

# CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A child's development includes both physical and emotional stages. We frequently concentrate on the stages of our child's physical development and have little insight or understanding about the importance of our child's emotional development. Understanding the stages of your child's emotional development will help you to make sense of your child's behaviour. It will help you to think about and acknowledge how your child might be feeling at a particular time and enable you to help him/her to work through what has been experienced. It is important to remember that each child develops in his/her own unique way depending on personality and at different rates from each other.

**The following are guidelines for the emotional developmental stages of children:**

## **Babies (0 – 1 Months)**

- Baby is adjusting to life outside the womb
- Crying is a normal
- Needs to feel calm, safe and have a routine

## **2 - 3 Months**

- Showing a wide variety of feelings and expresses emotions through smiles frowns, body movements, gurgling and cooing
- Comforted by being fed and cuddled
- More settled – beginning to settle into a more regular routine and happy to be changed
- Recognises familiar people and likes to smile at them

## **4 – 6 Months**

- Beginning to show fear around unknown people
- Able to laugh and make happy sounds
- Calmed when picked up and on hearing familiar voice

## **6 – 12 Months**

- Strong reaction to strangers and clings to parent.
- May start to resist when not happy to do something
- Enjoys attention
- May soothe him/herself with familiar toy or thumb sucking
- Emotional expressions are increased to include fear and sadness.

## **12 – 18 Months**

- Beginning to show negative emotions and may resist naps, refuse some foods and may have tantrums
- Begins to understand turn taking games
- Needs comfort and reassurance from parents/carers
- Afraid of being apart from carer and cry when they see carer leave.

## Two Years

- Shows extreme behaviour - dependent/interdependent, very aggressive/calm, and helpful/stubborn.
- Gets angry when stopped doing something that is unsafe
- Temper tantrums are common and tends to cry, scream, kick, bite and can be rough with other children
- Needs parent/teacher/carer to tell him what is right and wrong
- Easily distracted because of short attention span
- Has little concept of sharing – plays alone alongside other children
- Likes routine and any changes are upsetting
- Beginning to show feelings of sympathy, pity and pride and aware of praise and smile
- Becoming more independent
- Afraid of noises, trains, thunder and flushing toilets. Separation from parent, especially at bedtime is still frightening
- May be able to hold picture of loved one in mind which will help child to cope with separation from main carer (18 months – 3 years)
- Fear of strangers decreasing

## Three Years

- Play is the main activity of this stage and is important in the development of identity and confidence
- Demonstrates a balance of happiness and contentment
- Continues to be self-centered and may feel responsible for everything that happens
- Vivid imagination and can have imaginary friends
- Ability to bargain but not to reason
- Distraction techniques still work
- Less frustrated and angry
- Fear of dark remains and may have fear of moving objects and fear of being abandoned by parent

## Four Years

- Enjoys jokes and silly games and loves showing off
- Play still very important
- Can still demonstrate stubbornness, aggression, kicking, biting and blaming others for their naughtiness especially older siblings
- A sense of past/future developing
- Fear of dark continues
- May compete with parent of same sex for attention of parent of opposite sex
- Needs parent for support and reassurance

## Five Years

- Becoming more independent and can be serious and realistic at times
- Demonstrates anger by slamming doors and stamping of feet and verbally by saying 'I hate you'.
- Friendly & talkative to strangers
- May worry that something might happen to a parent while the child is not there and parents will not be available to them when needed
- Protective and kind towards parents, younger child or pet
- Becoming less frustrated and less angry

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[http://www.healthvisitors.com/parents/stages\\_emotional\\_development.htm](http://www.healthvisitors.com/parents/stages_emotional_development.htm)