



Parents: First Counsellor of Child Development

DR.KAMENDU R.THAKAR

Assi. Professor,
Smt.S.I.Patel Ipcowala
College of Edu. Petlad

1. What is child development?

Child development is a process every child goes through. This process involves learning and mastery skills like sitting, walking, talking, skipping and tying shoes. Children learn these called development milestones. It's been well-documented that the preschool years are critical for building the foundation for learning. Preschoolers are eager to learn how the world works, and the best way for them to learn at this age is through play.

During predictable time period. In childhood children need to get proper care and guidance for future. And parents are the first and trustworthy counselor for child. If parents try to understand their child's need and know about child psychology they can be great counselor for their kids.

2. Children develop skills in five main areas of development

(1)Cognitive Development:

This is the child's ability to learn and solve problems. For example, this includes a two-month old baby learning to explore the environment with hands or eyes or a five-year –old learning how to do simple math problems.

(2)Social and emotional Development:

This is the child's ability to interact with others, including helping themselves and self-control. Examples of this type of development would include: a six –week old baby smiling, a ten –month old baby waving bye-bye, or a five- year old boy knowing how to take turns in games at school.

(3)Speech and Language Development:

This is the child's ability to both understand and language.

For example, this includes a 12- month baby saying his first words, a two-year –old naming parts of her body, or a five-year –old learning to say “ feet” instead of “foots”.

(4)Fine Motor Skill Development:

This is the child's ability to use small muscles, specifically their hands and fingers, to pick up small objects, hold a spoon, turn pages in a book, or use a crayon to draw.

(5)Gross Motor Skill Development:

This is the child's ability to use large muscles. For example, a six-month –old baby learns how to sit up with some support, a 12-month –old-baby learns to pull up to a stand holding onto furniture, and a five year-old learns to skip.

Here I would like to suggest some activities which can promote social and cognitive development in child.

3. Cognitive development activities

1. Communicate With the Child

Parents used to talk to their child continuously (right from their birth won't be an exaggeration). Parents used to label every action was doing, right from standing up, sitting down, singing, cooking and everything. They also labelled every object child was looking at like door, plate, stroller, shoes: feeling like wind, heat, cold: Tasting- like sour, sweet, salty - and so on-literally everything. So by the

time kids comes at 9 months, They have good vocabulary, a good grasp of all the activities people does around them and understood tastes.

2. Introduce Books, Storytelling And Narrating Events:

Books play a very vital role in brain development, language skills and also a first step to gross motor skill development (holding book, turning pages). Parents should introduce cloth books & soft sponge books to their child as early as 2 months, board books from 5 months and paper books after child turned 1. Children like colourful objects, animals, birds & shapes till around 9 months and then love to listening to simple short stories from illustrated books (no fairy tales). And activity books (match the shadows, pairing similar objects) after they turned.

3. Ask Questions to Stimulate Thinking Process

Parents should named the objects child were seeing in all languages patents knew, then gradually started describing them (shape, colour, utility), if it was animal or bird book- I explained the environment in which they are found, etc. And then always asked them questions (pointing at a rabbit) - instead of asking "what is this?" Asked them "it has long ears, short fluffy tail, is soft & white like cotton?". \Parents continue with the exercise even when they went out to some shop or mall. Played the "I spy" game in the house & outdoors describe objects and ask them to identify them. It was fun.

4. Let Your Kids Explore - Touch, Feel, Smell, Taste

Parents should encourage the natural tendency kids have to explore the world around them. (But of course with discretion). Never stop them from playing with stones or mud in the garden or other things like tasting sour lime or bitter gourd, smell a flower on the plant etc. This way they learnt by themself that stones were hard, mud was soft, ice was cold, paper could be torn with hands and rubber bands were elastic & so on. Things which were not safe for them we explaine to them & kept out of reach-like touching a hot cup of tea could burn their skin, pressing against a glass door could break the glass, playing with a sharp object could hurt etc.

5. Music-Dance-Physical Activity

Kids love music and dance to the tune as well. Children start to sing quite a few songs & rhymes. And seems like they have now develope a good ear for music. So dance becomes a good physical activity to channelize the unending energy of a kid and singing & listening to songs becomes a great mental activity.

6. Building Event Memory, Associating Things & Situations

Kids these days use our smart phones very dexterously and photos is their favorite part .Although parents should limited their kids total gadget time(phone, iPad,TV) to 30-45 minutes. Parents can make good use of the photos they sees to build their event memory. Whenever children seen some old photos, parents should describe to them what was the event, what did she/he do, who all were present, which places we had visited etc. After several repetitions this activity has helped them build memory of past events and also recognizes people from the photos even if they meets them after a long time. Children has learn to associate certain things with specific events as well- like lanterns with Diwali or Santa Claus with Christmas.

7. Independence

It is okay if kids spilled a little food or water on the table initially but they learnt to hold their own spoon & cup. It took a lot of time to wear shoes, most of the times they put them on wrong feet. Kids figure out things themselves and we don't actually need to tell them how to do it, we need to give them some time. Parents should always encourage them to do these simple activities even if they were time consuming initially like eats independently, comb their hair, brush their teeth & wear thier own shoes.

8. Age Appropriate Toys, Art and Craft

Using age appropriate toys like building blocks, push & go toys, insert shapes in slots for gross motor skills development, some simple paper folding art, gluing stickers on papers, colouring for fine motor skills. Puzzles of different kinds for brain stimulation etc. All these have helped a lot.

9. Logical Reasoning & Decision Making

Kids naturally think logically and we just have to encourage this to stimulate their brain activity and enhance their thinking process.parents should give them opportunity to choose between two things at

times- like which dress she/he wants to put on or which game she/he wants to play- the decision making is a good brain stimulator.

10. The Most Important - Excellent Nutrition

Good food is a key to good development and good mood as well. A healthy body nurtures a healthy mind. A balanced nutritious diet is extremely necessary – vegetables (sometimes added to parathas), seasonal fruits, eggs, pulses, roti, rice, whole grain breads, wheat pastas, curd, cheese etc. And of course a scoop of ice-cream sometimes & some sweets once in a while.

4. Social skills activities

1. Turn-taking games for babies :

Babies are capable of spontaneous acts of kindness, but they can be shy around new people. How can we teach them that a new person is a friend? One powerful method is to have young children engage in playful acts of reciprocity with the stranger. These might include

- taking turns pressing the buttons on a toy,
- rolling a ball back and forth, or
- handing toys to each other.

When Rodolfo Barragan and Carol Dweck (2015) tested this simple tactic on 1- and 2-year-olds, the children seemed to flip a switch. The babies began to respond to their new playmates as people to help and share with. There was no such effect if children merely played alongside the stranger.

2. The name game for toddlers

- To give kids a boost, they recommend this game for preschool groups:
- Have children sit in a circle, and give a ball to one of them. Then ask this child to name someone in the circle and roll the ball to him or her.
- The recipient then does the same thing--naming a recipient and rolling the ball--and the process repeats itself throughout the game (Teachers' College, Columbia University 1999).

3. Preschool games that reward attention and self-control

To get along well with others, children need to develop focus, attention skills, and the ability to restrain their impulses. The preschool years are an important time to learn such self-control, and we can help them do it. Traditional games like "Simon Says" and "Red light, Green light" give youngsters practice in following directions and regulating their own behavior.

4. Music-making and rhythm games for young children

Young children are often inclined to help other people. How can we encourage this impulse? Research suggests that joint singing and music-making are effective social skills activities for fostering cooperative, supportive behavior.

5. Group games of dramatic, pretend play

To get along with others, kids need to be able to calm themselves down when something upsetting happens. They need to learn to keep their cool.

And surprisingly, one promising way for kids to hone these skills is to engage in dramatic make-believe with others. To try this approach, lead young children in games of joint make-believe, like

- pretending to be a family of non-human animals,
- dressing up as chefs and pretending to bake a cake together, or
- Taking turns pretending to be statues (and having peers pose the statues in various ways).

In a randomized experiment of preschoolers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, Thalia Goldstein and Matthew Lerner found evidence that these social skills activities helped children develop better emotional self-regulation (Goldstein and Lerner 2018).

After 8 weeks of teacher-led play, kids assigned to play group games of dramatic, pretend play improved more than did children assigned to alternative social skills activities, like playing together with blocks.

6. "Emotion charades" for young children

In this game, one player acts out a certain emotion, and the other players must guess which feeling is being portrayed. In effect, it's simple version of charades for the very young.

Is it helpful? At the very least, it's a way to motivate young children to think about and discuss emotions.

7. Passing the ball: A game for honing group communication skills

- The game begins with a player who starts the conversation, and then tosses a ball to someone else in the circle.
- The recipient responds with an appropriate, relevant contribution of his or her own, and tosses the ball to another child. And so on.
- To play successfully, kids must attend to whoever is speaking, and make eye contact during the exchange of the ball.
- White advises that you participate in the game yourself, and, if you notice that one of the kids isn't getting the opportunity to contribute, you can request that you receive the ball next. Then you can complete your turn by tossing the ball to the child who was left out (White 2011).

8. Cooperative construction:

Another form of play that promotes cooperation is team construction. When kids create something together with blocks, they must communicate, negotiate, and coordinate.

Preschoolers may develop more emotional self-restraint when they participate in joint games of pretend play.

9. Community gardening

Observational studies report that kids improve their social competence when they engage in cooperative gardening (Ozer et al 2007; Block et al 2012; Gibbs et al 2013). To turn gardening tasks into effective social skills activities, encourage kids to team up on tasks.

10. Story-based discussions about emotion

It sounds simple, and it is: Read a story with emotional content, and have kids talk about it afterwards. Why did the main character get angry? What kinds of things make you get angry? What do you do to cool off?

When kids participate in group conversations about emotion, they reflect on their own experiences, and learn about individual differences in the way people react to the world. And that understanding helps kids develop their "mind-reading" abilities.

In one study, 7-year-old school children met twice a week to discuss an emotion featured in a brief story. Sometimes their teachers encouraged them to talk about recognizing the signs of a given emotion. In other sessions, the kids discussed what causes emotions, or shared ideas about how to handle negative emotions ("When I feel sad, I play with the dog," or "I feel better when my mother hugs me"). After two months, participants outperformed peers in a control group, showing significant improvements in their understanding of emotion. They also scored higher on tests of empathy and "theory of mind" -- the ability to reason about other people's thoughts and beliefs.

11. Team athletics that feature training in good sportsmanship

Research suggests that team athletics can function as effective social skills activities -- if **use the opportunity to us teaches kids how to be good sports.** In one study, elementary school students who received explicit instruction in good sportsmanship showed greater leadership and conflict-resolution skills than did their control group peers (Sharpe et al 1995). How do we provide such instruction? Before a game, remind kids on the goals of good sportsmanship:

- Being a good winner (not bragging; showing respect for the losing team)
- Being a good loser (congratulating the winner; not blaming others for a loss)
- Showing respect to other players and to the referee
- Showing encouragement and offering help to less skillful players
- Resolving conflicts without running to the teacher

During a game, give kids the chance to put these principles into action before you intervene in conflicts. If they don't sort things out themselves after two minutes, you can jump in. And when the game is over, give kid's feedback on their good sportsmanship.

5. Some suggestions for parents

- Maintain a loving, secure relationship with your child.
- Be your child's "emotion coach".
- Be calm and supportive when children are upset, and don't dismiss their negative emotions.
- Practice inductive discipline
- Inspire children with positive words, and give them opportunities to experience the pleasures of giving.
- Talk with children about their social relationships, and introduce them to concrete, upbest strategies for getting along.
- Be wary about offering bribes to children for being kind.
- Show kids how to apologize, make amends, and offer forgiveness.
- Break up cliques with a negative vibe, and watch out for signs of peer rejection and bullying.
- Encourage pretend play with older kids and adults.

6. Conclusion

A good blend of all these activities goes long way, children will get a good grasp of language, motor skills are developed, sings, dances, concentration level increase and they become a little more independent. A little effort from our end pays in the longer run by making a child ready for his future.

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