



## Key Messages by Audience: Parents and Caregivers

*In addition to these parent- and caregiver-specific messages, general messages from the “About Social-Emotional Development and IECMH” document, as well as “Metaphors that Increase Understanding of Social-Emotional Development and IECMH” will also be useful for this audience.*

- Social and emotional development begins at birth with infants building attachments and trust with their caregivers, learning how to calm themselves, and later, recognizing emotions in themselves and others.
- Making friends. Waiting patiently. Caring for others. Resolving conflicts peacefully. Controlling emotions. Following the rules. These are all examples of social and emotional skills that children must learn gradually over time – with the support of caring adults.
- Children’s mental health is every bit as important as their physical health.
  - Just as a child’s body grows and changes early in life, so too does their brain and the social-emotional aspects of their development.
  - A child’s positive mental health and social-emotional development is supported by loving, stable relationships, positive experiences, and support from adults to help them develop critical social-emotional skills.
- It’s important to remember that all children develop differently and at their own pace.
  - Parenting is hard work and children don’t come with instruction manuals. It is normal to have concerns about your child’s social-emotional development and mental health and it’s important to ask your child’s doctor or child care provider if you have concerns or need help.
  - For children struggling with emotional or behavioral issues, effective interventions are available to help children grow up healthy and achieve success in school and in life. If you have concerns, ask your child’s doctor, teacher, or child care provider about getting more information, or a referral to have your child assessed.
- Parents are a child’s first and best teacher, yet all parents need support from friends, family, and the community to raise happy, healthy kids.
  - There are programs and services available in the community to help you build a positive relationship with your child, overcome adversity, and help your child develop their potential.