

Child Development 3-5 Years

Mental Skills

Children:

- Can think about objects, people, and events without seeing them
- Although less than before, still think they are the center of the world and have trouble seeing things from someone else's perspective.
- More able to use words to express thoughts and feelings and to share experiences
- Talk to themselves out loud as a way to control their behaviors
- Can think of events in the past or those yet to happen
- Begin to think ahead and plan their actions; often can anticipate physical consequences of actions that are not too complicated
- Starting to see the difference between things they see and what they really are (a stuffed dog is not a dog)
- Starting to see the relationship of cause and effect (If I do this, then that will happen)
- Ask a lot of why, how, when questions
- Learn by imitation, observation, and by exploring, creating, and doing things
- Understand that breakfast is before lunch; lunch is before dinner, etc
- Beginning to understand before/after; up/ down; over/under; today, yesterday, and tomorrow
- Can't play or do something for too long or become bored and tired unless there is adult guidance

Social Skills

Children:

- Can read and interpret emotions of others; can tell when someone is angry or upset,
- Can't understand abstract emotions like pity, greed, gratitude
- Use different ways to control their own emotions: close their eyes and ears; remove themselves from the situation; sometimes can resist temptation to respond to whatever is disturbing them
- May develop first true relationship because friends become very important.
- How they play: At age 3, they typically play near a friend, find it difficult to take turns and to share things; at age 4, they may begin cooperative play, still difficult to share but begin

to understand turn taking, begin to offer things to others; at age 5, enjoy playing with other children, often cooperate well, have special friends

- Use less physical aggression than when younger
- Use more often verbal aggression like insults, threats, teasing to hurt other children; bullying appears: they understand the power of rejection
- Understand social rules and can act in accordance to them
- Are eager to carry out some responsibilities; offer to help
- Understand that praise or blame happens because of what they do
- Begin to understand the difference of doing things "on purpose" and "by accident"; focus more on the damage than on the intentions of the perpetrator
- By age 4, begin to have a sense of their ethnic identity and of the ways their social group is perceived in the society
- Increased capacity to use imagination; can imagine terrible things can happen to them and can lead to fear; nightmares can happen

Tips for Parents

- Teach your children to use words when they are angry, sad. ("You are sad because grandpa is gone")
- Ask your children to show angry, mad, sad, happy, surprised feeling using their faces and tell you what makes people feel that way
- Ask your children to draw a picture of their mad feelings and talk about them
- Give your children opportunities to accomplish something like organizing toys and books, helping with making up the grocery list; delivering short messages to others, giving their own ending to a story in a book
- Help your children cope with fantasy fear by pointing out the difference between reality and fantasy
- Keep your children away from situations that create real fear such as seeing violence in the home or neighborhood, watching violence on TV, and receiving physical punishment
- When there is a fight:
 - (a) Stop the fighting, go first to the child that is injured to calm him or her
 - (b) Use time out to calm down the child who is the aggressor (No more than one minute for each year of the child's age)
 - (c) When both children are calm, talk to them and ask: What happened? What is each one feeling? Ask them to think of a solution; tell that it's OK to be angry or mad but not to hurt
 - (d) Praise both children for thinking of a solution. Remember to show your love and care even though you disapprove of their behavior