

## Always Consider:

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- How severe is the behavior?
- How many weeks or months has the behavior been occurring?
- How long does the behavior last (e.g. minutes, hours)?
- How does the behavior compare with the behavior of other children of the same age?
- Are there events in the early childhood education setting, or at home, that make the behavior better or worse?

If a child displays any of the behaviors described above and the answers to the questions make you think the behavior could be problematic, then:

- Talk with a colleague or supervisor
- Talk with the child's family
- Recognize cultural differences
- Get more information
- Seek professional help

Remember, it is always better to get more information and help when you notice behaviors that might be a risk to a child's healthy development. Communicate with families and work together. Also remember to take good care of your own physical and mental health.

Adapted from U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Publication CA-0037, 1999



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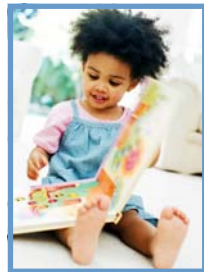
[www.hscmd.org](http://www.hscmd.org)

- Rejects or avoids being touched or being held or playing with others
- Unusually difficult to soothe or console
- Unable to comfort or calm self
- Extremely fearful or on-guard
- Does not turn to familiar adults for comfort or help
- Exhibits sudden behavior changes



## Preschool Children

- Cannot play with others or objects
- Absence of language or communication sounds or touch
- Frequently fights with others
- Very sad, withdrawn
- Extreme mood swings
- Unusually fearful
- Inappropriate responses to situations, e.g. laughs instead of cries
- Extremely active
- Loss of earlier skills (e.g. toileting, language, motor)
- Sudden behavior changes
- Very accident prone
- Destructive to self and/or others
- Extremely immature



# For Early Childhood Professionals

## Infant Mental Health: Support Social and Emotional Development



## Mental Health Matters

Healthy Start Coalition  
of Miami-Dade

# Support Social and Emotional Development!

As an early childhood professional, you play a major role in the development of the infants, toddlers, and preschool children in your care. Research shows that the way you talk and play with children during these early years impacts a child's:

- Social and emotional development (mental health)
- Learning abilities
- Functioning later in life.



## Mental Health Matters

Children learn from their families, culture, friends, and communities and from all the people who nurture them. As an early childhood provider, you help children to:

- Cope with stress
- Build self-confidence
- Develop self-worth
- Learn and master new skills

- Develop self-regulation and learn to control their impulses
- Develop trusting relationships with other children.
- To grow and learn, children need these mental health abilities as much as they need good physical health.

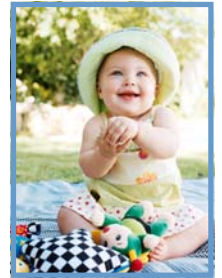


## Promote Health and Well-Being in All Children

1. Learn the developmental stages of social and emotional development.
2. Learn about and respect the cultures of children and their families.
3. Talk with children about their feelings - help them put words to their feelings.
4. Smile and laugh often - express joy.
5. Encourage friendship and play among children.
6. Help children learn to respect the feelings and possessions of others.
7. Use a variety of positive guidance methods, e.g. listening, redirecting, (offering another activity), and reinforcing (praising good behavior).
8. Teach problem solving and conflict resolution.

## Special Considerations for Infant Mental Health and Well-Being

- Respond promptly and calmly to crying or fussing.
- Hold, carry, rock, and touch babies often.
- Make care giving routines enjoyable.
- Repeat back the sounds a baby makes. Take turns singing, listening, and talking.
- Have schedules that respond to individual needs for sleeping, feeding, and active play.
- Provide a variety of opportunities, places, and positions for active movement.
- Never spank, threaten to harm, shake or shame infants.



**The following behaviors can indicate that a child's mental health may be "at risk":**

## Infants & Toddlers

- Displays very little emotion
- Does not show interest in sights