



# SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

## 5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Social and emotional competence helps children understand and express their feelings, build healthy relationships, and solve problems in positive ways. At Cape Cod Children's Place, we support caregivers and educators in nurturing these skills from the earliest years, helping children grow with confidence and connection.

### Understanding Social & Emotional Competence

Social and emotional skills shape how children understand themselves, relate to others, and navigate their world. These skills help children recognize and express feelings, communicate needs, build healthy relationships, and solve problems. Children develop these abilities through everyday interactions with caregivers, educators, peers, and their environment. When adults respond with patience, empathy, and consistency, children learn that their feelings are valid and that they can trust others to help them through big emotions.

### Everyday Ways to Build Social-Emotional Skills


- ▶ naming feelings to help children understand emotions
- ▶ offering comfort and calm responses during big feelings
- ▶ modeling problem-solving ("Let's think of ideas together")
- ▶ using routines and predictable transitions
- ▶ encouraging play and imagination
- ▶ celebrating effort and small successes

### When to Reach Out

Every child has big feelings and challenging moments, and every caregiver sometimes needs support. Reaching out is a sign of care and connection. You might reach out when:

- your child has frequent big feelings that feel hard to manage
- you're unsure how to respond to certain behaviors or emotions
- you want new strategies for supporting social-emotional growth
- you notice changes in mood, behavior, or relationships
- you'd like guidance from a trusted provider, educator, or community program

Talking with someone who understands child development can bring clarity, reassurance, and new ideas. Your everyday interactions help your child feel safe, understood, and ready to learn. Small moments of connection create big growth.

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