Stanislaus County
Office of
Education

Child/Family Services

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DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ESTEEM FOR CHILDREN AGES 0 - 7

Resource & Referral Handout

A. Infant stage

The foundation to build self-esteem is based on having basic needs met for nuturance, protection and reassurance during the helpless period of infancy.

1. Learns to trust or mistrust the world
2. Recognizes family, fears strangers
3. Anxious when mother is absent; a gradual discrimination of self as separate from the world
4. Social being – performer
5. Moods and emotions are expressed non-verbally (i.e., facial expression, crying)

B. Toddler Stage – 2 to 3 years

The beginning of self-awareness. “I exist separate from others and objects.”

1. Recognized self
2. Begins to make choices and lives with them
3. Individual traits are displayed, however, they don’t recognize themselves as distinct.

C. Transition Stage

Begins to recognize their distinct personality. “I am similar and different from others and objects.”

1. Compares and contrasts qualities between themselves and others
   For Example: Hair color, size, body shape
2. Learns about their relationship to nature
3. Uses the pronoun “I”
4. Begins to describe themselves. (“I am pretty.”)
5. Makes deliberate choices. (The terrible twos or “no” stage.)

D. Preschool Stage

Begins to experiment with different roles due to new ideas about themselves and others. “Who am I and who are you?”

1. Learns about different roles through play acting
2. Learns how to express feelings
3. Expresses imagination through fantasies, stories, and games.