



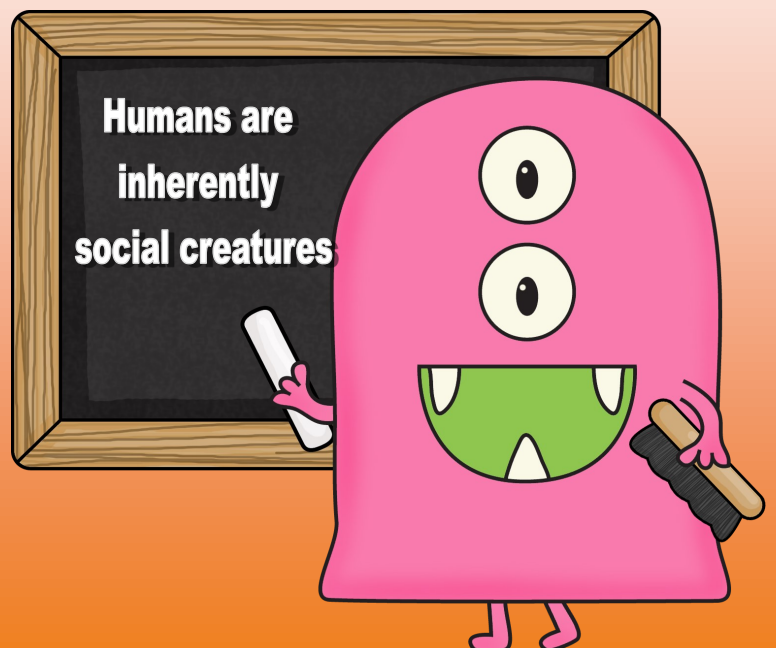
**Your child's
social development**

What is social development?

And why is it important?

Social development plays a very important role within your child's development. It is all about learning different values, knowledge and skills that enable them to interact with other people. Social development starts right from birth, and continues through out your lifetime. It brings explanation to how we recognise, interpret and respond to social situations. Social skills are fundamental for helping children to mature and succeed for their adult lives within their family, their workplace and their local community.

A lack of Social development can be damaging for the brain, it impacts and delays the brains development in general, especially in the first years of life. The absence of social development not only affects the individuals mood and behaviour, but also their cognitive health and even motor skills! In the world of psychology, Caparara, Barbanelly, Bandura and Zimbardo explained that behaviour like aggression and other maladaptive behaviours detract from academic success by undermining academic pursuits, thus producing socially alienating conditions for the socially impaired child.



From the moment life begins

In 2003, Meltzoff and Decety explained that within the first few minutes of birth, your baby can imitate the gross facial expressions from adults, this suggesting that we are born ready for social interaction.

By 5 months of age, the average child will smile at the sight of their mother or father's face. The parent will perceive these smiles as their baby recognising them and expressing love.

Parents will then smile back. Encouraging an affectionate and stimulating response, mutually reinforcing a system of social interaction.

Primarily, parents are a fundamental role in a child developing their social skills as they are their first opportunities to develop a

Relationship and learn how to communicate and interact.

The importance with other developments

Improving language skills

Building self esteem

Stronger learning skills

Emotional skills

Cooperative skills

Listening

Creativity

Brain development



Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)

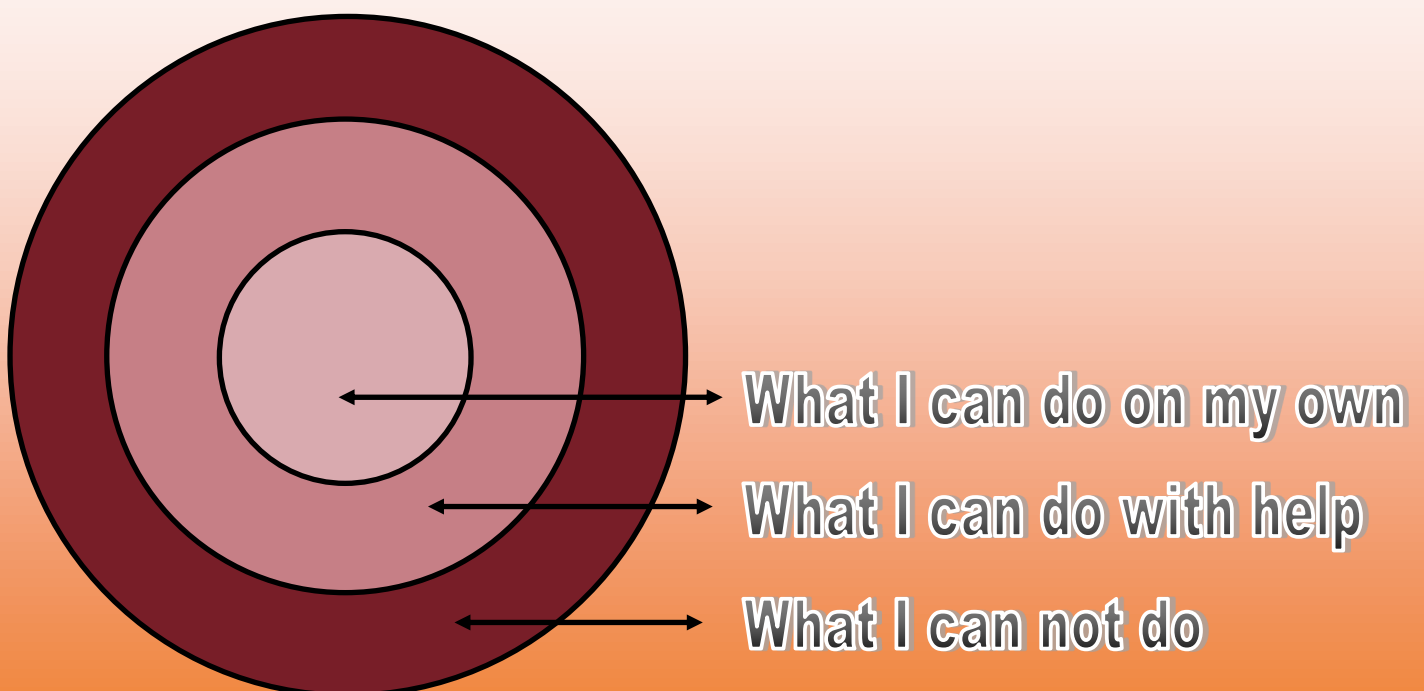
Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist that developed a social development theory that stresses that a child's cognitive development and their learning process can be guided through their personal social interaction. Within his theory he states that this learning process is fundamentally a social process that is opposed to the independent journey of discovery. Vygotsky emphasises the importance with guiding a child's learning through their interaction with a more knowledgeable other. This more knowledgeable other is not just limited to academic learning, but it also refers to parents, care givers and even fellow peers! Anybody with greater knowledge than the child for the set task. Unfortunately Vygotsky died at a young age from tuberculosis so his work has been carried on by fellow psychologists.

The zone of proximal development

Vygotsky invented the Zone of Proximal development because he believed that when a child is in the ZPD for a task, with the correct guidance from another who is knowledgeable, it will aid the child to reach achievement. This zone is used every time a child learns something new. It is more common within child development, but is still affective in adults as well.

There are important stages to assist a child through this zone :

1. To have an educator with the skill and knowledge beyond the child's
2. Social interaction with the educator so the child can observe and practise
3. Supportive activities provided by the educator to support the child as they are lead through the stages to achievement



Meet Genie Wiley (1970)

Genie spent her childhood tied to a potty chair in a small dark room. Her father did not like any noise, and when Genie broke the silence, her father would become violent towards her. On the rare occasion her father would interact at her, was too growl or bark. At the age of 13, Genie was discovered by a social worker after her birth mother sought help for her own personal problems.

When confronted with medical professionals, Genie couldn't walk like you would, she would manoeuvre like a rabbit would hop. Genie had no language skills, unable to chew and had the cognitive function of a 1 year old. Within a few months of rehabilitation with social interaction, Genie started to develop better cognitive skills, getting herself dressed, using the toilet and better at interaction, although her language skills were still very poor. Genie was able to learn and use words, but she wasn't able to construct these into a meaning full sentence that would make sense. It's believed that the lack of social development in her early life has caused lasting damage with the brain that affects her language ability.

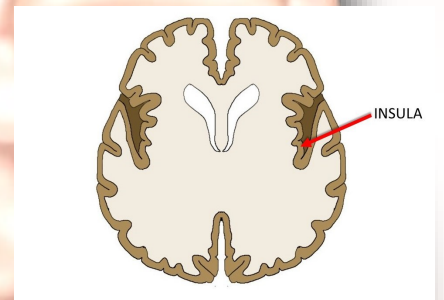
Behind the scenes

The brain is tuned into human voices. A whole Neural network is devoted to language, which exists on the left side of the brain in 90% of people, Over on the right side of the brain, that section works hard to decipher different tones used in speech and how people add meaning to their spoken words Within your brain, there are different sub sections that become active during socialising, here is examples;

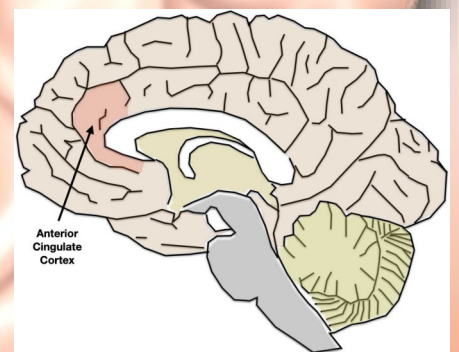
The amygdala: this part of your brain is responsible for the control of emotions and behaviour and memory formation, but during social interaction, it begins to select which incoming information is important to the individual.



The insula cortex: this structure has many functions ranging from sensory to motor functions. During social interaction, this section becomes active whilst assigning the emotional value towards different stimuli. For example, deciding whether your child enjoys a Brussel sprout or if they think its disgusting.



The anterior cingulate: this section plays a part for decision making, problem solving, social interaction, emotion and empathetic responses. This section of the brain works together with other parts of your brain. When your child eats the Brussel sprout and decides they do not like it, this part of the brain relays the information to say the word "yuck".



These are just 3 sections out of many that are in the brain and work with social interaction, showing that we are more "hardwired" to it than we think.

What can I do?

There are quite a few easy and cheap ways to help encourage your child's social development,

Imaginative play– This kind of play can include dressing up, play kitchens, building blocks and even making their teddys talk! anything that encourages your child to use their imagination.



Read and watch together– story books and fun films are a great way to encourage social development. Try discussing the story afterwards, see your child's interpretation

Honour differences - accepting that each child is different is a fundamental factor. A child who is shy and reserved compared to a child who is loud and outgoing still require the same amount of involvement, attention and encouragement.

Trips to the park – letting your child run free in the fresh air with other children is brilliant for social skills. If your child becomes shy and nervous about joining in/ approaching other children, play with them, after some encouragement from somebody they trust, they will soon build their confidence.

Arts and crafts– have any amazon boxes ready to be binned? Or even



empty toilet roll holders! With some glue, paint or any decorative material, you and you child can create something fun and imaginative! Some pens and paper can be just as effective! Why not make some cakes? They are fun and yum!

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