About behaviour

Children can find it difficult to tell us how they feel with words. Instead, we can often see how they’re feeling through their behaviour.

Behaviour is how children try to cope with difficult situations, and is often a good indicator of their mental health. Children change over time as they grow, and many behaviours are very typical at certain ages.

It’s an adult’s job to work out what’s going on. It can help to think of difficult behaviour as the tip of an iceberg – there’s usually an emotional cause hidden underneath.

Being apart

Children vary in their levels of emotional sensitivity. Some children worry about lots of things, while others are more carefree. Most are somewhere in between.

Separating from parents and carers can be distressing for young children, and can result in behaviours that are hard to manage - like screaming, tantrums or refusal.

Learn more about understanding this behaviour and helping children manage their emotions below.

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers
- Being away from one another
- Understanding and managing separation distress
- Helping children to cope with separation distress
- Positive separations: Resources for families and staff

Getting along

Children’s social and emotional skills are developing all the time, and they need chances to practice them regularly.

Social and emotional skills influence children’s mental health and wellbeing throughout their whole lives.

Children learn these skills through important relationships with their families, friends, teachers, caregivers, and peers.

Learn more about supporting children’s social and emotional development below.

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers

School children
Learning

Children start to learn from the time they are born. They need an environment that stimulates learning and development to reach their full potential.

Adults play a vital role in supporting children’s learning every day. When children begin school, it can be difficult for parents to know how much help to offer without giving them all the answers, particularly when it comes to schoolwork.

Learn more about supporting children’s learning below.

School children

- Scaffolding children’s learning
- About thinking and learning
- Thinking and learning: Suggestions for families

Play

Play is how children communicate, how they learn, and even how they relax. In fact, it’s how they develop their social and emotional skills.

Families are actually supporting children’s mental health by encouraging and participating in play.

Learn more about supporting children’s play activities below.

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers

- Children learn through play
- Play helps children feel good about themselves
- Children and play: Suggestions for families and staff
- Children and play: Resources for families and staff