

COMMUNICATION NEEDS AND SKILLS

Early Years (Birth through six years)

Cognitive	<p>Early experience of everything: shapes, colours, people, animals, sounds, rhythms, places</p> <p>Developing language</p> <p>Developing awareness and sensitivity to differences in gender, race, disability and early formation of social attitudes</p> <p>Difficulty in distinguishing fantasy from reality and difficulty in understanding causality (that one thing/action leads to another)</p> <p>Concentrating on the concrete aspects of reality (what I can see, hear and touch)</p> <p>Difficulty in understanding codes and conventions of television (like close-up, rerun, flashback, thought bubbles)</p> <p>Growing awareness of gender and other "differences"</p>
Behavioural/Physical	<p>Learning by doing and playing</p> <p>Learning through repetition and routine</p> <p>Developing motor skills – from crawling to walking, running, exploring the environment and becoming accident-prone</p> <p>Developing fine motor skills in fingers that facilitate independence and learning (e.g., cutting, colouring, tying, washing)</p> <p>Learning to express and control emotions</p>
Social/Emotional	<p>Experiencing new and often-times frightening emotions</p> <p>Developing from total dependency on others to separation and autonomy</p> <p>Evolving awareness of their own and others' emotions</p> <p>Growing in understanding that others think and feel differently</p> <p>Playing with others, learning to resolve very simple conflicts and to cooperate</p> <p>Showing signs of empathy, pro-social and helping behaviours</p>
Communication Needs	<p>To know they are loved and safe</p> <p>To develop positive feelings about themselves and others</p> <p>To know that the range of emotions and fears they have are normal</p> <p>To feel good about new learning and experiences</p> <p>To develop resilience by learning to "bounce back" and to seek help</p>

Communication Implications

- Use loving tones and simple language
- Model a spirit of inquiry and desire to learn
- Model safe exploration, curiosity and confidence in new-found skills
- Adapt to the child's growing attention span
- Be playful and portray learning through play
- Use lots of repetition, rhythm and song
- Keep a varied, but not too fast, pace
- Use everyday experiences; stories of other children, families, animals and typical daily activities and routines
- Use "pretend", open-ended and imaginative play
- Present and reinforce daily healthy self-care habits

Middle Years (Seven through ten years)

Domains	Main Developmental Characteristics
Cognitive	Better distinguishing between fantasy and reality Understanding inner motivation of characters Understanding causality (that "one thing leads to another") Using more sophisticated language Developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills Developing the ability to understand television and other media codes and conventions (use of camera shots and editing, sound and music cues, etc.)
Behavioural/Physical	Gradually becoming more independent in taking care of daily needs such as personal hygiene, feeding, taking care of possessions Learning to follow rules of play and interactions More interested in taking part in drama and playing sports More concerned about body image and appearance Taking more responsibility for their own actions
Social/ Emotional	To nurture positive feelings about themselves, others and the larger world To explore and test their own ideas, skills and talents To be guided in using their potential in positive ways To have their feelings and worries understood and respected
Communication Needs	To nurture positive feelings about themselves, others and the larger world To explore and test their own ideas, skills and talents To be guided in using their potential in positive ways To have their feelings and worries understood and respected

Communication Implications

Present longer and more dramatic stories
 Offer child-centred stories and characters
 Portray learning and school achievement as an opportunity to develop new, interesting skills and talents
 Use strategies such as visual and auditory humour and cognitive challenges (e.g., brain teasers, riddles, tongue twisters, etc.)
 Include interactive problem-solving and critical thinking
 Model pro-social actions such as kindness, conflict resolution and caring about others
 Offer strong, positive adult and child role models with high moral standards
 Introduce sensitive topics that show other children dealing with social justice or difficult issues like death, anger, abuse, disability, etc., in creative and healthy ways
 Show children making a difference in their own and other's lives, even in difficult circumstances (realistic heroines and heroes)
 Present stories about friendship, loyalty and "doing the right thing"

Adolescent Years (Eleven through fourteen years)

Domains	Main Developmental Characteristics
Cognitive	Capable of adult-like abstract and logical thought Emerging concern for, and exploration of, options regarding future plans Literacy levels might not be consistent with chronological age
Behavioural/Physical	Increasing independence and breaking away from adult authority (depending on culture) Interested in mastering physical challenges Experimenting with new behaviours, including risky ones Experimenting with identity-behaviours related to gender, race, religion, class, etc.
Social/ Emotional	Often influenced by peer culture Holding strong beliefs and principles on moral dilemmas Exhibiting rebellious behaviours against authorities Developing romantic and sexual relationships (depending on culture)
Communication Needs	To be informed and guided into adult life, including about behaviours that put them at risk and about responsible sexual behaviours To have strong, positive role models with high moral standards To have recognition and respect of their opinions and ideas To be allowed to learn from mistakes and correct self-destructive behaviours

Communication Implications
Present positive peer-group behaviours and other adolescents who are resilient and positive Present divergent points of view, opinions and perspectives While presenting growing independence, continue to portray positive parent-child relationships/nurturing adult-child relationships Portray characters with high self-esteem, especially for girls, children from disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities. Portray gender-progressive roles in adolescents and adults Talk about issues of concern to their particular age group (substance abuse, unprotected sex, violence, romantic relationships, bullying and discrimination, friendships) Talk respectfully and not didactically: do not "talk down" Present high-interest, low-literacy alternatives Present challenging stories with creative ideas, difficulties and solutions Use a lot of humour and creativity