

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Young children begin learning about friendships by building relationships with the adults in their lives, and observing how those adults treat each other. As children grow and begin to play with other children, they use those observations to develop friendships of their own. Through their friendships, children learn how to socialize with others by practicing how to manage their emotions, negotiate, compromise, resolve conflicts, communicate clearly, take turns, cooperate, include others, accept people for who they are, help each other, show compassion, and feel empathy.

Children are usually drawn to each other because they share similar interests or have a common goal. For example, a child who loves dinosaurs might notice when

someone else wears a dinosaur shirt and start a conversation, or a group of children who want to put together a large jigsaw puzzle might choose to work together on it. Even when children have common interests or goals, there will still be some conflict from time to time. When they find they disagree, children can learn how to negotiate, compromise, and solve problems.

Adults can demonstrate how to work through disagreements by encouraging children to take turns talking and listening to each other, identifying their emotions, and asking questions such as, "Now that we know how everyone feels, what are some solutions that will include everyone?" By asking thoughtful questions, adults can help guide children in



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READ AND LEARN

Children build language and communication skills when they practice identifying and managing emotions. Reading books about emotions offers the opportunity to talk about different feelings and how to express them appropriately. Look for the following books at your local library.

- **Can You Tell How Someone Feels?** by Nita Everly
- **Heartprints** by Norma Simon
- **How Do I Feel?** by Lisa Bany-Winters (2006)
- **How Do I Love You?** by P.K. Hallinan
- **My Many Colored Days** by Dr. Seuss
- **See How I Feel** by Julie Aigner-Clark
- **The Feelings Book** by Todd Parr
- **The Kissing Hand** by Audrey Penn
- **The Way I Feel** by Janan Cain
- **When You Need Wings** by Lita Judge

Playing with Music

Music has a wide variety of benefits for children of all ages. When children experience music, they are listening to language, moving their muscles, and expressing themselves creatively. Music can be found in all languages and cultures. It brings children together and teaches them about both themselves and the world. Encourage children to listen to a variety of music styles and create their own music.

Hold infants in your lap while you sing a lullaby. Create a simple rhyme using the baby's name and sing it to a tune you know. Each time their name is said, gently touch their cheek. For example, use the tune *Frère Jacques* to sing: *Maria is sleeping, Maria is sleeping, on my lap, on my lap; I can see Maria, I can see Maria, on my lap, on my lap.* This will help babies become familiar with the sound of their names while you comfort them.



Toddlers enjoy listening to nursery rhymes that can be pantomimed. Songs like *The Itsy, Bitsy, Spider*; *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*; or *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* are usually favorites. Toddlers enjoy trying to mimic the gestures for songs while they move to the beat. Try playing soft classical music during nap times, and music they can dance to during play time.

Preschool children are able to create and use instruments. They can make instruments such as a bucket drum or a kazoo (made by folding parchment or tissue paper over a comb, holding it against the mouth and humming). Introduce children to music that requires them to follow directions, such as *Tooty Ta* by Jack Hartman (available on most free digital radio apps). This music helps children practice self-regulation skills and learn to follow directions.

School-age children can help create musical instruments and organize performances. Younger children can enjoy being an audience for older children who sing, dance, or play music for them. Older children can also enjoy playing games such as musical chairs, freezing when the music stops, or having a contest for who can dance the longest before getting tired.

S Summer Pasta Salad

RECIPES

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy salads. Children can help wash vegetables, measure ingredients, and mix ingredients. As you cook, talk about the colors and textures of the ingredients, point out the recipe instructions, and count tomatoes. Children can also tear the arugula or spinach and basil instead of chopping it.

Ingredients

- 3/4 pound rotini pasta
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup arugula or spinach, chopped
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan, romano, or pecorino cheese
- 1 can (15 oz.) kidney beans, rinsed
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Cook the pasta according to package directions. While the pasta is cooking, toss everything but the cheese in a large bowl. Once cooked, allow the pasta to cool to room temperature. Toss the pasta in the bowl with the other ingredients and chill in the refrigerator for about thirty minutes. Serve with cheese on top.



Managing Stress

Everybody experiences some amount of stress every day. Stress can be caused by minor irritations such as dealing with traffic or waiting in a long line at the grocery store. Stress can also come from life-changing events such as the birth of a new baby, moving to a new home, losing a job, starting a new job, relationship problems, or the death of a loved one. Financial problems, worrying about family or friends, and finding enough time to get everything done, can also increase feelings of stress.

Stress can affect you physically, emotionally, and mentally. It can impact your health, relationships, and work. Learning to identify signs of stress is the first step to managing it. Emotional and mental signs of stress can include feeling irritable, forgetful, anxious, moody, and unable to focus on a task. There may be physical signs of stress, such as headaches, back pain, high blood pressure, frequent illnesses, changes in weight, fatigue, stomach aches, difficulty sleeping, cold sores, or changes in appetite.

Start reducing stress by making sure you and your family's basic needs for sleep and a healthy diet are being met. Adults need about eight hours of sleep each night, and children need about twelve hours. Prepare meals that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean protein such as chicken, fish, or tofu. Try to avoid foods that are fatty, processed, or have high amounts of sugar.

Being organized can also help reduce feelings of stress. Make lists of things that need to be done, and establish a consistent routine for your family. Following a schedule can help you feel more focused and productive. Plan relaxing activities before

bedtime such as reading together or listening to music. As a family, practice deep breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. Talk about how deep breathing can help people feel calm when they are experiencing a lot of stress.

Don't forget to get moving! Exercise releases hormones that make you feel better, and keep you healthy. Take a fifteen-minute family walk outside after dinner, or put on some music and dance. Remember that spending time together as a family can help all of you feel connected and supported, which also reduces stress. If you or a family member are consistently experiencing a high amount of stress, consult with a medical professional to receive the support you need.

Source: *Stress: How It Affects You and Your Child* brochure by Children's Home Society of California (2017).



considering the needs of others and finding ways to compromise and cooperate. Adults can also suggest rolling dice, or playing games like Rock-Paper-Scissors as tools for making decisions or solving conflicts.

Making friends also teaches children about diversity. When children attend a child care program or elementary school, they have the opportunity to meet people who are from different cultures, have different family dynamics, or have differing abilities. Children learn to work around language barriers by slowing down their speech and using gestures to communicate. They may also teach each other some words or phrases from their own languages and add those to gestures in order to communicate more clearly.

Children practice empathy, compassion, and problem solving when they discover ways to include those who have different abilities in their play. For example, if they want to dance to music, but one of their friends is in a wheelchair, they may offer that child scarves to shake and wave to the music, or take turns helping to move the wheelchair to the beat. Adults can support inclusive play by suggesting ideas and encouraging children to think of ways to adapt

activities so everyone can participate. This requires children to shift their perspective and think about how someone else feels, and how they can help someone feel valued and included.

Adults can support children in making and keeping friends by inviting their child to talk about friendship, encouraging them to include all children in their play, and offering support and guidance in managing some of the complex emotions they may sometimes experience such as jealousy, disappointment, or rejection. Meaningful conversations with children about friendship offer adults the opportunity to share their own stories and provide ideas for possible solutions to manage challenging situations.

Visit the library and read books together about friendship. Invite children to share their ideas about the characters and situations in the stories. Give children time to play freely and invent their own games. As they play, children will learn from each other, strengthen their social skills, and expand their understanding of the world.

Sources:

"Social Skills Children Need to Make and Keep Friends" by Karen Stephens (Exchange Press, 2002).

"Ways to Nurture Children's Friendship Skills" by Karen Stephens (Exchange Press, 2002).

ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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