



# Social Emotional Tips FOR Providers Caring for Infants

## Introduction

The quality of each infant's relationships with familiar adults—especially their parents—sets the foundation for social and emotional health. Social and emotional health is a child's growing ability to:

- express and manage a variety of feelings
- develop close relationships with others and
- explore his/her surroundings and learn (adapted from Zero to Three, 2001)

Children who experience the world as responsive to their needs, predictable, and supportive develop the social and emotional foundations that help them become ready to learn (Norman-Murch, 1996). For example, when a familiar caregiver shares a smile with an infant, rocks and cuddles him throughout the day, and gently responds to his needs, the child learns that he is safe. This sense of security allows the child to explore, learn and engage in the world and with people around them. A child who can do these things has an easier time being successful in school and life. Research tells us that attending to the social and emotional needs of very young children throughout the day—as part of their every day rituals and routines—promotes positive attachments that are critical to their developing trust for others and empathy.

***Social and Emotional Tips for Providers Caring for Infants*** provides a set of (5) one-page posters that staff can refer to during specific daily routines including: dressing, meal times, playtime, resting and diapering. Putting these posters up around the classroom can serve as a reminder of what to say or do to nurture the social and emotional health of infants every day. Each poster has (5) simple tips that staff can try with each child in their care such as: “*Talk about what you see.*” Each tip includes sample language that staff can try, “*Sal, look at the red and blue balls! Do you want to hold one?*” Each poster also offers a rationale for using the tips which are based on research. The practical strategies, sample language and rationale in each poster can help staff to:

- Practice using behavior and language that supports healthy, positive connections with children
- Learn more about social and emotional health and
- Understand the importance of social and emotional health to school readiness.

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## Intended Users and Examples of How to Use this Resource

This resource is primarily intended for use by those supporting infants within group settings. This may include staff such as, Early Head Start center-based teachers, family, group and center-based childcare providers and early childhood mental health consultants.

These posters align closely with the Social and Emotional Tips for Parents of Infants posters and can be used together to create consistent practices for children between home and care settings.

Examples of how an early childhood mental health consultant can introduce these posters to staff include:

- **Facilitating a small or large group training session.**  
For example, an early childhood mental health consultant might use the posters to enhance a staff training on social emotional development.
- **Facilitating an ongoing group experience.**  
For example, a consultant might introduce one poster at a time during monthly get-togethers encouraging staff to try several tips and report about their experiences at the next meeting.

For more information about social and emotional health of young children, visit the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation website at <http://ecmhc.org>.

Examples of additional social and emotional resources found on <http://ecmhc.org> website include:

- **Everyday Ideas for Increasing Children's Opportunities to Practice Social Skills and Emotional Competencies**  
<http://ecmhc.org/ideas/index.html>  
The Everyday Ideas are available in a variety of formats including, Twitter postings ("tweets"). The Everyday Ideas offer strategies that can be used in a classroom and supplemental materials that can be sent home for families to use. The ideas are organized by the type of skill that would be targeted when using the strategy: emotions, friendship skills, problem solving, and handling anger and other difficult emotions.
- **The Infant Toddler Temperament Tool (IT<sup>3</sup>)**  
<http://ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html>  
The Infant Toddler Temperament Tool includes a short on-line survey that allows parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers to recognize and explore their own temperament traits and those of a child for which they provide care. The IT<sup>3</sup> generates personalized results, which support parents and caregivers in understanding how adult and child similarities and differences in temperament traits may affect "goodness of fit." Along with these personalized results, the IT<sup>3</sup> describes best practice tips adults can use to foster the unique temperament of each child within their care.

- **Recognizing and Supporting the Social and Emotional Health of Young Children Birth to Age Five**  
<http://ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/index.html>  
This on-line tutorial provides professionals with a detailed definition and understanding of the milestones related to social and emotional health in infants and young children (birth up to age five) as well as strategies that adult's (parent's and other caregivers) can use to support these behaviors within every day routines in the home and within early care and education settings.



# 5 Simple Tips

To Support **Infants'** Social Emotional Health During



## Dressing

- 1 Talk about what you are doing.**  
*"Mila, Ms. Prima is going to put your shirt on now."*
- 2 Practice patience.**  
*"David, this shirt is hard for me to get over your head, I am going to try a different way."*
- 3 Leave extra time.**  
*"It will be time to go home soon, let's get you ready Sasha."*
- 4 Offer positive words.**  
*"Ellen you wiggled your foot into the sock. Way to go!"*
- 5 Have fun.**  
*"We got your shirt on Dedrea, let's clap your hands!"*

## You Help Children Grow!

Together, you and the infants that you care for can make dressing a special time for connecting. When you show patience and use gentle words, infants learn from you how to be kind and patient. When you talk positively about what you are doing infants learns that you like taking care of them, *"I am going to dress you in your coat today for our walk, it's chilly outside."*







# 5 Simple Tips

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## Meal Time

- 1 Hold infants while bottle-feeding.**  
*"I am going to feed you now Brayden. I am going to find a comfortable spot for us."*
- 2 Look into infant's eyes and connect.**  
*"I see you looking at me Gabe, I love looking at you too."*
- 3 Talk and sing to infants while feeding.**  
*"You like the orange carrots Calvin, I see that smile!"*
- 4 Support breastfeeding.**  
*"Mrs. Likins, you can have the rocking chair if you like to feed Marketa, or we have an empty office next door."*
- 5 Notice signs from infants that say, "I am done" or "I need more."**  
*"Kara you are turning your head away, I think you are all done eating."*

## You Help Children Grow!

You and the infants in your care can connect during mealtimes through cooing, singing and looking at each other. Babies love your face and voice. You help them to feel safe when you speak gently. When you know what infants need and respond, for example by feeding them, it sends a message to infants that their needs are important.





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## Play Time

- 1 Follow infants' interests.**  
*Lily, I see you bouncing to the music, let's dance together!"*
- 2 Talk about what you see.**  
*"Sal, look at the red and blue balls! Do you want to hold one?"*
- 3 Sing and read.**  
*"Sri and Nathan, snuggle in and let's look at this story together."*
- 4 Offer encouragement.**  
*"Helena, you almost rolled over, come on big girl, let's try again!"*
- 5 Have fun and laugh together.**  
*"I love your giggles, Talia!"*

## You Help Children Grow!

Infants are wired to learn and connect with people they love. Playing with infants every day builds your adult-child bond. When you sing, read, talk and look into the eyes of every infant, every day it helps their brain to grow.







# 5 Simple Tips

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## Rest Time

- 1 Create a routine.**  
*"Aden, first we will read stories, then we'll get ready for naptime."*
- 2 Use routines across care and home settings.**  
*"Your grandmother told us you like it when she sings your favorite song before napping Mya, let's try that today."*
- 3 Leave time for transitioning.**  
*"Mommy's here to pick you up Hanna, let's share some of the things you did today."*
- 4 Take care of the basics.**  
*"Justin, let's change your diaper before you rest."*
- 5 Take time to refuel.**  
*"Nina, I am going to rock in this chair and do my notes to get ready for playtime later."*

## You Help Children Grow!

Infants, need time each day to rest. Just like us! Gentle routines—doing the same thing every day, will help infants know what to expect and will help them ease into resting. Planning ahead to meet infants needs each day will make it easier for them and for you, *"Sara, your dad told us you have been hungrier than usual, we have plenty of snacks ready for you."*





# 5 Simple Tips

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## Diapering

- 1 Create a routine.**  
*"Hi Derry, you had a good nap! Let's check your diaper."*
- 2 Know the signs.**  
*"Eli, I see you pulling on your diaper, do you need to be changed?"*
- 3 Take time to connect.**  
*"Look at that big smile Henry! You make me smile too!"*
- 4 Offer choices.**  
*"Kia do you want the red ball or the bear to hold while I change you?"*
- 5 Practice patience.**  
*"I know you don't like to be changed Jordan, but we need to take good care of you. I am almost done."*

## You Help Children Grow!

Diapering is an every day routine that creates an opportunity for connecting with infants. When you coo, babble and talk with infants it sends a message that they are important. They love your voice and face! Creating a simple routine for diapering—doing some things the same every day, can help infants know what to expect and will make the experience smoother for each of you, *"Ms. Hernandez is going to change your diaper and sing our song and then we will go play with toys!"*

