

Social &  
Emotional  
Development  
in Middle  
Childhood  
AGES 5-10 YEARS

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# What to Expect & When to Seek Help



A Bright Futures Developmental Tool  
for Families and Providers

## What Parents Want to Know...

From kindergarten through middle school, every parent asks one question more than any other: *"How is my child doing?"*

All children have different strengths and abilities, and no other child will develop exactly like yours. Health, personality, and early experiences are important to your child's development; family, community, and cultural traditions also play important roles. For example, children have fewer limits and become more independent at earlier ages in some cultures than in others.

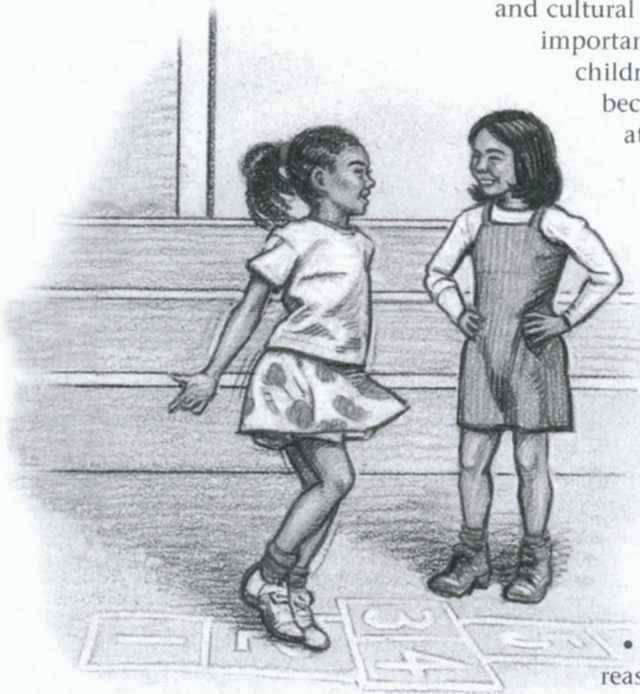
Although each child is different, *all* children face social and emotional challenges in middle childhood, including:

- Developing self-esteem and growing more confident
- Making new friends and meeting new challenges at school
- Learning to take reasonable risks, to handle failure, and to "bounce back"

As parents, you are becoming experts at knowing and meeting your growing child's needs. This tool can help by providing:

- A "snapshot" of what to expect as you and your child learn and grow together
- A way to identify your child's strengths and your abilities as parents
- A starting point for talking with others about your child's development
- Tips for when, where, and how to seek help

If you have questions or concerns about your child, "check it out." Ask a trusted friend, family member, or member of your faith or cultural community; talk with your child's health care or after-school care provider; or contact your child's school or your local social service agency. Help is available in your community. See the last page to learn more about services and support for you, your child, and your family. Finding answers to your questions early will help your child develop in the healthiest way possible.



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**T**he *What to Expect & When to Seek Help: Bright Futures Developmental Tools for Families and Providers* are guided by the following principle:

*Every child and adolescent deserves to experience joy, have high self-esteem, acquire a sense of efficacy, and believe that she can succeed in life. —BRIGHT FUTURES CHILDREN'S HEALTH CHARTER*

Based on *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health*, the Bright Futures developmental tools offer a framework for providers and families to begin a conversation together about how best to support healthy social and emotional development in children and teens. The tools are part of a coordinated set of print and Web materials, including the Referral Tool for Providers and the electronic Community Services Locator. The tools gently encourage families who have any questions or concerns about their child's development to "check it out"—and offer a number of tips for when, where, and how to seek help through local, state, or national resources.

## Beginning the Conversation

Written in family-friendly language, the tools may be used by families and child development professionals in a range of disciplines, including health, education, child care, and family services.

Throughout the tools, a strong emphasis is placed on strengths as well as concerns. The information under "What to Expect" not only offers a guide to healthy development and parenting, but provides information that parents can find reassuring about their child's behavior and their own parenting.

The tools provide an opportunity to identify concerns at an early stage. The information under "When to Seek Help" includes issues that might be addressed with additional information, as well as those that signal the need for further assessments and services. Space is provided for families to write down their concerns as well as to create their own list of community resources and services.

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To learn more about the tools, download a copy, or inquire about training, consultation and technical assistance, visit [www.brightfutures.org/tools](http://www.brightfutures.org/tools)