

# Raising Social Children

## Checklist & Resource Guide



Written & Illustrated By

**Darleen Claire Wodzinski,**

**MA ESE, QPPE, MA CMHC, PhD Candidate**

Copyright © 2015 by Darleen Claire Wodzinski  
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned,  
or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission.

First Edition: June 2015

Printed in the United States of America

## Introduction



Donna Just, EdD

Dr. Just is a reading specialist who teaches graduate Exceptional Student Education courses at Nova Southeast University. She is a national presenter as well as teacher coach with a passion for innovation and best practices in education.

*Social development is such an important part of early childhood learning and development. A child's ability to love, trust, and be a good citizen all depend on healthy social development. Darleen Claire Wodzinski is committed to promoting healthy development of all children to ensure they have happy and productive lives. The work she does with The Orchard Human Services, Inc. is important for parents and educators who want the best for their children and students. This guide is simple to use, easy to understand, and practical to put into use.*

*Dr. Donna Just*

# Contents

1. Introduction: Is Your Child Social Enough?
2. Early Childhood Socialization Checklist
3. Have Questions? Seek Professional Advice
4. Developmental Challenges of Socialization
5. Education *Child Find* Laws
6. Simple Guide to Promoting Social Development
7. Putting It All Together



# *Chapter 1*

## **Introduction:**

### **Is Your Child Social Enough?**



**Parents may feel unsettled or uncertain when their child acts sad and withdrawn in social settings.**

Have you ever wondered whether your little one is social enough? Does your school age child pull back from others when in public? Is your child intensely shy or withdrawn? If so, parents are wise to question whether their child's socialization development is on track.

Socialization is a key developmental domain of childhood. While social skills and capacities are acquired over time, some children are particularly challenged in this area. When a child does struggle with socializing with others, parents and educators must step in to provide some valuable guidance and support. Even if your child's social development is right on track for chronological age, parents can help children expand and deepen their social skills through practical and common sense activities at home and in the community.

Use this simple **Socialization Checklist** to figure out if whether your child's social skills are developmentally appropriate based on chronological age. Following the checklist, explore effective ways to promote socialization no matter your child's age!

Social skills can be developed at any time in a child's life, but the early years are when the brain is experiencing a flurry of neural activity. Childhood is a window of opportunity when your child will be able to develop social skills and awareness much easier and faster than at any other time in life. The sooner children begin to establish developmentally appropriate social skills, the greater the likelihood that they will continue to function effectively as a social being who communicates, interacts, and cooperates with others. Social skills are fundamental to a child's capacity to become a lawful citizen and effective adult.

Children develop social skills at their own pace. Some skills may be early, other delayed, and still others at the anticipated time. Evaluating your child's developmental process is a wonderful way for parent to focus on what is completely unique about their child. Just as some children learn to walk at 10 months, others at 12, and

still others as 14 months, children will begin to demonstrate social competencies at various stages of early childhood development. Social development involves a wide variety of important skills that include noticing the emotions of others, reading facial expressions, matching behavior to a social situation, showing compassion, caring for others, language and communication, and non-verbal communication.

Parents who take their children's social development seriously are more likely to provide the enrichment and stimulation that will allow for healthy and effective social

development. Benefits of social development include good communication, ability to follow rules, impulse control, good behavior, and excellent relationships. The first critical relationship a child has is with his or her parents, but quickly the little ones begin to expand their

horizons and interact socially with others. Peek-a-boo is an early childhood game that promotes social development. This checklist and intervention guide will help parents provide enriching social stimulation to ensure that their child develops the most effective social capacities possible.



## Chapter 2

# Early Childhood Socialization Checklist

(For Toddlers to 5th Graders)



Children with a delay or interruption of social development may be shy and reluctant to interact with peers, neighbors, and even family members.

### **1) Does your child communicate important information through speech?**

Assess how well your child is able to ask you for things. Toddlers can typically make simple requests like "Milk please" while preschoolers and kindergarteners are able to ask questions like "Can I go outside for a while?". Elementary school age children should be able to communicate more complex ideas such as "I would like to sleep over at Mark's house on Friday night."

### **2) Does your child look into people's faces as they speak with others?**

Next time you chat with your child, notice if s/he is looking into your eyes while you speak. Humans share a great deal of critical information through facial expressions. Looking at others while in conversation is a developmentally necessary task. Toddlers may only glance your way while preschoolers start to focus on others' faces while speaking. By elementary school, children should be able to respectfully gaze into people's eyes and read their facial expressions when communicating.

### **3) Does your child correctly identify the emotions and moods of others?**

Pay attention when your child communicates with you or someone else during an emotional time, whether happy, sad, mad, or glad. Evaluate whether your child is correctly identifying the emotion or mood being expressed by the other person.

**4) Does your child match his/her mood and emotions appropriately to the situation or circumstance?**

Observe your child interacting in social settings at home, school, the playground, the grocery store, etc. Notice whether s/he matches the mood or tone of the situation or circumstances at hand. For example, if a friend hurt her hand, would your child respond with an appropriate mood like sadness or compassion? Or would your child laugh or get angry for not being the center of attention? If something happy is going on, is your child able to respond in a positive and upbeat way? Or does your child respond to joyful situations with anxiety or fear?



## 5) Does your child use nonverbal communications skills to communicate?

Some children have well developed social skills but just prefer to use facial expressions and gestures to communicate. Look to see if your child uses gestures like thumbs up, high five, or a head nod. This can indicate social development but may point to a reluctance with using language for communication. For some children, high fives are just plain fun!



Other nonverbal cues include shrugging, frowning, and shaking or nodding the head. Toddlers tend to copy these gestures early but may not always use the gesture at the right time. Preschoolers generally have a good handle on simple gestures and know when to use them. Mastering these social behaviors for good communication is complex and is slowly developed over time.

Elementary grade children are usually masterful at the high five and the exaggerated shrug! If your child is masterful at non-verbal communication strategies, check to be sure s/he is also using good verbal communication skill as well.

**6) Does your child ever seem frustrated, sad, or anxious after struggling to interact and/or communicate with others?**

If you observe your child being withdrawn and shy in any social setting, pay attention to his/her reaction afterward. After the socially challenging situation, does your child seem to feel upset? Sad? Frustrated? Anxious? If not, then your child may not be terribly affected by his/her socialization skills, and may quickly grow through this phase. If, however, your child is upset afterwards, then it is time to consider some proactive steps to help with your child's social development.





If your child is anxious, sad, frustrated, or upset after being withdrawn or shy at a social event, it is time to evaluate your child's social development.

## *Chapter 3*

### **Have Questions?**

### **Seek Professional Advice**



**If parents still have questions after reviewing the checklist, then it is time to seek professional advice.**

If you still have concerns after reviewing this short early childhood Socialization Checklist, then it is time to check with a professional. A good place to begin is to speak with your child's

teacher or pediatrician. Developmental delays and interruptions are always best identified early. Socialization is a skill just like reading or doing math. Parents must realize that children sometimes need a little tutoring and support in social skills just like they will later on with reading or math. Other professionals include the school psychologist and the department of exceptional (or special) education at your local school district (*more about the school district in the next section*).

Social development is an important part of early childhood learning and growth. Humans are social beings, and it takes time for infants and children to learn about the complex social rules, values, and practices that make society and families tick. The first developmental task of children is to learn to look into the face of their parents. Infants are able to identify their own parents and can read their parents' facial expressions. Social development continues with a series of complex and intricate abilities that one day will result in a fully developed and socially competent adult.



## ***Chapter 4***

# **Developmental Challenges of Socialization**

As part of your exploration of your child's social development, arrange for your child's hearing to be reevaluated. Hearing problems can interfere with normal development of socialization and language skills. Many hearing problems are simple to correct, as in the case of excess ear wax. Other delays of social development could have roots in more complex and challenging conditions. Examples of conditions that could potentially interfere with early childhood development include ear infection, an Autism Spectrum disorder, and an undetected childhood trauma.

Children may be exposed to negative influences outside the watchful eye of parents, and childhood trauma and abuse can cause disruption of social development. While loving parents seek to protect and cherish their children, sometimes children are exposed to negative influences that are outside parental control. Accidents, intentional harm, and abuse can happen in a moment either inside or outside of the home. Parents must remain open to exploring the underlying causes of social developmental delay even if the truth hurts. A proper diagnosis and identifying the causative factors can increase the efficacy of treatment and promote better outcomes for your child.

If your child could have even a mild form of Autism Spectrum Disorder, then you are right on track to push for early identification and intervention. Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder tend to have much better outcomes when they receive early intervention. Autism socialization programs are a tremendous resource for families dealing with Autism, and science has proven that children learn best from their peers. As a result, children receiving an intervention for Autism are likely to thrive in a learning environment with peers.

Seek the opinion of education, child developmental, and health professionals in your community. Ask many questions, and provide as much information as you can about the things you have observed that causes you to have concern. Examples are checklists like this one, a developmental milestones calendar where your child's growth and developmental milestones are recorded, videos of your child that you believe demonstrates something that concerns you, and accounts from reliable friends and relatives who observed potentially concerning or developmentally delayed behavior by your child. Trained professionals are able to factor the information that you provide into the assessment of your child's developmental status.

## ***Chapter 5***

### **Education *Child Find* Laws: Your & Your Child's Rights**

If you are significantly concerned that your child's socialization development is not on track based on chronological age, contact the Special or Exceptional Student Education Department of your local school district. Delayed social and language development is sometimes a sign of more serious issues that are almost always best identified early. The "Child Find" laws allow parents to seek an evaluation when they have concerns about their child's developmental status. Even if a child's social developmental delay is not due to a serious condition, early identification will allow your child to access valuable services to improve and potentially overcome any interruption or delay of social development.

Even for parents who homeschool their children, the *Child Find* education law requires identification of developmental challenges for all children age three and older. If the school district authorizes an evaluation, your child will receive an assessment and evaluation at no cost. The assessment is safe and gentle and will provide both parents and professionals with valuable information about the child's developmental status.

If you feel your school district unfairly denied your child an assessment, then collect documentation of the suspected problem from your child's pediatrician, child care provider, and any other health, education, or mental health professionals who know about your child's situation. If necessary, visit a child psychologist to request an information evaluation and letter of recommendation for further assessment by the school district if appropriate. Seek the services of a special education attorney if you believe your child is being unfairly denied assessment or services.

If the evaluation turns up a developmental interruption, delay, or other problem that the school district can address, your child might qualify for free ongoing services. Even the brightest and quickest children sometimes need just a little help with language or socialization development to get back on track. Sometimes the services will be provided in your home at no cost to you. Other times the school district will arrange for transportation to bring your child to the school facility where special services are offered. Some of the professionals who may work with your child include the Exceptional Student Education Teacher (or Special Ed Teacher), Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, School Counselor, and School Psychologist.

If you decide to accept services from the school district to promote your child's social development, then you will be invited to participate in a formal process of developing, implementing, and tracking the IEP, or Individualized Education Plan. Seek assistance from an education or child development expert if you require advocacy or individual support to understand the complexities of the IEP process. Remember that you and your child all have rights

under education law, and the IEP steps are intended to promote the best outcomes for your child. Problems sometimes still crop up, and that is when an Education or Child Development expert is an invaluable resource. Remember that seeking legal help from an attorney that specializes in education law always remains a valid option if you are frustrated or disappointed with the services your child is receiving.



## *Chapter 6*

# Simple Guide to Promoting Social Development



When children receive the support they need to get on track developmentally, parents are able to relax and enjoy watching their child enjoy social interaction with friends and family.

## **Want to improve your child's socialization skills even more?**

Whether you have concerns about your child's socialization development or not, parents are in an excellent position to promote their child's development. Following are some strategies that you can use right away to help your child's development of socialization and communication skills. Remember that it is never too soon to stimulate your child's social awareness and ability to interact meaningful with others.

### **1) Children's first exposure to language and socialization is at home.**

Parents routinely demonstrate both verbal and nonverbal socialization and communication skills each and every day. You can promote your child's communication skills by sharing engaging conversation at the dinner table. Encourage family members to share about their day and ask others how they are doing. Be sure to look your child in the eyes when speaking to demonstrate good communication skills! Just table talk is enough exposure to greatly improve your child's socialization development. When in public, remember to use excellent manners and socializing skills. Your child will naturally learn by observing you in action.

### **2) Pretend play is a fabulous way for little ones to learn how to socialize!**

Encourage your child's imagination and conversation during a pretend barbecue or tea party. Your child will be encouraged to narrate the events since you are just pretending. Encourage such

fanciful conversations as "Would you like one lump or two?" or "the hotdogs are done cooking!". Any dramatic or pretend play that includes two way conversation is a great way to promote social skills during early childhood.

### **3.) Discuss a movie, book, or television show with elementary age children.**

Be sure to read the book or watch the television show with your child so you are ready for a deep conversation. Choose s age-appropriate media for your child. Ask lots of questions and be willing to let your child know about your opinions and feelings. Remember to use good eye contact and demonstrate proper socialization skills. If possible, invite others to join in the conversation. Socialization expands your child's social development and increases ability to communicate with others.

### **4.) Plan outings and events for children of all ages!**

If you go out for ice cream, be sure to encourage your child to order on his/her own! Going to the movies? Let your child ask for the tickets and pay the cashier. The more children socialize with others across a wide variety of settings, the more their socialization skills develop and expand.

### **5.) Sign your child up for community, sports, arts, and play activities!**

Organizations like 4H and Boy Scouts provide rich social interaction and lots of opportunity for children to observe other children using effective socialization skills. Other opportunities in the community include sports teams and training, play groups, and any school of art. The arts provide an exceptionally effective platform for promoting development of socialization because of the demand for interaction between teacher and students in such activities as crafting, painting, and knitting.

### **6.) Engage your child in finger play to support math learning, sing rounds, and recite nursery rhymes.**

Explore ways for your child to use finger games to help promote counting and math awareness. Create lyrics to familiar songs that include math facts and rhyming words. Sing learning songs with your child while you do chores or take a walk to promote learning!

### **7.) The performing arts provide an opportunity for children to learn about socialization and communication while playing a role.**

Some painfully shy children are still able to perform on stage. For some little ones, the character, costume, or performance group provides some form of protection. Whether it is the anonymity of being a nameless person in a choir or theater group, some children will come alive when put on a stage. Explore whether your child will embrace the performing arts as a way to promote important communication and socialization skills!

## **8.) Play board games, card games, and interactive games with your child!**

Children learn many social skills while playing games. Typically, game playing requires good communication and paying attention to what other people are feeling and doing. Games for infants and toddlers include Peek-A-Boo and Patty Cake. Games for preschoolers and Kindergarteners include simple memory games, I Spy type games, and board or card games like Candyland, Old Maid, and Chutes and Ladders. Games are available for children of all ages, and some games provide exceptional support for developing social skills. A game like Uno especially focuses on what other players are doing, as holding just one card means that player can call “Uno!” and go out on the next turn! The magic of playing games with children is that they are typically so busy having fun that they do not even notice that they are busy learning.

## **9.) Hold family rapping, music, karaoke, or sing-along events.**

Music is a wonderful medium for teaching social skills and promoting social development. Music is a structured art that depends on shared rules about rhythm, melody, pitch, and lyrics. Children must pay attention to the words, the tune, and when to jump in to sing along. Rapping is also a valuable rhythm-oriented artistic activity that can provide rich social engagement to promote development. Karaoke and sing-alongs are additional music related activities that provide excellent social stimulation.

## **10.) Engage your child in quiet conversation about favorite topics.**

So many of these techniques are focused and active interventions, and that is good. Your child also needs to have access to you to enjoy some quiet conversation. The kind of social interaction that happens during dinner or over a board game is very different from the quiet parent-child cuddle time that every growing boy and girl needs. Sit with your child at least twice a week for a calm discussion of things that are important in your child's life. Encourage your child to engage in meaningful conversation with friends and family members a swell. Try to avoid difficult or upsetting topics; the idea is to focus on good social skills. These quiet talks together will not only stimulate your child's social development but is likely to promote development in many other critical areas as well.



## *Chapter 7*

### **Putting It All Together**



Now that you have reviewed the checklist and the list of 10 categories of social interventions to help promote your child's social development, you are ready to get started. Come back and review this guide several more times as you plan and implement your intervention. Consider consulting with an Education or Child Development expert to make sure you are focused on the right types of interventions for your child.

Remember that your child does not have to have a developmental delay or interruption for you to make good use of this intervention list. Just like great parent consistently promote their children's language, manners, and physical development, the social domain can also be promoted in young children. Youngsters who grow up in households with parents who are aware of the importance of social development tend to become better communicators and have more skills to bring to school, employment, and relationships later in life.

Social skills are the foundation of human existence. All relationships are based on social interaction. Language and communication are mediated by social conventions. Virtually everything your child will ever do in his or her lifetime will be at least partially dictated by social rules and conventions. Give your child the valuable gift of having an early start on developing excellent socialization skills. This will help your child in school, with friends on the playground, at home, in church, at the store, and later on in romantic relationships and as a parent.

Good Luck & Happy Parenting!

The End



# Index

- 4H, 20
- abuse, 12
- activities, 2, 20, 22
- adult, 2, 11
- Advice, iii, 10
- advocacy, 15
- anxiety, 6
- artistic, 21
- arts, 20, 21
- assessment, 13, 14, 15
- assistance, 15
- attention, 5, 6, 8, 21
- attorney, 15, 16
- Autism, 12, 13
- barbecue, 18
- book, i, 19
- Boy Scouts, 20
- brain, 2, 4
- Candyland, 21
- checklist, 2, 3, 10, 23
- Checklist, 1, iii, 2, 4, 11
- child, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 4
- Child Find*, iii, 14
- children, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 4
- chronological age, 2, 14
- church, 24
- Chutes and Ladders, 21
- communicates, 2, 5
- communication, 3, 7, 8, 18, 20, 21, 24
- communications, 7
- community, 2, 13, 20
- compassion, 3, 6
- conversation, 5, 18, 19, 22
- crafting, 20
- cuddle, 22
- development, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 4
- developmental, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 24
- developmentally, 2, 5, 13, 17
- diagnosis, 12
- dinner, 18, 22
- disruption, 12
- district, 11, 14, 15
- ear, 12
- education, 11, 13, 14, 15
- education law, 14, 16
- educators, 2
- Elementary, 5, 8
- emotional, 5
- emotions, 3, 5, 6
- engaging, 18
- exceptional, 11, 21
- Exceptional Student Education, 14, 15
- expert, 15, 23, 4
- face, 11
- faces, 5
- facial expressions, 3, 5, 7, 11

fear, 6  
friend, 6  
frowning, 7  
fun, 7, 21  
game, 3, 21, 22  
games, 21  
gesture, 7  
gestures, 7  
glad, 5  
guidance, 2  
guide, 3, 23  
happy, 5, 6, 24  
harm, 12  
hearing, 12  
home, 2, 6, 12, 15, 18, 24  
Humans, 5  
ice cream, 19  
IEP, 15  
imagination, 18  
Individualized Education  
  Plan, 15  
infants, 11, 21  
interact, 3, 4, 8, 18  
interaction, 17, 20, 22, 24  
interruption, 4, 14, 15, 24  
intervention, 3, 13, 23, 24  
joyful, 6  
karaoke, 21  
kindergarteners, 5  
knitting, 20  
language, 3, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18,  
  24  
learning, 11, 13, 20, 21, 4  
legal, 16  
loving, 12  
mad, 5  
magic, 21  
manners, 18, 24  
math, 11, 20  
media, 19  
mental health professionals,  
  15  
milestones, 13  
moods, 5  
movie, 19  
movies, 19  
music, 21, 22, 4  
negative, 12  
nodding, 7  
nonverbal, 7, 18  
nursery rhymes, 20  
Occupational Therapist, 15  
Old Maid, 21  
opinion, 13  
painting, 20  
parent, 3, 22, 24  
parents, 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14,  
  17, 18, 24  
pediatrician, 11, 15  
Peek-a-boo, 3  
peers, 4, 13  
play, 18, 19, 20  
playground, 6, 24  
practices, 11  
preschoolers, 5, 21  
Preschoolers, 7  
Pretend, 18  
Professional, iii, 10  
professionals, 11, 13, 14, 15  
promote, 2, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21,  
  22, 23, 24  
psychologist, 11, 15  
public, 1, 18  
questions, 5, 10, 13, 19  
rapping, 21  
reading, 3, 11  
recite, 20  
relationship, 3  
relationships, 3, 24  
rules, 3, 11, 21, 24

sad, 1, 5, 8, 9  
school, 1, 5, 6, 11, 14, 15, 20,  
24  
school age, 1, 5  
School Counselor, 15  
School Psychologist, 15  
settings, 19  
shaking, 7  
sharing, 18  
shrugging, 7  
shy, 1, 4, 8, 9, 20  
sing, 20, 21  
skills, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12, 18, 19, 20,  
21, 22, 24  
social, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11,  
12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,  
22, 23, 24  
social settings, 1, 6  
Social skills, 2, 24  
socialization, 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 14,  
15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24  
Socialization, iii, 2, 4, 11, 12,  
19  
socializing, 2, 18  
society, 11  
speak, 5, 11  
special, 11, 15  
speech, 5  
Speech Language Pathologist,  
15  
sports, 20  
stage, 20  
status, 13, 14  
stimulation to, 3  
store, 6, 24  
structured, 21  
support, 2, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21  
table, 18  
task, 5, 11  
tea party, 18  
teacher, 11, 20  
television, 19  
Toddlers, 4, 5, 7  
transportation, 15  
trauma, 12  
treatment, 12  
tutoring, 11  
Uno, 21  
values, 11  
withdrawn, 1, 8, 9

## *Meet the Author*



Darleen Claire Wodzinski is an educational, child development, and mental health expert who specializes in brain-based and multiple intelligence-oriented psychoeducational strategies. In addition to writing and developing training programs, Darleen Claire is a Teacher Trainer, Parent Educator, and Clinical Mental Health

Counselor. She enjoys music, tennis, and roller skating with her husband, Steve, and their children and grandchildren. She is the Program Developer for [The Orchard Human Services, Inc.](http://TheOrchardHumanServices.com), which is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that supports healthy learning and development of children, families, and adults. All proceeds of book purchases go to support the nonprofit's good works.

Read more about Darleen Claire at her website

<http://DarleenClaire.com>



## Please Look for These & Other Titles

### **Dead Children Can't Read**

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski

### **Develop-Meant**

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski & Linda Berman

### **Developmental Justice**

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski & Dr. Kathy A. Thomas

### **Marmalade Jam**

*Book 1 in Marmalade Jam Therapeutic Series*

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski

### **Juno's Butter Knife**

*Book 2 in Marmalade Jam Therapeutic Series*

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski

### **Marmalade Jam – Companion Coloring Book**

Illustrated by Kara Hayden

### **Self-Harm: A Guide for Youth, Parents, Educators & Human Service Workers**

By Darleen Claire Wodzinski

# Raising Social Children

Checklist & Resource Guide



Your purchase of this book helps  
to support the nonprofit 501(c)3  
Orchard Human Services, Inc.

Visit [OrchardHumanServices.org](http://OrchardHumanServices.org) to learn  
more about Orchard's special work and  
find additional resources.