

Interacting with Peers

“I couldn’t believe Mia was able to have such a strong relationship with another child at such a young age.” ~ Mia’s mother

When I begin to interact with my peers, I will:

- look and smile at other children.
- enjoy my interactions with other children. I may show this by vocalizing, kicking, reaching, and using gestures.
- watch other children and copy them.
- reach out to engage with others.
- poke, pat, or touch other children.
- hand toys to another child.
- briefly play near other children. I will eventually play side by side with another child.
- begin to prefer certain playmates.
- talk about other children.
- begin to take turns while playing.
- engage in brief social play with peers. With time, I will play with others for longer periods of time.



My caregivers help me interact with my peers by:

- giving me opportunities to spend time around them.
- responding to other children’s sounds, cries, and moods.
- talking to me about what other children are doing.
- posting pictures of children and their families.
- acknowledging my feelings around other children.
- helping me play near other children using the same materials.
- providing opportunities for pretend play without interruption.
- offering duplicates of favorite toys to make turn-taking easier.
- supporting me when I talk about imaginary friends.

When children begin to use their imagination, they often use imaginary friends to help carry out their ideas. This is normal and supports the child’s play as well as their cognitive skills!

The Story of Mia and Emily

Mia and Emily were born four days apart. They began group infant care at eight weeks of age. Their caregiver soon noticed that they were able to calm themselves when they were held close together. She would place them together in a large stroller for comfort and support on walks. Mia and Emily were able to calm themselves as they moved closer, and they often reached for each other.

As Mia and Emily grew, they began to seek each other out during play. They would sit together and play with the same items, occasionally touching the other or watching their actions. They even began to seek each other out when distressed. Mia and Emily were lucky to have one another, and to have a caregiver that supported peer relationships. Now at three years of age, they still play together and prefer each other as playmates.



Stage 1
Birth to around
3 months



Stage 2
3 to around 6
months



Stage 3 & 4
6 to around 24
months



Stage 5
24 to around 36
months

For more information on peers, friendships, and play with infants and toddlers, view the Resources and References at the end of these materials, or visit Zero to Three's website at <http://www.zerotothree.org>.