

// Parent Ministry

Are My Kids on Track?

The 12 Emotional, Social and Spiritual Milestones Your Child Needs to Reach.

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REVIEW:

Parents always want to know if their children are normal or on track with others their age. This new book is an insightful guide to give parents much needed guidance through the emotional, social and spiritual milestones children should be experiencing. The three authors share their years of wisdom and depth of knowledge, while offering practical advice.

SNAPSHOT

EMOTIONAL MILESTONES

1. Emotional Vocabulary

Emotions, much like how children learn cognitive skills, are learned with simple foundational building blocks. Emotional skills begin with teaching children feeling words (vocabulary), leading to actions (resourcefulness). These things turn into regulation (perspective) and the milestone of skills learned (empathy).

Emotional vocabulary is the foundational building block and must be a top priority in a home. The ability for a child to be able to explain and clarify how they are feeling is key.

2. Perspective

Perspective is based on various issues, both socially and gender-related. Boys are mainly kinesthetic, visual, spatial and experiential learners, so learning how to regulate their emotions will be based on space, practice, and cues. Once again, there will be stumbling blocks to boys learning perspective: parent intervention, unbalanced discipline and coddling.

Girls are traditionally better at self-regulation. Girls need to learn perspective through being given a scale of emotions, time to learn how to cope, and clear consequences. Girl's stumbling blocks are things like "the dramatization of drama", "family noise", and a lowered standard of emotional expectations.

3. Empathy

Responding with empathy is more natural for some children than others. Empathy, like a muscle, may start off weaker in some but with exercise will get stronger.

Boys and girls, once again, are different in learning empathy. Boys will build empathy through experience, study, and civility, while stumbling because of competitiveness, definitions, and negative actions. Girls, on the other hand, build empathy more easily through awareness, humility and practice, while being challenged because of parent, peer, and personal narcissism.

4. Resourcefulness

The role of a parent is to identify, nurture and affirm the progressing emotional vocabulary milestones. This encouragement will translate into the development of emotional resourcefulness.



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SOCIAL MILESTONES

5. Awareness

Emotional and social milestones are rooted in awareness of self and others. Children must build an emotional awareness before they can truly build social awareness. Children's social interactions will struggle if they lack perspective, empathy, resourcefulness, and an emotional vocabulary.

Boys will build their awareness through social cues, role-playing and relationships with female family members. Boys will struggle in building strong social awareness because of brain development, being unable to read non-verbal cues, and once again, competitiveness. Girls build social awareness in their lives through it being modeled, experiences, and learning to nurture, while often struggling because of family issues, school, and media influences.

6. Reciprocity

Children in the early years of development, and again during the adolescent years, are often very self-centered in their social processing because building reciprocity is challenging.

Reciprocity in boys is developed through learning social mechanics, humility, and the encouragement of curiosity, while the road blocks are lack of awareness, cultural messages, and even his relationship with his mother. Girls, in comparison, develop the skills of listening, questioning, and trust that enable them to better care for others. The things that may negatively influence girls' reciprocity development are introversion, social competition and feelings of relational desperation.

7. Ownership

Children, as they develop socially, must learn to take ownership of their actions and mistakes, a significant milestone is taking personal social ownership.

Boys, as they develop social ownership, will demonstrate the ability to repent, resolve, and repair. They may struggle through feelings of blame and entitlement while allowing the culture around them to influence them negatively. Maturing girls demonstrate their ownership milestones through empathy for others, apologies, and modeling behavior for others, while fighting through personal stubbornness, feelings of entitlement and even self-hatred.

8. Boundaries

Social awareness, reciprocity and ownership lead to the key social milestone of boundaries, understanding what is and is not appropriate in social situations and generally in society. Setting boundaries for children and having them understand them creates emotional and social opportunity on various levels. It is vital for children to have a mastery of their own emotional and social development.

SPIRITUAL MILESTONES

9. Foundation

The final and most important milestone marker in the Christian home is the spiritual milestones, children having strong spiritual foundations of faith. Even outside of the Christian faith, studies show that a strong spiritual foundation is a positive in a child's development.

The stumbling blocks for a strong spiritual foundation for both boys and girls are: “extreme parenting”, an unsafe home, and “grasshopper parenting”, as family struggles seem larger than life.

10. Identity

Children of each age are seeking identity and need their parents to help them to find and affirm who they are in Christ. Children need to hear how parents and God see them. They desire to have a sense of knowing and being known.

The stumbling blocks for child developing a strong spiritual identity are over-encouraging, over-disciplining, and misguided training spiritually. Parents must learn to cultivate spiritual identity, imitate spiritual life, and be active participants of faith.

11. Mercy

From spiritual foundations and identity comes the ability for children to live out their faith through showing mercy. This spiritual milestone is that of stepping out of their comfort zones and showing others Godly love, grace, and forgiveness.

The building blocks and stumbling blocks of this milestone are the same. First is “awakening and confusion”, as they discover the world is not black and white. Second is “protection, competing, comparing and preparing” while children seek to show mercy in a world that is a paradox of belief and action. Finally, “relational spirituality” challenges children and adolescents to connect their relationship with God with their relationship with others.

12. Meaning

The final milestone that we all come to in our spiritual life is meaning. The great understanding of who we are, why we are here and what is our purpose in the adventure of a relationship with God. Foundational faith gives identity, leading to mercy that points to meaning. Older children into their teenage years throw off complacency, the risks, and leave out the front door of the home to take ownership of the experiences of faith. It is the final milestone of development in a child’s life, as they head toward maturity emotionally, socially and spiritually.

This is an outstanding almost 300-page book. This short snapshot barely scratches the surface of the deep and amazing content. Please consider picking up the full book at your local book store or order it online. You will not be disappointed, as this is more than just a one-time read. It truly is a book you will pick up repeatedly throughout the years as your children develop.

