



Dr. Barbara Stroud, LLC.
Changing the world - One relationship at a time

Social Emotional

**A guide to understanding and fostering
emotional connectivity.**

Dr. Barbara Stroud

As human beings, our innate need for connection is crucial for our overall well-being. We are wired neurologically and biologically to thrive through interpersonal connectivity.

Whenever you encounter a baby, whether it's your own or someone else's, you feel a natural biological instinct to protect and care for that child's safety.

This instinct is deeply ingrained in us because as a species, our survival depends on safeguarding our youth and ensuring the continuity of future generations. Infants and young children flourish when we fulfill these protective roles.

The need for safety is a principle which applies to all of us. When we prioritize the safety of children, by creating a protective environment, we acknowledge the significance of their needs.

Extensive research in attachment theory as well as Maslow's hierarchy of needs reinforce the importance of protecting and ensuring safety, not only for children but for ourselves as well.



Another essential required element for supporting healthy development is the demonstration of sensitivity and responsiveness to a child's needs while incorporating their family culture, inclusive of necessary survival skills, especially for marginalized communities. When we provide this kind of care, we prioritize the child's perspective rather than imposing our own.

This includes offering co-regulation during stressful times, supporting others in managing their stress responses, and fostering a sense of calm through collective efforts.



These skills are crucial for children throughout their lives and are equally beneficial for adults.

Teaching culturally congruent strategies for managing emotions is also vital. When we protect, respond sensitively to another's needs, offer support in the face of overwhelming emotions, and help children internalize culturally appropriate ways of managing emotions within their family systems, we foster positive outcomes.

These skills are essential across the lifespan, enabling individuals to navigate both their personal and Eurocentric cultural environments.

When reflecting on the tasks of childhood, we can see that children must acquire relational skills to navigate various social contexts, preparing them for school and future work environments.

These developmental tasks encompass understanding one's experience in the world, starting with how our physical bodies relate to the world and people around us.

Infants use their bodies to explore and understand their surroundings; they gain valuable information through touching objects and sensing textures.

Children also begin to understand their internal feeling states, learning which responses facilitate connection and which may lead to disconnection.



They learn to interpret facial cues that invite or repel others. They also develop awareness of their personalized family culture, and how it defines and influences them, granting access or imposing limitations. These tasks continue to evolve as children progress from infancy to kindergarten, high school, and beyond, adapting to new social environments and responsibilities along their life journey.



Understanding the implicit and unconscious rules or expectations of each relationship is a crucial aspect of early childhood.

Infants display remarkable adaptability as they quickly grasp the fact that different caregivers require distinct levels of engagement. They effortlessly match their engagement style to the adult they are with. It is fascinating how babies instinctively understand who they should be and how they should behave in different settings.

They recognize that the dynamics at home differ from those in childcare, the grocery store, swim class, or any other environment they encounter.

Assessing social cues becomes vital for children, determining when their bodies and internal feelings align with a sense of connection in relationships. They also become aware of external cues that signal whether a place is welcoming and safe or unwelcoming and potentially unsafe. The learning of these rules often occurs unconsciously, influenced by the guidance of caregivers. However, these tasks of understanding and adapting to social expectations continue to develop and shape us throughout our lives.

While these developmental tasks are significant for childhood, they also serve as school readiness skills and essential life skills. They provide a foundation for healthy relationships and effective navigation of social contexts as we progress through different stages of life.



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