

What I Need: A Child's List of Social and Emotional Needs

Even though I may look small, I have the same social-emotional needs as all human beings. When the adults in my life meet these needs consistently, I am better able to learn and develop.

To be safe and secure.

I need to know that I am physically and emotionally safe. I need to trust that the adults in my life will work to guard me from dangers, to protect my feelings, and not to put me in situations in which I cannot succeed.

To be loved and have a sense of self-worth.

I need to know that someone thinks I am the center of the universe. I need to believe that there is an adult in this world who will go to the ends of the earth to show me I matter.

To receive attention and be understood.

I need to know that someone is paying attention to me. I need to expect that someone values what I have to say and takes joy in what I do.

To have a sense of control and predictability.

I need to feel like I have some control in my life. I need adults in my life who are predictable in their behaviors and who structure my day with predictable routines and rituals.

To recognize and be able to handle strong feelings.

I need to know that the emotions that overwhelm me sometimes are normal. I need the adults around me to remain calm in the face of my feelings, to help me give them a name, and to provide me with safe and healthy ways to express them.

To have a sense of power and feel independent and competent.

I need to feel powerful sometimes. I build this sense of power when I am given choices, when I am presented with tasks at which I can succeed (sometimes with a little help), and when the adults around me notice what I do well.

To be engaged in stimulating pursuits.

I need to experience the world. My brain develops as I am presented with interesting materials to see, touch, hear, smell, and taste.

To enjoy relationships and have a sense of belonging.

I need to know that if I were not on this earth, someone would miss me. I need to feel like someone is glad that I am his or her companion and that I can count on him or her always being mine.