

7 Interpersonal Skills Your Child Must Have to Succeed in Life

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Future-ready children are well-rounded and have good social skills like verbal and non-verbal communication, listening, negotiation, decision-making, problem-solving, and assertiveness.

Interpersonal skills are important because they dictate how a child will relate with others and succeed in life.

Give your child the keys to future triumph by helping him develop his social skills.

A baby's throaty wail to tell you he's hungry; a girl's pouty "no" as you convince her to take a nap; a boy's inquisitive questions about an experience unfolding in front of him—these are some examples of daily interactions that take place between you and your child.

Interpersonal skills are important tools that need to be honed early on because they dictate how a child will relate with others and succeed in life. As the old adage goes, "no man is an island," and it is through human interaction that a person forms his character, develops lasting relationships, and overcomes adversities. How you interact with your child will give him ideas on how to socialize, so lead by example by being mindful of what you say and do around him. Take note of these seven skills that you can help hone from the moment he is born.

1. Verbal Communication

All about: The words and tone of voice a child uses to express himself. This begins when your baby utters his first word, continues as your toddler excitedly states his body parts, and eventually leads to him telling animated stories.

Develop it by: Observing what he is into and speaking to him without using "baby talk." Canadian preschool resource Educatall.com¹ explains that it's easier for kids to learn when they are interested in something. "If, for example, a toddler shows an

interest in his family's new car, talk about it. Use a picture of the car to name its color, to help him notice that the wheels are round, that it has four doors, etc."

2. Non-Verbal Communication

All about: What a person says through facial expressions, eye contact, and body language. PsychologyToday.com² states that babies actively communicate without words through engagement and disengagement cues, in subtle or potent manners.

Develop it by: Providing the proper stimuli. Mom Jennifer remembers when her youngest child Noah would react to animal flash cards at two months old. She shares, "Every morning, I would flash 10 animal cards. Noah would respond by shrieking whenever he saw panda, lion, zebra, and rabbit. It indicated that he could recognize the animals, and also expressed what he wanted to see. He would cry and groan when these four cards weren't shown, or flash a smile whenever they appeared."

3. Listening Skills

All about: How your child actively listens and responds to verbal and non-verbal messages.

Develop it by: Catching his eye, keeping instructions short, and giving good feedback (TodaysParent.com³). Pierre Addison, a mother of three boys, shares how she would make her two-year-old listen to her. "When Sean refuses to listen, I would sit him down on my lap, calm him down, and hold his face. I would ask him to listen to mommy, and when he looks straight into my eye, that's when I'd give my instructions."

4. Negotiation

All about: The art of giving and taking. It is how your child settles differences with others through compromise and agreement.

Develop it by: Setting up scenarios that would allow your child to present his case and practice his negotiation skills. Leigh's two sons, Liam and Jaden, would team up and try to convince her to extend their play or TV time. She would let them give her valid reasons why before granting their request. SuccessfulModernChild.com also stresses the importance of letting children resolve issues between themselves. When her sons started playing together, Kristine Tan shared that she would observe how they would take turns playing with just one toy.

5. Problem-solving

All about: Your child using logical and creative skills to pinpoint a problem, search for possible options, and select the best solution.

Develop it by: Guiding your child in assessing the problem. Australian mental health website KidsMatter.edu.au⁴ advises parents to do it in three steps: 1. Identify the problem. (Pick a quiet space where the child can be comfortable enough to share his problem.) 2. Find solutions and try them out. (Brainstorm two to three options through encouraging questions.) 3. Check in to see how it went. (Ask your child if the solution worked. If it didn't, what can he do instead?) Leigh shares a situation in which her eldest son Liam got bullied in school. She says, "We had to guide him how to handle the situation by asking him questions and sharing our own experiences with bullies. Thankfully, he was able to address the problem by himself and turn his bullies into friends."

6. Decision-making

All about: Making choices, from the dress she wants to wear for school to the book he wants to read before bedtime. More complex life choices can lead to good or bad consequences that will affect your child.

Develop it by: Always asking questions (so he can come up with his own answers) and letting him carry out his decisions (so he is accountable for his choices).

FamilyEducation.com⁵ also tells parents to try five different techniques: establish requirements, identify options, weigh the pros and cons, present the worst-case scenario, and jettison options.

7. Assertiveness

All about: How your child stands up for himself and gets his point across in an honest, clear, and appropriate manner. Being assertive also means putting other people's feelings, wants, and needs into consideration.

Develop it by: Modeling assertive behavior and showing instances when your child can speak up for himself. Kathy shares how she constantly teaches her son Jared this important life skill. "I always remind him that being assertive and saying 'no' is not a bad thing. I tell him that if someone asks him to do something that doesn't make sense to him, he can ask questions. Giving him the opportunity to solve things by himself and make his own choices are great ways to develop his interpersonal skills."

With parental guidance and constant stimulation, your child can develop these interpersonal skills and grow into a well-rounded and highly adaptable individual.

References:

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