

Baby Socialization

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Have you ever seen a baby discover another baby? It's amazing.

Take two 6-month-olds and place them on their backs next to each other. Almost instantaneously, they realize they aren't alone and like two mini-people, magnetically they become drawn to each other.

With a slight move from the back to [tummy](#), one baby will catch sight of the other. Soon enough, the babies are moving closer to each other for a better look. This leads to touching a face, reaching for a hand, catching a glance. In short, starting a friendship fueled by a natural desire to be with people and find a connection. All this happens very soon after birth—as if we are hard wired to become friends.

Before I became a parent and a teacher, I thought that socializing began as children entered the preschool years. Of course, I realized that babies smiled at parents and [grandparents](#), were interested in adult faces and loved hearing people talk to them. What I didn't realize is that babies are fascinated with other babies and that social interactions from [birth](#) can have a significant impact on a child's social development and how they relate to others.

Here's 5 benefits of social interaction between babies.

1. **Social development.** Long ago Jean Piaget introduced stages of social development that unfolded over time and came to fruition as children produced language and the skills of symbolic play (using a block to represent a telephone or developing the ability to step into a pretend scenario). These stages of social development in children start first with babies playing alone and being unaware of others. Next, children are side by side but still largely play independently. Finally, the third stage has children working and playing cooperatively with shared goals.
2. **Language.** Lev Vygotsky, another child development expert, posited that play evolved along with language development. Children's language and cognition, he said, grew side by side to foster increasingly robust play.

3. **Intentional actions, like crawling or reaching for a toy.** When an infant of three months discovers her hands, becomes fixated on how they work, what they can do and ultimately how they can be harnessed for intentional action, we can easily miss the point. In discovering their hands, our baby has found their first toy. Similarly, a baby who is fascinated by another's face or is eager to crawl towards a creature like herself is exhibiting rudimentary social awareness. It is literally their first step in developing connections with others. We see this attraction when babies look at books of baby faces. But just imagine how much more alluring—and rewarding—it is when that baby is next to them in the flesh!
4. **Pleasure.** Children who are exposed to other children during infancy have a greater opportunity to discover themselves in relation to others. They also come to see other baby faces as a source of pleasure.
5. **Connections to each other.** While it is clear that play deepens and changes as children develop their expressive and cognitive capacities to reveal what they imagine, it seems equally clear that babies are related to other babies in a special way. And we shouldn't dismiss this connection simply because it remains mysterious. Learning to notice another, being attracted, reaching outside oneself to explore another's face or hands—all of these are stepping stones to stepping stones that open the door to play.

Social learning centers, where teachers guide interactions, are perfect settings for this journey of discovering the self in relation to others. Social learning environments give children a solid start in the domains of social and emotional development, which are key to all future learning and, more importantly, lasting happiness.