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APPENDIX E

CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

During the first year the infant’s development is so dramatic that parents often feel the baby “changes overnight.” Physical development proceeds from head control to mobility. The primary psychosocial task for the baby is to build a sense of safety, security and trust in other human beings (parents/other caretakers). If this task is not accomplished, it will impact on related emotional development.

Infancy to Six Months

Physical: Sucks reflexively; visually tracks to midline; lifts head when held upright; rolls from stomach to back; pulls to sit without head lag; grasps rattle; reaches for objects; inspects objects with hands, eyes and mouth;

Cognitive/Language: Smiles selectively at mother’s voice; startle reflex to sudden noise; babbles and coos, squeals and gurgles (by three months); anticipates food with vocalization; laughs;

Psychosocial: Gazes at faces (birth); smiles responsively; uses vocalization to interact socially; distinguishes primary caretakers from others and will react if removed from home; smiles readily at most people; plays alone.

Six to Twelve Months

Physical: Creeps; sits without support; pulls to stand to cruise furniture; transfers objects hand to hand; bangs with spoon; finger feeds part of meal; shakes bell; crawls on all fours; attains sitting position unaided; stands momentarily; first steps; hold, bites and chews a cracker; grasps string with thumb and forefinger; beats two spoons together; begins to use index finger to point and poke;

Cognitive/Language: smiles and vocalizes own mirror images; says “ma-ma”, “da-da”; shakes head to say “no-no”; imitates playful sounds; responds to name with head turn, eye contact and smile; recognizes voices of favorite people; responds to verbal request such as wave bye-bye; repeats performance that are laughed at;


Psychosocial: Discriminates strangers- i.e., frowns, stares, cries; first stranger/separation anxiety begins; actively seeks adult attention; wants to be picked up and held; plays peek-a-boo; rarely lies down except to sleep; pats own mirror image; chews and bites on toys; beginning responsiveness to own name; social with family; becoming aware of emotions of others.

During the toddler years, children tend to separate emotionally from parents or primary caretakers. Self-esteem and self-confidence develops as they make moves towards greater autonomy while securing their attachment to important adults. Key milestones include locomotion, toilet training and verbal communication.

12 to 18 Months

Physical: Walks alone; stoops and stands up again; climbs up on furniture; walks up stairs with help; builds tower of two cubes; scribbles spontaneously or by imitation; holds cup; put raisin or pellet in bottle; turns book pages, 2-3 at a time; removes hat, shoes and socks; inhibits drooling; chews most foods well; opens closed doors; holds cup and drinks with some spilling; imitates housework; will bring familiar object upon request;

Cognitive/Language: Jabbers expressively; communicates by gesture; vocalizes more than cries for attention; understands word; shakes head to indicate NO; says 2-3 “words” other than ma-ma or da-da; looks in appropriate place when asked, i.e., “Where is book?”; vocalizes NO; vocabulary of 10-15 words; fluent use of jargon; points and vocalizes to indicate wants;

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Psychosocial: Strong dependence on primary caretaker with increasing difficulty separating; difficulty quieting and relaxing into sleep; wants to have caretaker nearby all the time; gives toy to adult on request; shows sense of me mine; follows simple request; begins to distinguish you and me; imitates adult activities; interested in strangers, but wary; sharp discipline not helpful; verbal persuasion and scolding not useful; plays alone or beside other children; strong claiming of mine.

18 to 24 Months

Physical: Runs stiffly; pushes and pulls large objects; comes down stairs on bottom or abdomen; seats self in small chair; builds tower of 4-7 cubes; tries to fold paper imitatively; can wiggle thumb; turn knobs (television); help dress and undress self; may indicate wet or soiled diapers; pulls person to show; asks for food and drink by vocalizing and gesture; uses spoon with little spilling; replaces some objects where they belong;

Cognitive/Language: Points to pictures in books; points to one body part on request; vocabulary of 20 words- mostly nouns; understands yours vs. mine; enjoys simple stories; speaks in two word sentences – i.e., “juice gone”;

Psychosocial: Moves about house without constant supervision; temper tantrums are common in situations of frustration; begins to call self by name; discriminates between edible and non-edible substances; claims and defends ownership of own things.

24 to 30 Months

Physical: Jumps in place; can walk on tiptoe (imitation); walks up and down steps, both feet on each step; can walk backwards; runs headlong; holds pencil with thumb and forefingers; can zip and unzip; builds tower of 6-8 cubes; learning to use buttons and buckles; pulls on socks, pants or shorts; drinks from cup without spilling; helps put things away; toilet training in progress;

Cognitive/Language: Often calls self by first name; speaks 50 or more words; has vocabulary of 300 words; uses phrases and 3-4 word sentences; understands and asks for “another”; points to four body parts;

Psychosocial: Initiates own play activities; wants routine “just so”; does not like change in routine; cannot wait or delay gratification; does not share; identity in terms of sex and place in family is well established; observes other children at play and joins in for a few minutes.


30 to 36 Months

Physical: Completes three piece form-board; turn pages singly; can dress with supervision; eats with fork and spoon; pours from one container to another; gets drink unassisted; avoid simple hazards;

Cognitive/Language: Verbalizes toilet needs; uses plural; increasing use of verbs; beginning use of adjectives and prepositions; vocabulary of 900-1000 words by 36 months; uses verbal commands; gives full name when asked; asks “What’s that?”

Psychosocial: Begins associative play activities; names or points to self in photos; joins in nursery rhymes and songs; likes praise; auditory fears are prominent (noises) show sympathy, pity, modesty and shame.

During pre-school years, a child attain proficiency in simple self-care within the home and begins to form important relationships with peers and adults in nursery school or day care setting. This is a period of continuing growth in individuation and independence. Identification and attachment to the family is strong. Loss of or separation from parent during this phase of development may have long-term impact on personal identity or the persistence of magical thinking.

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Three Years

Physical: Gallops; balances on one foot (1-5 seconds); catches large ball, arms flexed; hops on one foot; turns somersaults; copies circles; builds with legos, etc.; spontaneously draws; imitates snipping with scissors;

Cognitive/Language: Follows two unrelated commands; identifies same/different with pictures; responds to verbal limits and directions; identifies 2 or 3 colors; listens attentively to short story; converses in sentences; speech is completely intelligible; answers simple yes/no questions; tells age by holding up fingers; shows understanding of past versus present; matches colors;

Psychosocial: Outstanding characteristic is readiness to conform to spoken word; begins to take turns; plays simple group games; tries to please; may masturbate openly; may have imaginary playmates; shares upon request.

Four Years

Physical: Runs smoothly, varying speeds; bounces ball with beginning control; throws ball overhand; walks up and down stairs with alternating feet using rail; attempts to cut on straight line; writes on page at random; may try to print own name; draws person-arms and legs may come directly from head;

Cognitive/Language: Understands opposite analogies; follow 3-stage commands; listens eagerly to stories; uses all parents of speech correctly; uses color names; defines words in terms of use (car, pencil); ask many why, what and how questions; enjoys humor and self laughing; enjoys dress-up play, categorizes animals, food, toys;

Psychosocial: Urge to conform/please is diminished; control issues prominent for many children; may be physically aggressive; nightmares prominent; may argue, boast and make alibis; tendency to boss and criticize others; separates from mother easily; prefers peers to adults; washes face, brushes teeth and dresses self; uses bathroom unassisted.

Five Years

Physical: Uses roller skates; rides bicycle with training wheels; colors within lines; can cut on line; ties knots in string after demonstration;

Cognitive/Language: Listens briefly to what others say; repeats days of week; acts out stories; ready to enter kindergarten; states address, age, name and ages of siblings; learns left from right; match 10-12 colors; predicts what will happen next; prints first name and simple words; writing is mostly capitals-immature appearance; frequently copies left to right; recognizes first name and several or all numerals on clock, phone, calendar; adds and subtracts using five fingers; is capable of self criticism and self-praise;


Psychosocial: Enjoys small group; knows when certain events occur; accepts adult help and supervision; likes to complete task; enjoys competitive exercise games; fears of parental loss, thunder and scary animals; more conscious of body, wants privacy; less hitting, more verbalizing.

During the elementary school years, they experience successful mastery of the world outside their own family unit. Children this age are involved in academic learning, social interactions with same-sex peers and developing motor skills. As they move into the latency years, there is a strong need for children to learn more about their early history and incorporate this knowledge in their growing sense of self-identify.

Six Years

Physical: Constant motion-very active; balances and rhythm are good; ties own shoes; makes simple, recognizable drawings;

Cognitive/Language: Uses picture dictionary; identifies likeness/difference between objects; can tell what number comes after 8; understands quantity up to 10; identifies words by length or beginning sound/letters; rereads books many times; prints first and last name; reverses digits when writing teens (13/31); names coins, states, cents value of a penny, dime and nickel; writing is slow and effortful with mixed capital and lower case letters;

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Psychosocial: Poor ability to modulate feelings; enjoys performing for others; difficulty making decisions; plays simple table games; often insists on having own way; may return to thumb sucking, baby talk, etc.; often takes small things from others and claims them as found; begins to distinguish right and left on self; understands time interval differences including seasons.

Seven Years

Physical: Small muscles are well developed; eye-hand coordination is well developed; draws triangle in good proportion; copies vertical and horizontal diamonds;

Cognitive/Language: Speaks fluently; uses slang and clichés; recites days of week and months of year; can talk about own feelings in retrospect; often seems not to hear when absorbed in own activity; can organize and classify information; writing speed increases; learns to tell time;

Psychosocial: Independent in completion of routines; learning to screen out distractions and focus on one task at a time; when angry becomes quiet and sullen; better control of voice and temper; sets high expectations for self; frequently disappointed by own performance; anxious to please others; sensitive to praise and blame; has not learned to lose games, will cheat or end game abruptly; concerned about right and wrong.

Eight Years

Physical: Movement is rhythmical and somewhat graceful; frequent accidents due to misjudging abilities; holds pencil, toothbrush and tools less tensely; enjoys exercise of both large and small muscles;

Cognitive/Language: Ease in expression and communication; likes humor in stories; omits words and reads out of order; interested in money; knows addition and subtraction combinations – some by heart; can write sentences; begins cursive writing; few reversal errors; tries to write neatly;

Psychosocial: May be selfish and demanding of attention; may be cheerful; very curious about activity of others; learning to lose at games; begins to have sense of humor, e.g., original riddles and jokes.

Nine Years

Physical: Becomes interested in competitive sports-social aspects of the games are primary; apt to overdo physical activities; sitting posture often awkward-slouches, head close to work, etc.; works purposefully to improve physical skills;

Cognitive/Language: Enjoys school; wants to operate at optimal level; can describe preferred methods of learning; enjoys keeping a diary and making lists; prefers to read silently; worries about doing well in school;


Psychosocial: Appears emotionally more stable; capable of concentrating for several hours; likes to plan ahead; peer pressure gains importance; may take up collecting hobbies; makes decision easily.

Ten Years

Physical: Girls and boys tend to be even in size and sexual maturity at tenth birthday; girls' bodies undergo slight softening and rounding; increased fidgeting more common for girls than boys; little awareness of fatigue; bathing is strongly refused; loves outdoor exercise play – e.g., baseball, skating, jump rope, running;

Cognitive/Language: Can participate in discussion of social and world problems; interest in reading varies from child to child; wishes are mostly for material possessions, health and happiness for self and others and personal improvement; enjoys memorizing; prefers oral to written work in school; interest span is short, needs frequent shift in activity in school; interest in movies and television diminishes;

Psychosocial: Seems relaxed and casual; boys show friendship with physical expression (wrestle, shove, punch); girls show friendship with note writing, gossip and hand-holding; enjoys sharing secrets and discussing mysteries with friends; believes friends over parents; anger not frequent and is soon resolved; little crying except with hurt feelings; does not respond well when praised or reprimanded in front of friends.

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The tasks of adolescence are similar for both boys and girls although boys tend to lag behind girls by one to two years, especially in physical maturation. Asymmetrical development, e.g., cognitive development before physical growth, is common. The primary tasks are: exploring personal identity and roles; lessening dependence on family and renewed emphasis on separation and individuation; exploring relationships with peers; exploring sexuality; and exploring ways to feel competent, important and accomplished. Normal development often involves swings in mood and reliability, vacillation dependence and independence, self-absorption, impulsivity and control conflicts with adults.

11-13 Years

Physical: (Girls) – Pubic hair pigmented, curl; auxiliary hair begins after pubic hair; height growth spurt; breast development continues; labia enlarged; increase in subcutaneous fat; menarche (menstruation begins); (Boys) – Prepubescent physical development; beginning growth of testes, scrotum and penis; downy pubic hair; consistent height growth;

Cognitive/Language: Beginning to move from concrete toward abstract thinking; increased interest in ideas, values, social issues, music, clothes, hair, personal appearance (especially common for girls); although conflict with family increases, most express attitudes that place strong value on family and involved parents;

Psychosocial: Anxious about peer acceptance; concern with self-identity; girls – highly concerned with body image and physical changes; increased interest in peers and culture; changing friends is common; strong need for achievement and recognition of accomplishment although may be masked by feigned indifference.

13-15 Years

Physical: (Girls) – Pubic hair fully developed; continued breast growth; menstruation well established; decelerating height growth; ovulation (fertility); moderate muscle growth and increase in motor skills; (Boys) – Pubic hair pigmented, curled; penis, testes and scrotum continues to grow; height growth spurt; seminal emissions but sterile; voice lowers as larynx enlarges; mustache hair;

Cognitive/Language: When intelligence is normal, abstract thought is fully developed (usually by age 15) and can be applied in more situations; anxiety, major distractions interfere with abstract thinking; continued interest in ideas, values and social issues;


Psychosocial: Increased independence from family; girls are somewhat more comfortable with body image and changes; boys highly concerned with body and changes as puberty begins; relationships with opposite sex increase; same sex relationship continues to dominate; reliance on and anxiety about peer relationships continue; may experiment with drugs; concerned with achievement, experiences, feelings of accomplishment and receiving recognition; continued interest in appearance, music and other elements of peer culture.

15-16 Years

Physical: (Girls) – Full development of breasts and auxiliary hair; decelerated height growth; (Boys) – Facial and body hair; pubic and auxiliary hair denser; voice deepens; testes, penis and scrotum continue to grow; emissions of motile spermatozoa (fertility); graduated deceleration of height growth; muscle growth;

Cognitive/Language: When intelligence is normal, abstract thinking is well established; applications to own current and future situations and to broader issues (e.g., social concerns and academic studies);

Psychosocial: As a major emancipation step becomes imminent, there may be marked increase in anxiety and avoidance behaviors; increasingly concerned and interested in movement towards independence; can maintain more stable relationship with peers and adults; body image reasonably well established especially among girls; more realistic and stable view of self and others, nature of problems and better at problem solving.

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17-21 Years

Physical: (Girls) – Uterus develops fully by age 18-21; other physical maturation complete; (Boys) – Full development of primary and secondary sex characteristics; muscle and hair development may continue;

Cognitive/Language: Ability for abstract thinking and for practical problem-solving skills is increasingly tested by the demands associated with emancipation and/or higher education;

Psychosocial: Partial or full emancipation is accomplished, although with difficulty; concerns about autonomy lessen and concerns about resources (money, car) increase; relationships with family tend to be somewhat less conflictual; existing conflict tend to revolve around emancipation issues; attention still on peers and self-identity.

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