

# Fact Sheet #3: Skills to Expect from 3 to 5 years

## Mental Skills

### Children:

- Can think about objects, people, and events without seeing them
- Although less than before, still think they are the center of the world and have trouble seeing things from someone else's perspective.
- More able to use words to express thoughts and feelings and to share experiences
- Talk to themselves out loud as a way to control their behaviors
- Can think of events in the past or those yet to happen
- Begin to think ahead and plan their actions; often can anticipate physical consequences of actions that are not too complicated
- Starting to see the difference between things they see and what they really are (a stuffed dog is not a dog)

- Starting to see the relationship of cause and effect (If I do this, then that will happen)
- Ask a lot of *why, how, when* questions
- Learn by imitation, observation, and by exploring, creating, and doing things
- Understand that breakfast is before lunch; lunch is before dinner, etc
- Beginning to understand before/after; up/down; over/under; today, yesterday, and tomorrow
- Can't play or do something for too long or



become bored and tired unless there is adult guidance

## Social Skills

### Children:

- Can read and interpret emotions of others; can tell when someone is angry or upset,
- Can't understand abstract emotions like pity, greed, gratitude
- Use different ways to control their own emotions: close their eyes and ears; remove themselves from the situation; sometimes can resist temptation to respond to whatever is disturbing them
- May develop first true relationship because friends become very important.
- How they play: At age 3, they typically play near a friend, find it difficult to take turns and to share things; at age 4, they may begin cooperative play, still difficult to share but begin to understand turn taking, begin to offer things to others; at age 5, enjoy playing with other children, often cooperate well, have special friends,
- Use less physical aggression than when younger

- Use more often verbal aggression like insults, threats, teasing to hurt other children; bullying appears: they understand the power of rejection
- Understand social rules and can act in accordance to them
- Are eager to carry out some responsibilities; offer to help
- Understand that praise or blame happens because of what they do
- Begin to understand the difference of doing things "on purpose" and "by accident"; focus more on the damage than on the intentions of the perpetrator
- By age 4, begin to have a sense of their ethnic identity and of the ways their social group is perceived in the society
- Increased capacity to use imagination; can imagine terrible things can happen to them and can lead to fear; nightmares can happen



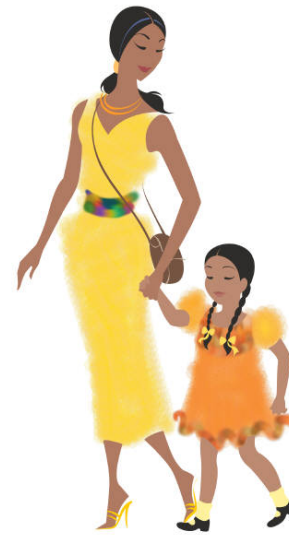
# Tips for Parents

- Teach your children to use words when they are angry, sad. ("You are *sad* because grandpa is gone")
- Ask your children to show *angry, mad, sad, happy, surprised feeling* using their faces and tell you what makes people feel that way
- Ask your children to draw a picture of their mad feelings and talk about them
- Give your children opportunities to accomplish something like organizing toys and books, helping with making up the grocery list; delivering short messages to others, giving their own ending to a story in a book
- Help your children cope with fantasy fear by pointing out the difference between reality and fantasy
- Keep your children away from situations that create real fear such as seeing violence in the home or neighborhood, watching violence on TV, and receiving physical punishment
- When there is a fight:
  - (a) Stop the fighting, go first to the child that is injured to calm him or her
  - (b) Use time out to calm down the child who is

the aggressor (No more than one minute for each year of the child's age)

(c) When both children are calm, talk to them and ask: What happened? What is each one feeling? Ask them to think of a solution; tell that it's OK to be angry or mad but not to hurt

(d) Praise both children for thinking of a solution. Remember to show your love and care even though you disapprove of their behavior



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