

Emotional Development

M I L E S T O N E S

Age	Emotional Expressiveness	Emotional Understanding
Birth–6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Signs of almost all basic emotions are present.■ Social smile emerges.■ Laughter appears.■ Expressions of happiness are greater when interacting with familiar people.■ Emotional expressions are well organized and clearly related to social events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Capacity to match the feeling tone of the caregiver in face-to-face communication is present.
7–12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Anger and fear, especially stranger anxiety, increase.■ Use of caregiver as a secure base emerges.■ Emotional self-regulation improves as crawling and walking permit approach and retreat from stimulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Ability to detect the meaning of others' emotional signals emerges.■ Social referencing develops.
1–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Self-conscious emotions appear but depend on the presence of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Appreciation that others' emotional reactions may differ from one's own emerges.■ Vocabulary of words for talking about feelings expands.■ Empathy appears.
3–6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ As representation and language improve, active strategies for regulating emotion develop.■ Ability to conform to display rules by posing a positive emotion one does not feel emerges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Understanding of causes, consequences, and behavioral signs of emotion improves in accuracy and complexity.■ As language develops, empathy becomes more reflective.
7–11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Self-conscious emotions become integrated with inner standards for right action.■ Strategies for engaging in emotional self-regulation increase in variety, become more internal, and are adjusted to situational demands.■ Conformity to and conscious awareness of emotional display rules improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Ability to consider multiple sources of information when explaining others' emotions appears.■ Awareness that people can have mixed feelings and that their expressions may not reflect their true feelings emerges.■ Empathy increases as emotional understanding improves.



Note: These milestones represent overall age trends. Individual differences exist in the precise age at which each milestone is attained.