



# Preschool Development & Mental Health

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# AGENDA

1. Domains of development
2. What is preschool mental health
3. The power of play
4. Support for development
5. Pyramid Model and how we support social and emotional learning
6. Home to school connection
7. Healthy Habits



# Developmental Domains



1. **Physical** (fine and gross motor skills)
  - a. Fine motor→ using the small muscles in your hands and fingers.
    - i. Ex: Gripping a pencil, using tweezers, cutting with scissor, buttoning, zipping, using eating utensils
  - b. Gross motor→ manipulating large muscles of the body
    - i. Ex: Running, walking, Jumping, hopping, galloping, skipping, walking up and down stairs, balancing, catching, throwing, kicking
2. **Cognitive**→ thinking and asking questions about the world.
  - a. Ex: attending, problem solving, showing curiosity and motivation, recalling information, making connections, engaging in pretend play
3. **Communication** (expressive and receptive)
  - a. Ex: Listening and understanding, following directions, speaking to others and engaging in conversation
4. **Social and emotional**→ relating and interacting with others. Children begin to understand their emotions and develop relationships
  - a. Ex: Regulating emotions and behaviors, managing feelings, following limits and expectations, taking care of own needs, building relationships with adults and peers, responding to emotional cues, cooperative in group

## Your child:

is more independent and can do many things for herself. Your child will tell you, "I can do it myself!"

is still learning to follow simple rules, although he sometimes needs gentle reminders.

now plays briefly with other children. She is still learning about sharing and taking turns.

likely has a special friend that he prefers playing with. Boys may prefer playing with boys, and girls with girls.

is becoming more independent. When you go on outings, she will not always hold your hand or stay by your side.

has emotions that may shift suddenly, from happy to sad or from mad to silly. He's learning how to handle his emotions.

can sometimes use words to express her feelings.

is beginning to think about other people's feelings and learning to identify their feelings, too.

sometimes boss people around and makes demands. This shows that he is independent and values himself. He might do something that he is asked to do, but he is more willing if he thinks it is his idea.

uses imagination to create stories through pretend play with dolls, toy telephones, and action figures.

may be fearful and sometimes has nightmares. Scary images and sounds, even cartoons, can give her nightmares.

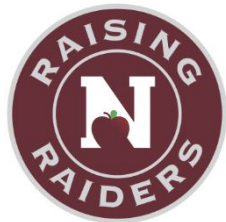
has an increasing attention span. She often stays with an activity for at least 5 minutes.



## Social-Emotional Development Guide

Learn what types of behaviors to expect from your growing child.

# Age 3



## Your child:

likes to play with other children and has favorite games and playmates.

is beginning to share. He takes turns but is possessive of favorite toys.

expresses extreme emotions at times—happiness, sadness, anger, silliness. She may be able to label her own feelings.

often uses real-life situations when he plays, such as going to the store, school, and gas station.

may have imaginary friends when playing games, sleeping at night, and going to preschool.

now understands short and simple rules at home.

is starting to understand danger. She knows when to stay away from dangerous things.

loves silly jokes and has a sense of humor.

is beginning to control his feelings of frustration.

may use her imagination a lot, and she can be very creative.

is becoming more independent and adventurous. He may like to try new things.

can be boastful and bossy at times with her new independence.

shows concern and sympathy for younger siblings and playmates when they are hurt or upset. His ability to empathize—to put himself in someone else's shoes—is increasing.

has an increasing attention span. She often stays with an activity for at least 10 minutes.



## Social-Emotional Development Guide

Learn what types of behaviors to expect from your growing child.

# Age 4





## Your child:

likes to play best with one or two other children at a time.

likes to choose his own friends and may have a best friend.

now plays simple games such as Candy Land and Go Fish.

may play with small groups of children at the park or at school.

understands and can follow simple rules at home and at school.

is now very independent and likes to make his own choices about clothes to wear, foods to eat, and activities in which to be involved.

is sensitive to other children's feelings. She can identify other people's feelings: "She's sad"

likes to talk with familiar adults and children.

understands how to take turns and share at home and at school, but he may not want to all of the time.

shows a variety of emotions. She may be jealous of other children at times, especially of a younger brother or sister who is getting attention.

feels adult approval is very important. Your child looks to adults for attention and praise.

is showing some self-control in group situations and can wait for his turn or stand in a line.

is usually able to respond to requests such as "Use your quiet voice" or "Inside is for walking."

is beginning to understand the meaning of right and wrong. She does not always do what is right, though.

has an increasing attention span. She is able to focus her attention for a necessary length of time, such as listening to directions or a story.



## Social-Emotional Development Guide

Learn what types of behaviors to expect from your growing child.

# Age 5





# What is mental health?

The CDC states that

“Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.”



# Play is Essential for Preschooler development



Different kinds of play help preschoolers develop and learn in many different ways:

- Dramatic and pretend play
- Messy play
- Physical play
- Songs, books, riddles and silly rhymes
- Sorting games
- Outdoor play
- Simple board games
- Rough-and-tumble play





# PLAY PROMOTES THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

Following a schedule



Empathy

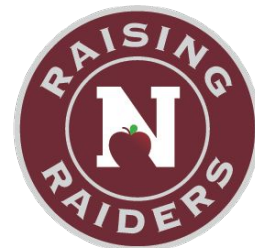


Following directions

Big Emotions



Kindness



Language

Friendship skills

LIMITS

Using writing utensils



Turn Taking

# The 6 Stages of Play



## Unoccupied Play

0-3 months

When baby is making movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.



## Solitary Play

0-2 years

When a child plays alone and are not interested in playing with others quite yet.



## Spectator/Onlooker Behavior

2 years

When a child watches and observes other children playing but will not play with them.



## Parallel Play

2+ years

When a child plays alongside or near to others but does not play with them.



## Associate Play

3-4 years

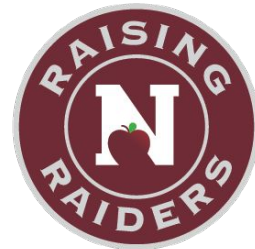
When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not much cooperation required.  
*For example, kids playing on the playground but doing different things.*



## Cooperative Play

4+ years

When a child plays with others and has interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing.



# PYRAMID MODEL



The Pyramid Model is a positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) framework that uses evidence-based practices.

***Supports Social Emotional Competence in Early Childhood.***



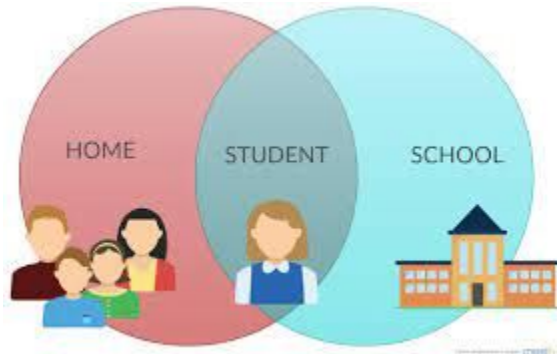
We also use things like family pictures, transition items, cozy corner, and manipulatives to teach coping mechanisms (like deep breathing)

***CHALLENGINGBEHAVIORS.ORG***



# Home to School Connection

Early childhood programs that actively involve families, serve children in natural contexts where possible, incorporate evidence-based interventions, and take a comprehensive approach to treatment are associated with greater improvements in mental health outcomes.



# How Families Can Support their Child

1. Set clear and developmentally appropriate expectations
  - a. Exposure, teaching skills, encouraging independence  
  
Model, practice, repetition
2. Children learn best when they are interested, teaching them through things they are interested– more engaging, play based even better
3. Awareness and reflection of your child's strengths and weaknesses
  - a. Questions to ask yourself by explore your own beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge





# If you are concerned you can:

Talk to your pediatrician

Talk to your child's teacher

The Prek support staff: social worker, instructional coach, intervention and referral specialist

- ❖ Many children occasionally experience fears and worries or display disruptive behaviors. If symptoms are serious and persistent and interfere with school, home, or play activities, this could be an indicator to seek professional help and treatment with a mental health clinician.

## **Community Resource Handbook-**

<https://www.nutleyschools.org/preschool/resources>

## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



# STAYING HEALTHY



- **Healthy eating:** including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (for example, beans, peas, and lentils), lean protein sources, and nuts and seeds
- **Physical activity** and movement for at least 60 minutes each day
- Getting the **recommended amount of sleep** each night based on age→ **Prek is 10–13 hours per day (including naps)**
- Practicing **mindfulness or relaxation techniques**



belly breathing



# Resources

- <https://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/resources/waystoplay/child-centered-play/>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning/getting-play-started/preschoolers-at-play#preschooler-play-why-its-important-nav-title>
- <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/keeping-kids-healthy/development/child-directed-play/>
- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations  
ChallengingBehavior.org
- HealthyChildren.org
- [health.usnews.com/wellness/for-parents/articles](https://health.usnews.com/wellness/for-parents/articles)
- Pathways Psychology  
<https://pathways-psychology.com/>
- [Happy parentingandfamilies.com/](https://happy parentingandfamilies.com/)



# National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

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