

Emotional Development in Young Children A One Page Guide

Stage	Emotional Developmental Milestones
Birth - 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young babies are getting used to life in the world. They are learning to bond and develop trust. • Young babies smile, cry, grasp, cling, suck, make eye contact and sucking movements with their mouth, and reach out to let you know they need care and loving. • Young babies love face to face contact and being talked to – this helps them feel wanted and important and strengthens the bond with their main carers and others.
7-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older babies enjoy looking at you and the world around them. • They are beginning to learn that they are separate from their main caregivers. • They can make connections between the look on your face and your tone of voice. • They are beginning to manage their feelings by soothing themselves. • When main care givers respond quickly, consistently and sensitively, older babies learn more quickly about their feelings and how to manage them.
18 months – 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toddlers are becoming more independent and wanting their own way. They show extremes of behaviour from very independent to dependent, aggressive to calm, helpful to stubborn. These changes can happen quickly. • Toddlers only understand the world from their point of view. • Toddlers like to test the boundaries set by their main care givers to gain the reassurance that the boundaries (limit setting) are still there. • Tantrums and other reactions to anger and frustration are common in toddlers. • Toddlers respond well to comfort shown by cuddles, holding, stroking, calming and gentle tones and being in a quiet, comforting place. • Toddlers express their feelings and are learning to manage their feelings through play. • Toddlers are beginning to name feelings, e.g. happy, sad, angry, scared and to show interest in others' feelings. Songs, games, stories and imaginative play helps toddlers to know more about feelings and the feelings of others. • Toddlers are learning to link 'cause and effect' and are better able to remember from previous experiences the reason and causes for how they feel. This is helped when their main carers can simply talk and explain about feelings at the time. • Talking with toddlers before difficult events, changes or separations helps them to manage their feelings and to feel secure and comforted.
3 - 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young children are starting to express their feelings in words more as well as through actions. • Young children are beginning to show awareness of other people's feelings and that these might be different from their own about the same situation. • Young children are literal and magical in their thinking. They believe that wishes do come true so it is important for adults to use words carefully when speaking about important things.