



# Article of the month

## Helping Your Child with Socialization

### Social Milestones

All children go through definitive phases of social development. The infant or very young child plays alone quite happily, babbling to himself and occasionally sharing a treasure with mother or father. If another child wanders onto the scene, he is likely to get clonked with a block or pushed out of the circle of play. Next comes the period when a child is able to play with one other child, and this includes an element of adjustment to the idea of sharing, of taking turns, of going "first" or "last." This is a bumpy road, fraught with failure, and the wise parent remains unshaken when Johnny's playmate goes home in a huff or when Johnny barges in the door crying. "I hate Tommy. I wish he wuz dead. I'm never gonna play with him again!" Of course, in all likelihood Johnny and Tommy will be playing together in idyllic fashion within the hour. Eventually the group grows larger-to three children and to four- and by the time the child enters kindergarten, he is able to join and to enjoy group experiences and to take his lumps with the others.

### Social Programming

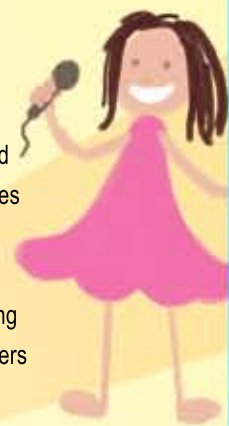
There are times when a parent must reach out for help, and it is generally the mother, who, faced with this assignment, is going to have to scan the available candidates in the neighborhood and to select a child who would make an appropriate playmate. Sex is not an issue. At this age and under these circumstances boys and girls play equally well together. It is wise for her to approach the child's mother and explain the situation. She is asking to "borrow" the youngster for a supervised visit in her home. Bribery is quite acceptable here. She can make it a special occasion-lunch or a tea party. Refreshments may be served first, and then the youngsters may have a short play period. (Emphasis on short.) The moment either child shows signs of boredom or restlessness, the visit should be brought to an end. The first visit must culminate on a happy note if more are to follow. As these one-to-one visits become more commonplace, mother can structure a simple activity which the children can handle without her-such as blowing soap bubbles or playing with clay. If the activity goes well, she should fade into the woodwork for five or ten minutes, keeping well within earshot so that she can step in if the going gets rough.

### The Next Step

Eventually, if things continue to progress well, the young child should be allowed to try a short visit to the neighbor's house. This also must be structured. The mother should accompany the child to the appointed place and make arrangements to pick him up at a specified time, suggesting that she be contacted by phone if the visit needs to be terminated earlier. She should not drop Johnny off and head for the nearest grocery store. There is a strong possibility that he may panic during his first giant experience and decide that he wants to go home "right now!" Gradually, de-structure can take place. Perhaps the mother will need only to walk her child to the corner and watch while he travels the rest of the distance alone. Finally, the child may be allowed to go all by himself. making a phone call to his mother when he reaches his destination. Of course, hopefully, social development and chronological age will continue until such time as the child can come and go to his friend's house as he chooses, without the wearisome planning. Spontaneity, after all, is a great part of the pure joy of children's play. A note of caution: In these hazardous days, parents are well advised to be cautious about letting a child walk from one house to another even in the immediate neighborhood. One mother solved the problem by "shadowing" her child, hiding behind a tree or a fence. The child thought he was making th journey alone and grew in self-confidence while the mother could be sure he had reached his destination safely.

### Group Play

It is now time to enlarge the child's group, and the experience repeats itself, with mother structuring initial group contacts and standing alert to terminate them if the play session begins to deteriorate. Group play, for some reason, seems to hold a greater possibility for disaster than one-to-one play. Children tend to "gang up" and take sides. But this, too, can be circumvented if the parent is creative and innovative. Nothing is quite so effective as a quick and attractive change of subject. (It's called an ace in the hole!) "Who wants to help me bake cookies?" or "Who knows how to wash a car?" will work wonders.





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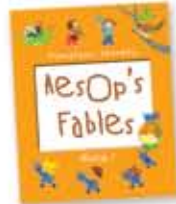
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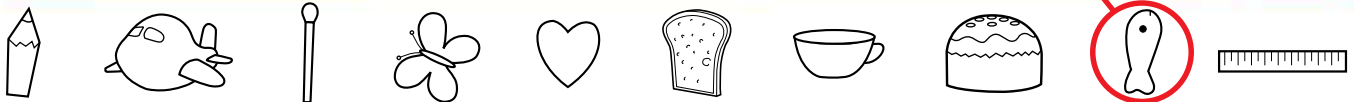




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- The Judges' decision is final.
- Slogans will become the property of Future Ace Publishing Sdn Bhd.
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