

## Ages & Stages: Helping Children Develop Self-Concept

(Poole, C., Miller, S.A., & Church, E.B. (2014). *Ages and Stages: How Children Develop Self-Concept.*)

<p><b>Stage by Stage Birth-2 years</b></p> <p>Babies need loving and consistent relationships to develop a positive sense of self.</p> <p>Tuning into babies' preference helps them develop a sense of self that is compatible with their innate characteristics.</p> <p>Gentle but firm limits help toddlers feel secure.</p> <p>Two-year-olds' emerging language propels their sense of self. "Me do" becomes their mantra.</p>	<p><b>Facilitating the development of self-concept</b></p> <p>Slow down and focus on each baby.</p> <p>Build the relationship and learn about each another. Just as the caregiver gets to know the baby the baby gets to know the caregiver.</p> <p>During the first year of consistent, loving relationships, a baby's behavior becomes more organized and he or she communicates more clearly.</p> <p>At around 18 months, a toddler become self-conscious.</p> <p>During the second year, toddlers explore their world. Toddlers form a sense of self, "I'm me! I can do it!"</p> <p>Two-year-olds emerging language. Their feelings are strong. Set limits that are reassuring but don't squelch a toddler's sense of self.</p> <p>Respond to child's preferences.</p>	<p>Use this space to jot down ideas that you, as a program manager, can do to facilitate children's development of their self-concept. Your notes might be specific, such as ideas you have for staffing supports, or the addition of environmental materials</p>
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<p><b>Stage by Stage 3-4 years old</b></p> <p>Threes and fours see themselves as separate and unique individuals.</p> <p>The self-images of young children tend to be descriptive, rather than judgmental.</p> <p>Preschools are increasingly independent, and intrigued by the new things that are able to do.</p>	<p><b>Facilitating the development of self-concept</b></p> <p>Preschoolers see themselves as separate, unique individuals and describe themselves with their physical attributes.</p> <p>Although forming one's self-concept is a lifelong process, how children feel about themselves in the early years (positive or negative) can set a pattern for the rest of their lives.</p> <p>This is a critical time for success with new skills. As skills develop that they will use throughout their lives they become excited and feel good about themselves.</p>	<p>Use this space to jot down ideas that you, as a program manager, can do to facilitate children's development of their self-concept. Your notes might be specific, such as ideas you have for staffing supports, or the addition of environmental materials</p>
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**Stage by Stage 5-6 years old**

Children learn to adjust to “big school” (kindergarten) and some enter with enthusiasm while others hold back.

Facing new challenges of developing a strong, and positive sense of self in a “big school” setting. Some have trouble separating.

Transitioning from “me” to “us.”

Children may go back and forth with wanting to meet the needs of the group but perhaps wanting to meet their own need.

Defining themselves within the group. They may say “No” to an activity that they previously enjoyed. They are using the power of no to help them define themselves within the group, and to take the time to see where they fit in.

The child is developing self-respect. While self-concept focuses on “who I am,” self-respect is about “how I take care of myself.” A strong sense of self allows children to speak up if they think something is not fair. The key word is respect.

**Facilitating the development of self-concept**

Adults help children see that their own needs will be met in an appropriate time frame. Playing turn-taking and transition games can facilitate learning how to wait.

Language has grown beyond the preschool years. Adults can help children “talk-out” their feelings and problems. Allow time for these discussions during the day.

Play games that help children focus on learning about themselves and their friends.

When practical, allow children to make choices not to participate if they indicate “no” when a game is started.

Demonstrate respect for all children and their families. Discuss issues of fairness and how to peaceably resolve conflicts with others.

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