

Social Development

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to cover the process of social development by examining:

1. Social Development
2. Early Milestones
3. Middle Milestones
4. Later Milestones

1. Social Development

Social development is the development of self-awareness, attachment to parents and caregivers, and relationships with other children and adults. This occurs as a sequence, beginning with the idea of an awareness of self. This then leads to an awareness of parents or caregivers and those immediately related to the child. It continues outwards, to an awareness of others, including friends, coworkers, etc.

Social development is tied to many ideas within developmental psychology, such as paternal and maternal roles or attachment theories by Mary Ainsworth. Parents are vital to social development as well as to the development of language and emotion. This also paves the way for cultural development and plays a part in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the ideas of cultural relativity.

When talking about social development, it is good to look specifically at **developmental tasks**. Developmental tasks are the skills that have to be mastered and the changes that have to occur for development to progress in the correct and optimal way. These milestones, or developmental tasks, in early social development occur specifically in infancy all the way up to early childhood.

It is important to remember that individuals develop at their own pace and their own time, and development occurs within ranges. Sometimes people do not develop within these ranges, but that doesn't mean that the person is abnormal or deficient in some way.

IN CONTEXT

Consider this scenario. There is a young boy that doesn't read seriously until he is 5 or 6. His parents may begin to think that he has some kind of learning disability occurring.

After this age, however, the boy not only begins to read, but his reading and grammar skills develop at a voracious rate. He may end up being a fast and avid reader. His early development wasn't necessarily indicative of his later skills and abilities.



TERMS TO KNOW

Social Development

The development of self-awareness, attachment to caregivers, and relationships with others

Developmental Task

Any skill that must be mastered for optimal development

2. Early Milestones

Milestones begin to occur within 0 to 6 months after a child is born. During this early stage, children are developing a physical awareness and understanding of their bodies. They are also developing a kind of tactile awareness, and respond to touch.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** They begin to recognize, for example, that this is their hand and this is their leg.

Now, in the early part of developments, when a child smiles, it might not actually be what we consider to be a smile. It might be caused by something physical, like gas. It's around the fifth month that the child develops what is called a **social smile**. This is a smile in response to another person, like a parent. This is one of the early forms of communication that a child has, and is one of the first ways that they develop as a social being.



TERM TO KNOW

Social Smile

Babies begin smiling deliberately at about 2 months, but by 8 to 12 months, babies smile more frequently when another person is nearby. This action is rewarding to parents; may communicate interest in an object.

3. Middle Milestones

Middle milestones occur from 6 to 12 months of age. During this time, the child is developing more complex forms of communication. They start to recognize language and respond to it in certain ways.

Children also begin to imitate the actions of their parents and other people. They develop a range of emotion. They may be starting to show anger, sadness, or fear. They also start to show separation anxiety, which is distress as a response to parents or caregivers leaving the room or area where the children can see them. This is normal in development to occur and isn't something to worry about, necessarily.

4. Later Milestones

In later development, there are still certain important milestones that need to occur. Around 18 months of age,

children start to develop what is called self-awareness. Essentially, self-consciousness, or self-awareness, is a conscious knowledge of one's own self, character, feelings, motives, and desires. This also helps children to develop ideas of themselves versus others and concepts like empathy later on.

During this time, around the same age, children are starting to develop as more independent people. They play independently. They may begin to try to direct others. They try to show their parents what they want to do.

Around 2 to 3 years of age, they begin to show preferences. They begin to prefer certain types of food or colors. They also begin to say no to things.

At around 3 to 4 years of age, they begin to establish relationships with people outside of their caregivers, such as friends or more distant relatives. They begin to share their toys with other children, and they begin to show an awareness of other people.

There are many more milestones that follow, but these are some key ones.



SUMMARY

Social development is the development of self-awareness, attachment, and relationships with others, and is a process that occurs as a child grows. **Early milestones** for social development occur between 0 to 6 months and include developing physical awareness and the ability to smile as a response to someone. **Middle milestones** occur between 6 months and 12 months of age. This period includes developing more complex communication and imitating others. Children also begin to express a wider range of emotion. **Later milestones** include things like the development of self-awareness, independence, and preferences. Children also begin developing relationships with people other than their caregivers.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Erick Taggart.



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