



Child Development: Overview

Child development can be described as how a child grows from infancy into adulthood. Usually this takes place through a predictable sequence of steps (or milestones). As your child develops, changes occur in their bodies and their brains. Development is often categorized into 4-5 “areas” that look something like this:

- Social
- Emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Speech and Language

Social development refers to how a child interacts with others; examples would be empathy, sharing, and friendships.

Emotional development refers to a child’s inner world, and includes things like self-concept, esteem, impulse control, as well as fears and anxieties.

Physical development is the development of fine and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills are primarily control of the hand and finger muscles. Gross motor skills involve the larger muscle groups.

Cognitive development is the ability to learn and solve problems. **Speech and language** development is sometimes combined with cognitive development.

A child that develops in a healthy manner is able to reach *their* full potential in each of these areas. Sometimes, a child’s development is *delayed* in one or more areas. The delay can be temporary or permanent. The causes of the delay can be biological or environmental or both.

Developmental milestones are simply an identification of typical stages that children tend to reach at certain ages. There are many theories and ways of explaining *how* a child moves from stage to stage.

A parent is often their child’s first teacher and therefore has an important role in a child’s development. A parent can:

- Help a child overcome their fears and anxieties related to a developmental challenge.
- Help a child develop the knowledge and skills they need to meet that challenge.
- Love and support a child as they work towards mastery of a developmental challenge.

Helping our children of today develop to their full healthy potential is what creates a world of healthy adults in the future.

For more tips, or if you need more information or would like to talk to someone:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of Washington State: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at

www.circleofparents.org