

# Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The loving things parents do every day such as cuddling, comforting, talking, playing, being proud of every achievement and celebrating it in the family, are the foundations of successful personal, social and emotional development. We are all competent learners from birth and it is usually our parents who give us the confidence to keep learning and stretching the boundaries of our understanding.



Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary.

Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

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## Resilience

Becoming resilient is a big part of your child's PSED (personal, social and emotional development).

Purposefully developing children's natural resilient tendencies will give them essential life skills: the skills to cope with challenges, adopt a positive perspective, and develop self-confidence and self-worth; all essential ingredients for happiness. Many experts on child resilience agree that there are specific characteristics or elements of a child's life that most contribute to their ability to be resilient. Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, a paediatrician and leading expert on child resilience, organises these characteristics and elements into the 7Cs.



## THE 7 CS OF RESILIENT CHILDREN

- **Competence** - A child's competence is built through opportunities to fully develop and master specific skills or strengths. This includes concrete skills such as counting, playing ball, reading, or playing an instrument and less concrete skills such as the ability to solve problems, be a good friend, or make thoughtful decisions.
- **Confidence** - Children need to have a general belief in themselves and their abilities, believing that they are important and can make a positive difference and worthwhile contribution to the world.
- **Connection** - Strong relationships serve as a safety net for all individuals, particularly children. When children feel connected, they feel protected and are more likely to explore the world knowing that they have support when they need it.
- **Character** - Although the lines between right and wrong are still blurry in early childhood, children are beginning to develop an internal moral code to guide them (hence their ever-present focus on fairness).
- **Contribution** - Having opportunities to make a positive impact are essential to children's sense of worth.
- **Coping** - Children need to develop internal coping responses that allow them to navigate challenges without turning to destructive behaviours or relying solely on others to help them through challenging times.
- **Control** - From their first assertive, "NO!" young children are practising asserting control of their lives. Children need clear boundaries and the ability to assert control when logical, to develop a sense of their abilities and feel in control of their lives.



## IDEAS ON HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN TO BE RESILIENT

- Support** - As much as possible, provide support rather than advice. Ask your child about their ideas and solutions.
- Role-play** - Role-play typical age-appropriate moral dilemmas or ethical challenges so when your child faces them in real-life, they are more prepared.
- Get out of the way** - Let children take risks and make mistakes (when safe to do so) and learn from them on their own. It is hard to watch children stumble or fail, but the experience of using their own wits and talents to improve their circumstances is often more valuable than any tips you might provide.
- Share simple strategies** - Teach your child some stress-busting strategies, e.g. mindfulness, talking with someone, exercising, etc.
- Be a good role model** - Your children are watching and learning from how you approach life and respond to challenges.

## Some ways that you can help me with my PSED – from birth to 3

- I need loving, responsive, playful interactions with you.
- Find out what makes me feel calm - rocking, cuddling or singing.
- Offer me manageable choices between two things.
- Let me help get snack or lunch ready and learn to pour my own drink.
- Help me understand my feelings by using words to label my feelings like 'sad', 'upset', 'angry'
- Model turn taking - "Can I have a turn?" "My turn next."

## Some ways that you can help me with my PSED – for 3 and 4 year-olds

- Give me tasks to carry out, e.g. washing my plate after snack.
- Model how you manage your own feelings, e.g. "I'm feeling a bit angry, so I am going to take a deep breath."
- Help me to understand why I am feeling sad or frustrated.
- Make a 'calm down jar.'



### Make your own calming mood jar

Focusing on something else can help your child calm down if they are feeling anxious or angry. Shake this glitter filled mood jar and watch as it settles from a whirling storm to a calm glitter sea.

#### You will need

- An empty jar with a tight-fitting lid
- Glitter glue
- Hot water
- A spoon

#### What to do:

1. Pour a dollop of glitter glue into the jar. How much depends on the jar that you're using, but don't worry, you can always add more if you need to.
2. Add hot water to the jar and stir it with the spoon to dissolve the glitter glue. Do not use boiling water in the jar as it could break the glass.
3. Once all the glue has dissolved, wait for it to cool down before you screw the lid back on. When it's on tight (and make sure it's really tight) give it a shake and watch the glitter storm calm down.

## Some ways that you can help me with my PSED – for 4 and 5 year-olds

- Listen carefully to me. Encourage me to express my feelings using words.
- Help me solve problems by talking them through with me. This will help me keep going even when I find it really hard.

## Some suggestions for encouraging independence in young children

- **Picking out clothes** - This is a great activity to do at night before bed, especially if the morning is busy. You can also have your child pick out clothes for the whole week on Sunday. Fashion battles may happen, but it's a good learning experience for everyone.
- **Getting themselves dressed** - The more you can encourage your child to have a go themselves, the better (and quicker) they will get. Learning to do their own buttons and zips is also very good for building the strength in their fingers and hands.
- **Preparing breakfast or lunch** - Enabling your child to help prepare their own meal not only strengthens their independence but can be a good way to teach them about healthy eating by supporting them to make healthy choices.
- **Preparing toothbrush and brushing teeth** - Very good for teaching self-care as well as independence.
- **Setting table or cleaning up the table after a meal** - Giving your child a role in the family meal is not only great for building independence, but it also models the value of everyone sharing the workload. Setting the table is also good for developing your child's mathematical skills – knowing how many knives, forks, plates etc to put out.
- **Putting away toys** - This one can need encouragement, but you can easily make a game out of it - "Can you get all the toys in the box before the music finishes?"
- **Putting away coats, shoes, backpacks, lunchboxes when entering the house** - encourage your child to hang up their coat, put away shoes, empty lunchbox container into sink and stow their backpack when they come home from nursery or a trip out.



- **Taking care of a pet** - Feeding the dog/cat/fish, filling water bowls or cleaning fish-bowls, walking the dog, giving pets a bath - there are so many responsibilities that young children can take on when caring for a pet. An added benefit is that they learn about compassion and caring for others.

### Above all - **Don't Do Things They Can Do For Themselves**

When your child is able to do certain things independently, such as dress or brush their teeth, **let them do it**. By doing everything for them because it's easier or quicker, you're taking away their independence.

# Ideas to encourage Healthy Eating

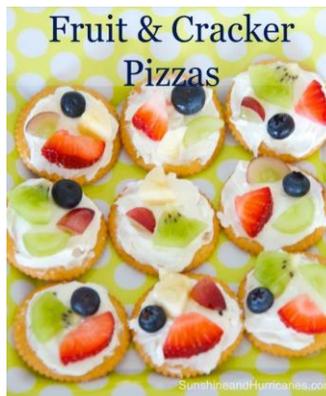
**Grow some vegetables** – Plant some seeds in trays, either vegetables or herbs, with your children and encourage them to care for them and water them until the seedlings are ready to transplant into planters, window boxes or the garden. Your children will be excited to see their vegetables growing and more likely to eat them when they're ready, because they grew them.

**Build “Edible Faces”** - set out a plate or a tortilla and provide a selection of healthy toppings.

These could include raw vegetables such as: sweet peppers, cucumber, yellow/red cherry tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber and/or fruits such as: bananas, raisins, apples, bananas, kiwis, satsumas, grapes (must be cut in half).



You could also include savoury dips such as humus, cheese, sour cream etc to stick down the vegetables or yoghurt, fromage frais etc for the fruit faces.



**Make "Fruit Pizzas"** - Provide a range of small fruits (grapes must be cut in half), some crackers and cream cheese. Allow your children to spread the cream cheese onto the crackers and then to decorate their “pizzas”.

## More ideas to support your child's PSED

**Sharing and caring – encouraging empathy** – Ask your child to settle Teddy in a comfy chair and explain that he is very hungry. Give your child a bowl and talk about the food in it (this could be imaginary or stuff to represent food such as dry pasta etc.) Ask your child to feed Teddy and ask questions to help your child think about how Teddy is feeling. 'I wonder if teddy likes it?' 'Maybe it's too hot?' When Teddy is 'full', point out how happy he is now but how messy as well. Ask your child to help you to tidy up.



Ask your child questions about how their toy character is feeling. For example, 'how do you know they like the food?', 'what do you think they would say if they could talk to us?' Try to use the game to explore **negative emotions** too by asking your child the opposite questions. For example, 'how would you know if they didn't like the food?', 'what do you think they would say?'

You can help your child consider teddy's feelings and think of ways to make sure he or she is happy!



### **Selfies! - Understanding emotions**

Acting out emotions can help children consider other people's feelings and perspectives.

Tell your child you are going to take some 'selfies' of each other making different faces (for example, happy, sad, angry.) When you have taken a few photos, go through them together. Ask your child to identify the emotion in each picture.

Then ask when and why your child feels that way (when do you feel sad? why?) Ask how your child makes themselves feel better and overcomes bad moods.

When you and your child have covered basic emotions like happy and sad, try **more complicated** faces. For example, 'impatient' and 'stubborn'.

Now that you have taken lots of selfies together, go outside the room and take photos of yourself showing different faces. Then ask your child to **identify your emotion** in each photo and tell them about how you manage your own feelings.

You can use this game to help your child come up with strategies for dealing with negative emotions in real life.



### **Mirroring - Working together**

Copying others through body language alone is a great measure of empathy and connectedness. Sit or stand opposite your child. Explain you are going to copy each other while looking into each other's eyes. Lift one hand into the air, and encourage your child to mirror your movement, while keeping eye contact. Move other parts of your body - keep talking your child through it to help them. Once they get the hang of it, let them lead and you follow.

When you and your child can play the game while talking, try to stay silent and only copy each other by watching one another's actions.

Now move around with much more complicated movements, pretending to do tasks like mowing the lawn, eating something or playing the trumpet!

If you get really good at this, it should stop being clear who is leading who, which means you're super connected!



**Scavenger Hunt - Building resilience** - Think of some objects from around the home like your child's favourite toys or a book they know. Call out an object for your child to find and send them to track it down - do not make it too easy!

If your child cannot find it, call out clues or say 'hot' when they are near, or 'colder' as they get further away. Encourage and praise them to keep up motivation.

When your child can find the object in its usual place, make it harder to find by placing it behind a curtain or cushion.

When your child can find the object in a more hidden place, time your child while they try to find it by counting the seconds or using your phone's timer. Then challenge your child to get a time as low as possible!

If your child is getting frustrated, join them on the hunt!

## Some useful websites for parents/carers to help in supporting children's Personal, Social and Emotional development

[Resources for Early Years Wellbeing & Mental Health | Early Years in Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)

A collection of 17 films featuring puppets Pip and Declan to help children understand their feelings and emotions and how they can keep healthy and safe.

[Foundation Stage PDMU - Northern Ireland - BBC Bitesize](#)

A collection of short films presented by Dr Radha Moghil that explore a whole range of feelings and emotions, as well as providing talking points and tools to feel better.

[Feeling Better - BBC Teach](#)