



Social-Emotional Development & Mental Health

at Emerson

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Social-Emotional Development

Overview of Typical Middle School Milestones

Middle school is a time of significant social and emotional growth. Middle schoolers are often more physically mature than emotionally mature. Keep in mind that kids develop at different paces.

It's common for middle school students to:

- Start thinking more logically
- Demonstrate more moodiness, seek privacy, and keep secrets
- Value friends' opinions more and give in to peer pressure to be accepted
- Be especially sensitive to others' opinions and reactions
- Develop more complex and in-depth peer relationships
- Have a better awareness of what to say in various social situations
- Test out new styles, clothing, and ways of being to find out where they fit



Social-Emotional Skills

Students Need to Navigate Middle School

In order for students to navigate the academic and personal challenges of adolescence, we want them to develop the following skills:

- Identify their emotions and apply healthy coping strategies
- Consider the perspectives and needs of others and use these skills to effectively problem solve and make compromises
- Interact respectfully with peers, adults, and the community
- Build meaningful relationships and feel a sense of connection to community and school
- Analyze challenges and make responsible decisions



Social-Emotional Functioning

Does your child apply these skills?

Ask yourself the following questions about your middle schooler(s):

- Do they attend school regularly (9 or fewer absences per year)?
- Do they complete school, home, and personal responsibilities?
- Can they maintain a positive attitude toward themselves and others?
- Do they take responsibility for their actions when they make mistakes?
- Are they able to communicate their needs to others?
- Do they maintain appropriate boundaries with others?
- Can they build and maintain friendships?
- Can they ask for help from an adult when they need it?
- Does their emotional reaction match the severity of the challenge they are facing?



Social-Emotional Development at home

Tips for Parents

Here's how to help your child develop critical social-emotional skills:

- Have consistent family rules and expectations that are communicated verbally and visually in your home
- Help your child advocate for their learning by encouraging them to communicate directly with their teachers, when appropriate
- Designate a consistent space and time for schoolwork
- Assist your student in developing strong organizational and study skills
- Attend Parent-Teacher conferences and check the Parent Portal weekly
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and opportunities



Social-Emotional Development at home

Tips for Parents

Here's how to help your child develop critical social-emotional skills (continued):

- Take your child's attendance seriously! Students should take a sick day only when they have a fever, are vomiting, or have diarrhea
- Monitor their social media accounts
- Support good sleeping habits by having students charge all electronic devices outside of their bedroom
- Maintain regular communication with the parents of your child's friends
- Middle school is tough: ***Listen without judgment and ask open-ended questions when they come to you with challenges and concerns***



Social-Emotional Skills at Emerson

Meeting milestones and developing critical skills

Here's a few ways we support your child's social-emotional skill development:

- SOARS Expectations
- *Second Step* curriculum
- Team-building and citizenship opportunities
- TLC clubs and extracurriculars
- Interscholastic athletics
- Intramurals
- Soaring Eagles leadership program (8th grade)
- Best Buddies
- Student Government Association



Warning Signs

Moving beyond the norm

According to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), 20% of youth between the ages of 13-18 live with a mental health condition. Here's what to look for:

- Dramatic change in personality and behavior
- Not wanting and refusing to come to school regularly
- Declining grades and not completing school work
- Reporting frequent somatic complaints such as stomach aches, headaches, racing heart, fast/difficult breathing, physical discomfort, etc.
- Trouble sleeping
- No longer finding enjoyment in activities once enjoyed



Warning Signs

Moving beyond the norm

Here's what to look for (continued):

- Experiencing intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily functioning
- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks (i.e. crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated)
- Difficulty maintaining personal hygiene
- Demonstrating excessive reliance on electronic devices
- Dramatic changes in eating and/or exercise patterns
- Self-harming and/or verbalizing thoughts of suicide or homicide
- Engaging in risky behaviors (stealing, vaping, cheating, lying, smoking, drinking alcohol, physical altercation, involvement with law enforcement, etc.)



4 Things Parents Can Do

Moving beyond the norm

If your child is exhibiting warning signs and concerning behavior, follow these steps to support their psychological health and functioning:

- 1.** Talk with your pediatrician.
- 2.** Get a referral to a mental health specialist.
- 3.** Work with the school.
- 4.** Connect with other families.



Social Emotional Supports at Emerson

Moving beyond the norm

We provide specialized supports. Please reach out to us about:

- Counseling, social work, and psychological services
- Individual and group counseling
- Crisis and risk assessments for students in distress
- Referrals for outside providers

6th Grade:

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