:



Social and emotional skills in the early years can be integrated in everyday activities. For example, opportunities for supporting early social skills arise when working in groups, or when dealing with everyday conflicts.

The Early Years Library contains six social and emotional skills booklets, each covering a core social and emotional skill and key practices that can be used to support skill development. The table on the next page presents the six booklets.

If you want to support:	Focus on:
Recognising and expressing emotions	Learning feeling words
	Identifying feelings using facial expressions and body language
	Describing how we feel
	Recognising other people's feelings
Regulating emotions	Calming down
	Generating, choosing and implementing solutions to cope with strong emotions
Communicating with others	Communicating non-verbally
	Engaging in conversation
	Listening
	Greeting others and introducing yourself
	Using polite language
Working together	Sharing and taking turns
	Team work
	Being helpful
	Asking for help
Developing positive relationships	Developing friendships
	Giving compliments and using kind words
	Valuing similarities and differences
	Being kind and caring
Resolving conflict	Speaking up during conflict
	Finding solutions for conflict

For more information on the Early Years Library and to download the booklets, visit www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary

How can I use these booklets?

The booklets can be used very flexibly and for different purposes:

- During new staff induction, to help new staff understand why they focus on certain skills and activities.
- When planning activities for the children based on your understanding of their interests, needs and the curriculum in your setting. Practices and strategies can be adapted to your context, to children's age, and to your daily schedule.
- Throughout the day to get inspiring ideas for extending activities, responding to children and planning in the moment.

As a practitioner, you might find that you are already using many of these strategies and practices. This can give you the confidence that the work you are doing to support the children in your care is underpinned by evidence.



Robert Kneschke

Commonly used strategies

Evidence-based programmes recommend a range of strategies for practitioners. Throughout the Early Years Library, you will notice that some of these strategies are used more frequently to support some skills, while other strategies are used more frequently to support other skills. For instance, modelling praise is used to teach children how to give compliments, while visual displays like stickers and posters are used to support discussions about emotions. Using a range of strategies is most likely to support young children's development. At times, as a practitioner you will also step back and let children experience challenge and joy in their learning without getting involved.

Strategies to support social and emotional skills include:

- Discussion, questions and answers
- Didactic instruction and teacher modelling
- Games, role-play and child modelling
- Strategy practice and physical learning
- Visual displays, objects and materials
- Books, songs and nursery rhymes
- Art and creative projects
- Drawing and writing
- Timetabled routines
- Multimedia

Inspiring ideas

To support each of the skills, the Early Years Library offers inspiring ideas based on typical activities in evidence-based programmes. There are a range of activities suitable for individual, small group, and whole group activities. Some of the inspiring ideas are appropriate for in-the-moment interactions with children, while others require more planning. They are meant to inspire your practice, not dictate it. You can use the inspiring ideas to reflect on your practice, discuss ideas with colleagues and plan how to respond to children's interests and needs in relation to your curriculum.



Charlein Garcia/Unsplash

Unique individuals

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. For this reason, the Early Years Library is not presented in chronological order by age. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

Inter-connected areas of development

While the booklets are presented separately, research shows that all areas of development are inter-connected. Supporting children's social and emotional skills will call on language and early literacy; supporting children's early numeracy will call on social and emotional skills; and so on. The Early Years Library is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine practices from across the booklets and return to the booklets in different ways at different times.



Markus Spiske/Unsplash



Role of the adult in supporting child development

Early childhood education can help children build strong social and emotional skills. When children play together, they have opportunities to manage their emotions and behaviours and deal with everyday problems. Children benefit from warm and supportive interactions with early years practitioners who can give guidance and opportunities to develop a range of social-emotional skills. Striking a balance between child-led and adult-guided experiences helps children develop their love of learning while also supporting and extending their learning.



Practitioners can support children to develop these skills in a range of ways, for example by modelling friendly behaviours, introducing books and discussions on the topic, or supporting role-play activities and games. The Early Years Library highlights specific effective practices from evidence-based programmes that you can weave into your existing approaches.

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Early Years Library

READ THE
INTRODUCTION
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

What do we
mean by
recognising
and expressing
emotions

From a very young age, children experience a wide range of emotions. Developing an understanding of what they themselves and others are feeling helps to build strong relationships with others. Many children need adult support to recognise their feelings. Using words and body language to describe and express emotions like sadness, anger, surprise and joy is the first step in helping children to manage their feelings.

Why is it
important

Children who learn to identify and express their feelings in a healthy way are more likely to develop positive relationships with others. Helping children to develop a sense of empathy encourages tolerance and acceptance of others.

RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Learning feeling words

Introducing 'feeling' words into children's daily vocabulary helps them to identify and label how they themselves or others are feeling. Discussing the meaning of new feeling words is important so that children understand different feelings.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce and discuss feeling words and reflect on what they mean
- Use visual tools like feelings faces and photos to support children to label emotions

Inspiring Ideas

- Introduce new and interesting feeling words regularly with matching expressions. *"If you're happy and you know it, laugh out loud, HA HA! If you're cross and you know it, give a growl, GRR, GRR! If you're proud and you know it, say 'Go me!'"*
- Add a Little Literacy! Introduce a new feeling word for each letter of the alphabet *"A is for Angry, B is for Bored"* See how far you can get!
- When reading or telling a story, describe the character's feelings to children using a wide range of feeling words and help to explain their meaning. *"She took so long to bake her cake, but she feels so satisfied! Satisfied means happy with how things have turned out"*

Tip

Begin with 'simple' feelings like happy, sad and angry before moving on to more complicated feelings like frustrated, jealous or proud.

RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Identifying feelings using facial expressions and body language

Being able to tell what other people are feeling by looking at their face or body language is an important skill that also helps children to recognise their own emotions. Giving children opportunities to discuss facial expression/body posture, and to practise making their own facial expressions, can help them make the connection with how we feel on the inside.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and reflect on how we feel inside during different emotions
- Use visual tools such as feelings faces and photos to encourage children's understanding of the facial expressions tied to emotions

Inspiring Ideas

- When you feel a strong emotion, talk to children about how your face looks and how you are holding your body. *"I'm feeling so happy, can you see that my mouth is smiling and my eyes are crinkled at the edges? I look different when I'm sad, though. My face frowns and sometimes I curl my body up like this..."* As well as happy and sad, some interesting feelings to act out could include feeling scared, proud or cross!
- Using pictures of faces from storybooks, magazines or drawings, ask: *"can you spot someone who is feeling sad? How is this person feeling? How can you tell they are feeling sad?"*
- Feelings Charades! Whisper a feeling word to one child and have them act out clues for the other children with their face, body language and tone of voice.

Tip

Mirrors are a great resource that children can use for practising their feelings faces.

RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Describing how we feel

Children express their emotions through their behaviour before they learn ways of expressing their needs and emotions with words. Putting feelings into words helps children to manage situations, particularly with strong emotions like feeling cross or upset.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss with children times when they have felt particular emotions and reflect on other situations which might make them feel the same way. Use visual tools such as feelings faces or posters to support the discussions
- Use scenarios and stories to encourage children to identify how they might feel in those situations

Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! So children can learn about feelings and how to express them, demonstrate talking about a time when you felt scared, angry, surprised or excited. *"Sometimes I feel a bit scared when it's very dark. When do you feel scared?"* To extend the activity, you might give children an opportunity to pick a 'feelings face' that is the same as the feeling you have just described and talk about a time when they felt the same.
- Show children photographs of themselves from their observations. *"There you are! How did you feel when you were doing this?"*
- So children can learn that feelings change over time, when reading or telling a story, have the children give a thumbs up when the character has a comfortable feeling or a thumbs down if they have an uncomfortable feeling. At the end of the story ask: *"How did [the character] feel at the start of the story? Do they feel different now?"*

Tip

To support children to describe and express their feelings, puppets can be used to show what it's like to describe a particular feeling: *"I feel happy today because we had so much fun playing."*

Tip

To expand children's feelings vocabulary, ask: *"Can you think of another word for that feeling?"*

Tip

Use praise when children talk about their feelings or describe them well. Use 'comfortable' and 'uncomfortable' to describe emotions rather than good or bad. This helps to show children that feelings are normal and that it's good to talk about them.

RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Recognising other people's feelings

Considering other people's perspectives helps to develop empathy and the ability to respond sensitively to others. This involves thinking about how somebody might be feeling and why. It is important for children to have lots of opportunities to practise this skill during the day.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Encourage children to reflect on how others feel during daily activities
- Use stories and pictures to encourage children to identify how the people in the images are feeling

Inspiring Ideas

- Show children a photograph or a feeling face and ask: *"How does this person feel? Why do they feel surprised/frustrated/upset? What do you think happened to make them feel that way?"*
- When reading or telling a story, ask: *"How do you think [the character] is feeling? What happened to make them feel that way? Would you feel the same or different if it happened to you?"*
- Place 'feeling faces' in spots around the room and say: *"You have to stand up on stage and sing a song, run to how you feel!"* and *"You have to search for treasure under ooey-gooey slime, run to how you feel!"* Point out that children can feel different ways about the same things!
- Practise recognising emotions throughout the day, particularly when other children are feeling strong emotions: *"How does your friend feel? How do you feel when that happens to you?"*

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REGULATING EMOTIONS

What do we
mean by
regulating
emotions

Emotional self-regulation means being able to monitor and manage one's emotions and related behaviour. It includes being able to calm down when experiencing strong emotions and once calm, being able to choose the best course of action. Young children will still be developing these skills, so they require adult support through modelling and coaching. Some children will find it easier than others to regulate their emotions. Starting with some knowledge of emotions and words for identifying them will provide children with the skills to understand their own feelings and those of others, and in turn regulate their emotions accordingly.

Why is it
important

Our emotions are closely connected to our thoughts and behaviours. Learning how to regulate our emotions helps us to manage our feelings and our reaction to a situation. In doing so, it enables children to express themselves in context-appropriate ways and make decisions about how to respond to challenges.

Calming down

Learning calming techniques can help children regain a sense of control when they experience strong emotions such as anger, frustration, excitement, worry or feeling upset. Structured step-by-step strategies, and quick methods like body movements, breathing and visualisation are useful for helping children learn how to calm down.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Provide children with step-by-step strategies to calm themselves down e.g. the turtle technique
- Use visual prompts like posters, cards and puppets to introduce and reinforce the calming down strategies and help children remember the different steps
- Provide opportunities for children to practise calming down strategies through the use of role play, and once familiar, prompting in the moment

Inspiring Ideas

- The Turtle Technique. Step 1: Recognise your feelings *"I feel angry!"* Step 2: Stop your body. Step 3: Tuck inside your 'shell'; take three deep breaths to calm down and think calm thoughts *"I can do it. I can calm down."* Step 4: Come out when you are feeling calm and think of a solution.
- Belly breathing. With hands gently rested on their tummies, ask children to breathe in slowly through their nose and out through their mouth, feeling their tummy gently rise and fall.
- Animal yoga. Animal poses can help children focus on their body and breath when their minds feel busy. *"Slowly move your arms up and down as if you were an eagle."* *"Pretend you are a cat sneaking up on a mouse."*
- Visualise a safe place. Help children visualise a safe and calm space when emotions are strong. *"Imagine you are floating high in the sky on a white and fluffy cloud. As you breathe in, imagine your body sinking deeper into the soft cloud."*
- Let's Talk! *"Can you tell me about a time you felt worried/angry/scared? What did you do to calm down? What are the other things you could do to calm down next time you feel this way?"*

Tip

Introduce strategies when children are feeling calm and settled so they become familiar with what they need to do. Prompt familiar strategies when they experience strong emotions.

Tip

Remind children to notice how their bodies feel, and to focus on their breathing.

REGULATING EMOTIONS

Generating, choosing and implementing solutions to cope with strong emotions

Children can benefit from support in identifying solutions to resolve the situation, choosing the best solution and implementing it. It is easier for children to think of helpful solutions if they are feeling calm. Generating solutions is the final step in the *Turtle Technique*.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss how children can generate solutions to issues that might cause them to feel strong emotions. Support these discussions with visual tools and demonstrations
- Provide opportunities and games to discuss and make positive behaviour choices, such as acting out day-to-day problems with puppets

Inspiring Ideas

- A puppet shows strong, familiar emotions: *"It's raining outside so I can't use my new bicycle!" "I want pizza for my dinner, not pasta"*. Talk about what the puppet can do after calming down to resolve the situation and feel better.
- Stop, Think and Choose! Use a cuddly toy to show children how to choose a positive behaviour after calming down from strong emotions. *"We STOP what we're doing, we THINK about how we feel and what we can do, then we CHOOSE what we can do to feel better!"*
- Let's Talk! *"What do you do to cheer yourself up when you feel sad? I like to hug a cuddly toy, talk about my feelings with someone I trust or distract myself by doing something that makes me happy. How about you?"*
- Thumbs up! Thumbs down! Describe a challenging situation and children decide which solutions make them and others feel better. *"You are trying to put your coat on, but your zip has got stuck... You throw your coat on the floor. Thumbs up or down? You ask an adult for help. Thumbs up or down?"*

Tip

Emphasise that it is okay to feel uncomfortable feelings like anger or sadness. It helps to try and find solutions and make positive choices.

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COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

What do we
mean by
communicating
with others

We use our communication skills as tools to interact with other people. Children need to be able to use both verbal and non-verbal communication including speech, gesture, facial expression and body language in order to communicate with others. Children learn these skills in a variety of social contexts.

Why is it
important

Learning how to talk to and listen to others and how to engage in conversation helps to build and strengthen our relationships with others. Being able to communicate with others also facilitates learning and the exchange of information with others.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Communicating non-verbally

Children benefit from understanding that we can communicate with others both verbally (through speech) and non-verbally. Different types of non-verbal communication, such as eye-contact, facial expressions and gestures, can be used in different situations. Practicing non-verbal communication in groups and in pairs helps children understand and learn how to use non-verbal communication in appropriate ways.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use non-verbal communication
- Discuss how to use non-verbal communication in different situations

Inspiring Ideas

- Act out gestures that can give us information without saying a word. Wave to say hello, shake your head no, give a thumbs up to say 'Brilliant job!' Have children guess the gesture's meaning. *"See, I didn't have to use words for you to know what I meant!"*
- Welcome to our house, quiet mouse! Have children practice greeting others without saying a word by walking around the room giving high fives, smiling and waving to their friends very quietly!
- Share a smile! Encourage children to share a smile and then ask them how it makes them feel. *"Can you share a smile with someone to make them feel happy today? How does sharing a smile make you feel?"*

Tip

Throughout the day, encourage children to look at others when speaking to them (if they feel comfortable doing so) and to listen carefully when others are speaking.

Tip

Praise children when they use smiles, nods or eye contact during interactions and conversations with others. It can be useful for children to practice these skills in pairs.

Tip

Encourage children to use a brave voice, smile and make themselves big when talking to others.

Engaging in conversation

Children learn the rules of conversation (turn taking, active listening, responding to questions, eye contact) through warm, engaging interactions. These interactions can take place naturally throughout the day (e.g. when role playing, working on a task, during circle time).

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Encourage interesting conversations among children as a whole group, smaller groups or pairs
- Give children lots of opportunities to practice conversation during everyday activities such as arts and crafts projects

Inspiring Ideas

- Shop Talk! Engage children in shop role play which supports lots of back-and-forth interactions. Help to extend their conversation and direct them back to talking child-to-child. *“Why don’t you ask your customer how expensive this is?”*
- Book club! When reading a book to children, have them pair up and ask each other questions about the story, taking turns to listen carefully to each other’s answer. *“Who was your favourite character?”* Children can expand the conversation by asking follow-up questions, for example: *“Why are they your favourite character?”*

Tip

Encourage children to engage in conversation with each other during everyday activities, for example, when playing pretend games with friends or describing the world around them. Support children to listen carefully to each other and take turns when speaking.

Listening

Active listening is an important part of good communication. It involves showing you are listening, giving the speaker your attention, and hearing what they are saying before speaking. Demonstrating active listening skills when engaging with children is an essential first step. It also helps to provide opportunities for children to practice active listening with a variety of other people (not just the adults around them) on a regular basis.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to listen carefully
- Use role-play activities to provide opportunities to develop listening skills in serve and return conversations
- Use physical activities to reinforce listening skills. Ask children to listen to instructions to move in a certain way, then show you they have listened carefully by making those movements

Inspiring Ideas

- Simon Says! When playing 'Simon Says' have children show they are listening carefully by asking them to shout the action back to you as well as moving: *"Simon Says CLAP!" "CLAP!" "Simon Says JUMP!" "JUMP!"* Children can take turns giving and receiving directions.
- Nature Noises! When playing or walking outside, have children listen carefully and point out the noises in nature! *"Eyes watching! Ears listening! Voice quiet! Body calm!"*
- One talking, all listening! To practice listening in group conversations, children can try using a 'One talking, All listening' stick/ball/object. When one child holds the stick and talks, the other children must listen carefully until it's their turn.

Tip

Show children what active listening looks like, by facing the person who is speaking, maintaining good eye contact, nodding to show you are understanding what they are saying, and smiling!

Greeting others and introducing yourself

Learning how to greet others and introduce yourself can help children to feel more confident in initiating social interactions. Children benefit from discussions and activities about introducing themselves and greeting others in a variety of situations.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to greet others and introduce ourselves
- Have children role play greeting each other and introducing themselves
- Remind children how to greet others through the use of songs, books and poems

Inspiring Ideas

- When greeting a child with big smiles, eye contact and *"Good morning!"*, model how you would introduce yourself: *"I'm [name], I'm [age]. What's your name? How old are you?"*
- To welcome children, go around the group and have children say their own name, warmly supporting children who feel a little less confident. After a child has introduced themselves, the whole group can chant: *"Hello [name], it's nice to see you today! YAY!"*
- Children can pick a new or special friend to introduce themselves to. *"Hi, my name is [name]. What's your name?"* adding *"What would you like to play today?"*

Tip

Don't worry if some children feel uncomfortable using eye contact when introducing themselves - children can be friendly in lots of different ways!

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Using polite language

Another important aspect of good communication skills is the use of polite language to express gratitude ("Thank you"), make requests ("Please can I..."), solve conflict situations, greet others and give compliments ("I like the way you...").

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use polite language in everyday conversations with children
- Display picture cards on the wall which demonstrate children using polite language as a reminder of how to use polite language in everyday scenarios
- Role-play activities to help children practice using polite language

Inspiring Ideas

- Set-up a role-play situation which involves a bus driver taking children to school. Children practice saying "*thank you*" to express their gratitude as they get off the bus.
- Please pass game! Children see how quickly they can pass a beanbag around the circle. Before their neighbour passes it to them, children say "*Please pass the beanbag*" in a respectful voice and afterwards say "*Thank you!*" As children become familiar with the game, introduce new objects and words "*Please pass the big, blue teddy.*"
- Have a puppet act out asking for a snack using polite language "*Please may I have a banana?*" Support each child to practice asking for a snack of their choice using polite language with lots of praise for a job politely done!

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Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

WORKING TOGETHER

What do
we mean
by working
together

As children grow, they develop more of an awareness of others and learn to care more about other people. As part of this, they learn that their words and actions affect others, for example, when sharing their toy or passing a ball. Children benefit from having opportunities to learn about and practise cooperating with others throughout the day.

Why is it
important

Working together helps to support the development of children's cooperation skills. These skills help to build trust, empathy and a sense of belonging. Providing opportunities for children to share, take turns and work together as a team helps them to form healthy relationships and a sense of being part of a social group.

Sharing and taking turns

Learning to share and take turns is part of playing cooperatively with others. It also teaches children about compromise and fairness. Children learn a lot from watching what adults do so it helps to demonstrate turn-taking and sharing with others throughout the day. Children need opportunities to practise this skill, for example, through arts and crafts activities.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce the concept of sharing and taking turns using puppets
- Roleplay scenarios with set roles (e.g. shop keeper and customer)
- Play boardgames and encourage children to take turns

Inspiring Ideas

- Puppet Role Play! Show two puppets playing together. Scenario 1: the puppet is not sharing their toys with the other puppet. Scenario 2: the puppet shares their toys with the other puppet. Discuss what is happening in both scenarios and how the puppets might feel.
- If children have difficulty sharing toys/ books/materials, use a timer to measure fair turns, giving children lots of praise when they pass the object to the next child!
- Arts and Crafts! Give a group of children a limited amount of arts and crafts material. Let them know why you have given them fewer resources. Support children in sharing the materials and taking turns if necessary.

Tip

Notice and praise children when they share and take turns throughout the day.

Team work

Providing opportunities for children to work together as a team helps them to learn how to cooperate and work towards a common goal. By working together, children learn to express their needs and desires as well as hearing and respecting the needs and desires of others.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how to work with others
- Use art and craft projects and games to encourage discussion and team work
- Discuss how children feel when they work well with others

Inspiring Ideas

- Team work! In pairs or small groups, children share, take turns, chat and cooperate to build the tallest tower they can! How tall can it get before it falls?
- Making faces! While one child draws or sticks the eyes onto a face, their partner waits patiently to add the nose, before then taking turns to add the mouth, ears and other details, working alongside each other to create a team face!
- Frog friends! Children hop like frogs to music and then they must find a lily pad (e.g. a hoop or mat) to jump on when the music stops. With each round, remove a lily pad and encourage children to work together to make sure all the frogs are safe!

Tip

It might be easier for some children to work in pairs than in groups. As children develop their cooperation skills, they can practise working in small groups of two, three and four children to encourage more discussion and compromise.

Being helpful

Children are never too young to learn the joy of helping others and being helpful at home and in their early years setting. Children benefit from discussing the different ways they can help others at school and at home. Practicing helping others throughout the day encourages kindness.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce different ways of helping through discussion and use of books and songs
- Role play to practise helping behaviours
- Use visual tools, such as a 'Ways to be Helpful' poster

Inspiring Ideas

- Superheroes! Children pretend to be a superhero and make themselves as big as they can by stretching as far as they can! *"How can you help others when you are a superhero?"*
- Let's Talk! *"You are so helpful today! What sort of things do you help with in your house? How do you feel when you help your family? Can you think of any other ways you can be helpful at home?"*
- A teddy visits children but doesn't know their way around! Children can helpfully show teddy their important places. *"You are all being so helpful to teddy! When everyone helps this is a very happy place to be!"*
- Tidy Up Rhyme Time! Children can practice helping by tidying up their toys while singing a helping song or saying a rhyme. *"1,2,3, who are we? We are tidy friends, can't you see? Helping others, having fun! Tidy friends, tidy friends, we're number 1!"*

Asking for help

It is important for children to know how to confidently ask for help. By giving children the phrases they could use to ask for help, and helping them identify who they might turn to for help, children will feel more secure in their ability to seek help when needed.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use books and songs to start discussions about how different people can help us
- Use role play and games to practise asking for help

Inspiring Ideas

- When a child needs help, for instance when zipping up their coat, playing on a swing or reaching to put the last block on top of a tower, prompt them to ask another child or an adult: *"Can you help me, please?"*
- When reading or telling a story, encourage children to think about who they could ask for help. *"This is a predicament! Who would you ask for help if this happened to you? That's a great idea!"*
- Support Team! Each child gives a sticker to people who they think are part of their support team, like friends, teachers and teaching assistants and tell them what makes them brilliant helpers! *"Our support team is a team of brilliant people who help us through lots of different bits of our lives... Who is part of your support team at home?"*



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Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

What do
we mean by
developing
positive
relationships

Knowing how to make and keep positive relationships allows children to form strong bonds with others. For younger children, this starts with caregivers and trusted adults and, as children get older, their relationships expand to other family members and friends. As they grow, children learn how to approach people, communicate with them kindly and make new friends.

Why is it
important

Building positive relationships is at the heart of early childhood education. Developing positive relationships with others helps children to discover who they are, to understand others and to enjoy new experiences.

DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Developing friendships

Children of all ages, in particular those around preschool age, build skills that help them to develop friendships. These skills can include learning to share, taking turns, and understanding things from another person's point of view. Through practicing these skills and having discussions about friendships, children develop an understanding of how they can be a good friend and the steps they might need to take to make new friends.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and use puppets to reflect on what makes a good friend
- Use visual tools like stickers and posters to support children to practice making and keeping friends

Inspiring Ideas

- When reading or telling a story, ask: *"Who are [character]'s friends? Who are your friends? Why are they such good friends? How can you be a good friend? That's so important!"*
- When you notice children helping, sharing or playing together well say: *"You are such good friends! It's lovely to have friends! Why don't we see if anybody else would like to be good friends today?"*
- Freeze! In pairs, children balance an object on their head (for instance a soft toy, tissue or leaf, perhaps). When it falls off, they are magically frozen! They can only unfreeze when a friend heroically comes to the rescue!

DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Giving compliments and using kind words

Having the ability to give compliments and say something kind about another person is an important social skill. Children benefit from seeing others giving and receiving compliments and having discussions with their friends about how and when they might give compliments. Providing opportunities to practice using kind words is important.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how children can praise others
- Use visual tools, such as posters, to help children practice using kind words

Inspiring Ideas

- Support children to decide which words are compliments, and which are not, by asking, for example: *"Which is a compliment: 'that's a picture' or 'that's a WONDERFUL picture'?"*
- Give compliments freely to children and other adults during the day. When you receive a compliment, point it out to children. *"What a lovely compliment. Those kind words have made me feel really happy!"* Children can then practise giving compliments using dolls, puppets and small world resources. *"Oh pirate! You are excellent at finding treasure." "Thank you, elephant, I know I am!"*
- When a child produces artwork, writes or builds something, prompt other children to compliment their work. *"What a fantastic castle! You've worked so hard on that! What's everyone's favourite part?"*
- In a circle, children spin an arrow or roll a ball and give a compliment to whoever it lands on! Help children to focus on other children's best qualities by giving examples. *"I like the way you play with me/help me/share with me."*

Tip

Focus compliments on why someone is nice and friendly, rather than on their appearance and belongings. This keeps everyone feeling included and valued, which supports positive relationships.

Valuing similarities and differences

Being able to recognise similarities and differences between people helps children value diversity and inclusion. Children can celebrate their unique qualities by exploring each other's likes and dislikes, and learn to understand that families all over the world are both similar and different.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce and discuss how we are all both similar and different
- Use photos of different cultures, books and songs to help children explore and appreciate similarities and differences

Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! To celebrate each family member's unique qualities, ask: *"Who smiles the most in your family? Who is the funniest? Who is the sleepiest? Who helps the most?"*
- At snack time have children make a fruit kebab. Point out everyone's unique and tasty patterns! Be excited about what children eat with their families and discuss how different families eat different delicious snacks.
- When reading or telling a story, discuss the similarities and differences between the characters and children. *"Do you have brothers and sisters like this character? Do you have a pink sofa? Would you like ice cream for dinner too?"*
- With arts and craft materials sorted into groups, encourage children to make their own piece of art. Talk to children about how each piece of art is wonderfully different, even though they are all made from the same materials!

DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Being kind and caring

The ability to act kindly and compassionately is an important part of developing positive relationships. Children benefit from having discussions with their friends about what 'being kind' means to them and opportunities to practice acts of kindness towards others.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- When you read a story, ask children how the characters are kind to each other
- Using visual tools such as posters or picture cards, discuss with children the different ways they can be kind to others and show that they care about their friends

Inspiring Ideas

- During the day, encourage children to be kind when other children are shy, upset, hurt or need help. *"Can you see that the baby is crying? What can we do to look after the baby? That's so kind!" "I think your friend is feeling a bit shy today, how can we be caring and help?"*
- Let's Talk! *"What kind thing can you do today to make someone feel happy? How do you feel when you are being kind?"*
- Caring Cards! Have children make cards for someone's birthday, or someone who is ill or might have been upset. *"I bet seeing this card will make them feel happy! You are so kind!"*

Early Years Library

READ THE
INTRODUCTION
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

RESOLVING CONFLICT

What do we
mean by
resolving
conflict

Children can learn practical skills to manage conflict in a healthy way. Dealing with conflict builds on children's communication skills (listening to others and expressing their own needs in a respectful way), empathy (putting themselves in someone else's shoes) and problem-solving. It can be difficult to resolve conflict when emotions are strong, so children should be supported to regulate their emotions first.

Why is it
important

Quarrels and disagreements are normal in any relationship — for adults and for children. Learning how to deal with conflict helps children navigate squabbles and equips them with strategies to deal with bigger conflicts as they get older. Children develop confidence in their abilities when they see the positive impact of their problem-solving skills.

Speaking up during conflict

Provide children with the words to assert themselves and express what they want or need when they find themselves in a conflict situation. Children can practice using phrases that will help them to express their needs when a conflict arises.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use a puppet to show how to speak up during conflicts and prompt discussions about conflict
- Use stories to discuss conflict situations, exploring how characters feel and what a character might say to address the conflict situation

Inspiring Ideas

- Use puppets to model a phrase children might use when they find themselves in conflict with someone else. *"Stop! I don't like that."* Support children to practice saying this phrase assertively so that they have a simple method of dealing with conflict. *"Well done for telling your friend about your feelings."*
- Act out a puppet or cuddly toy taking a ball from a child and have children practice speaking up assertively. *"I didn't like it when you took my ball. Please can I have it back?"*
- When children find themselves in a conflict situation, support them to identify how they are feeling. For example: *"I feel sad because I am being left out of their game."* Gently encourage them to speak up: *"I'd like to join in with your game, please."*

Tip

Provide phrases that are easy to remember when they find themselves in a conflict situation.

Tip

Reinforce appropriate ways to speak up during conflict: *"Well done, you have said what you want in a strong and respectful way."*

RESOLVING CONFLICT

Finding solutions for conflict

Support children to identify different ways to solve conflicts and decide on the most appropriate solution. This might include learning how and when it is appropriate to accept when something may be their fault and how to say sorry.

Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use pictures representing conflict situations and ask children to identify what is happening, brainstorm different solutions and choose the best one.
- Discuss what it means to say “it was an accident”, why it is important to admit a mistake, to tell the truth and how to apologise.
- Use stories to discuss how children would feel before and after resolving the conflict

Inspiring Ideas

- Show a puppet in a common conflict situation: *“Someone else is playing with my favourite toy!”; “They pushed in front of me while I was waiting for my snack!”* Talk about the different actions the puppet could take to resolve the situation and the pros and cons of each idea. As a group, decide what the puppet should do next.
- Tell a story of an everyday accident, and ask children how everyone might have felt. *“What happened? Was it an accident? How do you think everyone felt?”* Brainstorm ideas for helping people to feel better, for example, *“It was an accident, I’m sorry.”*
- Let’s Talk! *“Can you think of a time when someone has been unkind to you? What did you do? Can you think of another way to solve the problem? One way to solve the problem could be to ask for help.”*
- When two children begin to disagree, support them to think of different ways to solve the conflict and to put one of the solutions into practice. *“We could combine our building blocks to make an even taller tower!”; “We can take turns playing with the new doll.”*

Tip

Provide children with opportunities to practice finding solutions when they are not part of the conflict (with role play and puppets) before encouraging them to practice it in real life.

Tip

Encourage children to think of a solution instead of you doing it for them. *“Let’s put on our thinking caps and figure out together what we can do to solve this problem.”*

Tip

Let children hear you saying sorry and explaining what you are sorry for to help them understand how and when they might apologise.