



Introduction to Social and Emotional Development Domain for Young Infants

Domain Components:

- SE1. Relationships with Others
- SE2. Emotional Expression and Understanding
- SE3. Self-Awareness and Self-Concept

Here are some important things to know about young infants and their social and emotional development

- ❑ They show preference for familiar adults and form strong emotional bonds with one or more caregivers.
- ❑ They enjoy playing games such as “peek-a-boo” with their caregivers.
- ❑ They show interest in their peers. For example, when they are safely placed near each other, they may look at and/or reach out and touch each other.
- ❑ They express a wide range of emotions such as joy, sadness, contentment, distress, interest, surprise, anger, and fear through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.
- ❑ They begin to develop self-awareness. For example, they explore their own hands and feet. They respond to their own name.
- ❑ They need family members and other caregivers to give them attention, show them affection and take care of them.
- ❑ They need to be comforted when in distress, fed when hungry, changed when wet, and allowed to sleep when they are tired.

By knowing these special things about young infants, families and caregivers can better understand how to support the child’s social and emotional development.

Here is what happens when families and other caregivers support the young infant’s social and emotional development:

- They acquire “basic trust” which is necessary for healthy development in all areas. This is a feeling of safety and security that the world and oneself are all right.
- They begin to see themselves as worthy individuals.
- Young infants begin to develop caring and cooperative behavior.
- They enjoy being with others.



Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: “Special Times Together”

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Get in tune with each infant’s needs. Learn the things about each infant that are unique; for example:
 - how the infant likes to be held for feeding or sleeping.
 - the kind of cuddling, stroking, talking and playing that brings comfort to the infant.
- Think of the time you spend diapering, dressing and feeding each infant as your special time together...a time the two of you can get to know and enjoy each other; as a unique opportunity for one-on-one interactions with the infant.
- Have the necessary supplies ready for these caregiving times so you don’t feel rushed.

Try these nurturing rituals:

- Touch, smile, talk and sing with the infant during feeding, diapering and bathing.
- Talk with the infant about what you’re doing. The infant may not understand what you’re saying but will understand your voice tone that says *“I want to be with you.”*
- Be consistent in the way you hold the infant and in the tone of your voice.
- Be gentle with the infant.

Note: If you work with infants in a group setting where there is more than one caregiver in the infant room, be a primary caregiver for specific infants in the group. When possible, assume primary responsibility for their daily caregiving routines such as feeding and diapering. This allows you to get to know each infant well and each can come to know you.





Connecting with Infants

SE Activity: "Can You Smile?"

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Select a time when the infant is alert and content

Try this:

- Hold the infant facing you or lying down in front of you.
- Gaze into the infant's eyes.
- Smile at the infant. Walk your fingers up and down her arms while you are talking to her.
- Speak softly as you say things such as "I see you! Who is this beautiful baby?" or "Can you smile at me? Yes, I see you smiling?"
- Do this activity for short intervals throughout the day, such as during diapering and waking from a nap.
- Discontinue the activity if the infant turns her head away from you or begins to squirm. She is letting you know that she is no longer interested.





Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: “Peek-a-Boo and Pat-a-Cake” (Games)

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Observe the infant and make sure he is alert and ready to play.

Try this:

- Play “peek-a-boo” with the infant.
- Hide your face behind your hands.
- Open your hands and say “peek-a-boo!”
- Notice the infant’s reaction. If he smiles or laughs, continue the game until he loses interest.



Try this variation:

- Hide your face behind a cloth
- Take the cloth away and say “peek-a-boo.”

Or this variation:

- Gently and lightly put the cloth over the infant’s face.
- Take the cloth away and say “peek-a-boo.”

At another time, try this:

- Play “pat-a-cake” with the infant.
- Clap the infant’s hands as you say “Pat-a-cake” and roll his hands when you say “roll it”

Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker’s man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can,
Pat it and roll it and mark it with a “T”
Put it in the oven for Thomas and me.

Teacher Note: Use letter representing infant’s name and use infant’s name in the last line!

Teacher Note: “Peek-a-Boo” also promotes Cognitive Development

Learning Goal: 2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory



Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: "Pay Attention to Me"

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Listen carefully to the infant's cry. Try and figure out what the cry means:
 - ✓ hunger
 - ✓ tiredness
 - ✓ wet or soiled diaper
 - ✓ pain (gas, colic, teething, for example)
 - ✓ uncomfortable clothing
 - ✓ uncomfortable position
 - ✓ need to be held
 - ✓ overstimulation
 - ✓ sudden change such as loud noise or bright lights

Try this!

- Take care of the infant's needs as quickly as possible. This will not spoil the infant, but will build trust and confidence that his needs will be met.
- Be gentle and soothing with the infant.
- Think of ways to prevent distress in an infant. Some examples include:
 - ✓ be aware of early signs of hunger, sleepiness or irritability and immediately take care of the infant's need
 - ✓ suggest that families dress infants in clothes that are comfortable, don't bind or restrict movement and are appropriate for the temperature
 - ✓ keep the environment calm by avoiding loud music or bright lights
 - ✓ keep the infant on a predictable but flexible schedule





Connecting with Young Infants

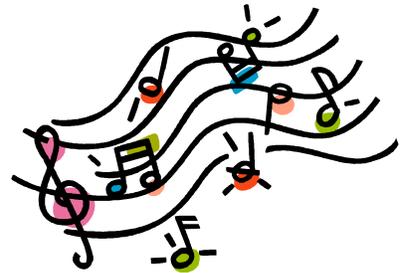
SE Activity: “Sing Softly” (Singing with Infants)

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Recall lullabies or songs that you have heard; songs such as:
“Hush Little Baby”
“Rock-a-Bye Baby”
“All the Pretty Horses”
“Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”
- Make up your own songs or lullabies



Try this!

- Sing lullabies as you rock the infant and hold her close.
 - Sing lullabies while gently swaying with the infant in your arms.
 - Gently stroke her face as you sing a lullaby.
 - Include her name in the lullaby. For example, sing “Rock-a-bye Carmen” or “Hush little Carmen.”
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CDs

A Child’s Gifts of Lullabies by Tanya Goodman

We Sing Nursery Rhymes and Lullabies (Book and CD)

Classic Nursery Rhymes by Hap Palmer

Books

Time for Bed by Mem Fox, illustrated by Jane Dyer. Orlando: Harcourt. 1997.

Hush Little Baby by Silvia Long. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. Board edition. 2002



Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: "Gotcha!" (Playing Games with Infants)

Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

You will need: You and an infant
Stuffed animal

Before you begin:

- Place the infant in an infant seat, or if he sits independently, seat him in front of you on the floor.

Try this!

- Sit in front of the infant, holding the stuffed animal in your hand.
- Move the stuffed animal slowly toward the infant, making a funny, animal sound. (**Do not make a scary noise!**)
- Gently touch the infant's toes with the stuffed animal and say, "Gotcha, Isaac."
- Notice your infant's reaction.
 - Does he anticipate the "Gotcha?"
 - Does he giggle, kick and coo?
 - Does he seem to be enjoying the game?
 - Does he seem to be frightened by the animal?
- Repeat this activity unless the infant is frightened by it.
- Play the game only as long as the infant remains interested.

Special Note: Never tickle an infant. Tickling forces laughter. An infant's laughter should be spontaneous and controlled by the infant.

Play more games with your infant!

- "Peek-a-Boo"
- "Pat-a-Cake"
- "This Little Piggy"





Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: “Making Friends”

Learning Goal: SE1.2 Interacts with peers

You will need: Two or three infants and you nearby
Clean mat on the floor

Before you begin:

- Observe the infants in your group and notice if they are beginning to show an interest in each other. If so:

Try this!

- Place two or three infants facing each other on a clean mat on the floor so they can become better acquainted.
- Sit nearby to keep the infants safe.
- Observe the infants. Do they watch each other? Do they reach out to touch or pat each other?
- Make comments about what they are doing and experiencing. For example, “Yes, Jacob, that’s Melia’s arm you are touching.” “Rachel, you are touching Jacob’s hair. It feels soft, doesn’t it?”

At another time, try these ideas:

- Place two infants in front of a mirror large enough for them to see each other. Point to one of the images in the mirror and say, “Lark, that’s Peyton in the mirror.” Then point to Lark’s image and say, “Peyton, that’s Lark in the mirror.”
- Place two infants in a double stroller and take a tour of an area outside the classroom, including the playground. Use children’s names as you call attention to things they see in the environment.





Connecting with Infants

SE Activity: “You Know How I Feel”

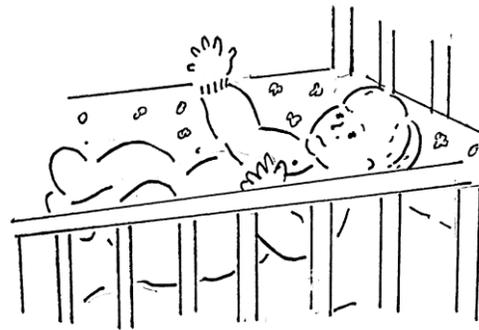
Learning Goal: SE2.1 Experiences, expresses and regulates a range of emotions

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

Think about the different feelings and emotions you have seen the child display:

- crying or squirming when distressed
- smiling and cooing when sung to
- showing fear when hearing a loud noise
- kicking legs in excitement



Try this!

Put the infant’s feelings into words. Talk with the infant about the feelings he seems to be expressing. Here are some examples of what you might say:

- The child starts to cry when you drop a pan on the floor:
“That loud noise scared you. Here, let me hold you for a little while.”
- The child kicks her legs when you walk near her crib as she is waking from a nap:
“You’re sure excited. I think you’re ready to play.”
- The child smiles and coos as you sing with him:
“You’re so happy when I sing to you. Are you trying to sing along with me?”
- After you have changed his wet diaper:
“That dry diaper feels good, doesn’t it?”
- The child begins to cry for no apparent reason:
“Let’s see if we can find out what’s making you so unhappy.”



Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall!”

Learning Goal: SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as a unique individual

You will need: You and an infant, time together
A mirror large enough for you and the infant to see each other talking

Before you begin:

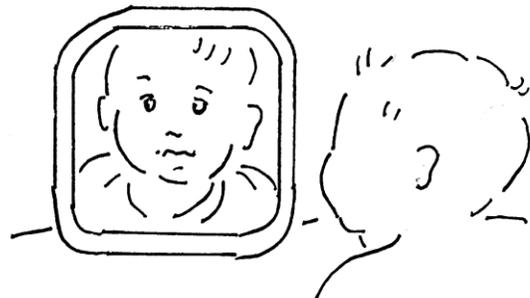
- Observe the infant to make sure she or he is alert and ready to play

Try this nurturing ritual!

- Hold the infant in a position that allows you both to connect visually (make eye contact) in the mirror’s reflection.
 - Chant in a sing-song manner, *“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the most wonderful baby of them all?”*
 - Point to the baby in the mirror and repeat her name. Smile and say, for instance, *“Lucy is the most wonderful baby of them all.”*
 - Observe the infant for signs of interests, such as smiles and coos. If the infant responds, repeat the chant with a little more enthusiasm. Vary your voice inflection. Be sure to emphasize the infant’s name repeatedly.
 - Make up variations of the chant. For example, *“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the most loved baby of them all?”* *“Lucy, Lucy is the most loved of them all!”*
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Try this additional activity - Mirror Peek-A-Boo!

- Hold an infant in front of a mirror.
- Turn away, then turn back to the mirror and say “Peek-a-Boo.”
- Continue this peek-a-boo game as long as the baby is interested.





Connecting with Young Infants

SE Activity: “Where Are Your Toes?”

Learning Goal: SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as unique individual

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Select a time after diapering and before removing the infant from the changing table.

Try this:

- Sing the following song to the infant (Tune: “The Farmer in the Dell”):

Where are (Josh’s) toes?
Where are (Josh’s) toes?
Hi Ho, Hi Ho
Here are (Josh’s) toes. (point to infant’s toes)



- Continue the song, substituting different body parts such as hands, arms, fingers, feet and legs into the verse.
- Continue singing the song as long as the infant shows interest.

At another time, try these activities:

- Select a time when the infant is alert and rested.
- Lay the infant face-up on a blanket or securely place the infant in an infant seat.
- Sing the following name song to gain the infant’s attention: (Tune: “Where Is Thumbkin?”):

Where is (Mario)? Where is (Mario)?
There he is. There he is. (point to infant)
How are you today, (Mario)?
How are you today, (Mario)?
Ready to play? Ready to play?

- Gently clap his hands together while saying his name. Do it over and over again as long as the infant is enjoying the activity. Repeat the game at another time.
- Play a game such as “pat-a-cake” with the infant.

Additional Learning Goal: SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with trusting adults