

August 2022

Understand Your Child Better

With This Child Psychology
Guide



By Nance Langa

Abstract

Child Psychology is a vast subject. It tells you about the growth of an individual from infancy until the end of adolescence and how each child is different from the other, not just physically but also in their thought process and personality. A child mind is said to be like clay. He takes shape just the way you mould him. Therefore, understanding your child is of utmost importance for all parents.



Getting Started

Understanding your child is one of the most important things that you should learn as a parent. It is very helpful in becoming effective in guiding and nurturing your child as they grow and mature. You need to bear in mind that your child has a unique personality trait that remains consistent throughout life.

One of the ways you can understand your child is by observing them as they sleep, eat, or play. Look for the consistent traits. Which activities do they like best? Is adjusting to changes easy for them or do they need time to become familiar with these things? These things are the normal characteristics of a child and your child may not be an exception.

As much as possible, have time to talk to your children as this is crucial to gaining information and understanding. In the case of young children, they require less verbal language and more facial expression and body language in order to understand their thoughts and feelings. Asking them questions will allow them to share their feelings to you.



Self-esteem is a major key to success in life. The development of positive self-concept or healthy self-esteem is extremely important to the happiness and success of children and teenagers. A positive parent-child relationship provides the framework and support for a child to develop a healthy & respect and regard for self and for others. Children crave time with parents. It makes them feel special. Parents are encouraged to find time to spend playing with their kids on a regular basis. This should include one to one with each child and group time with all of the adults and kids in the home. If you are a single parent or have an only child, occasionally invite family or friends over to play.

For one reason or another, some children do not develop social skills as easily as others. They may earnestly seek peer relationships and then, having endured rebuffs, if not downright cruelty, retreat to the safety of home, family, and their own company. There is probably nothing so painful for a parent as the rejection of his child. Parents need to take the long view of social problems and to map out a plan to solve them quite as carefully and thoughtfully as they would consider academic or health problems. There are guidelines which, if followed, will help these children if the parent is willing to take time and initiative.

I. What Is Child Psychology?

Child Psychology is a field of study which delves into the mental, emotional and behavioural development of a child. It traces the entire journey of children from infancy until the end of adolescence and studies their cognitive and intellectual development.

History and Development

Historically, children were often viewed simply as smaller versions of adults. When Jean Piaget suggested that children actually think differently than adults, Albert Einstein proclaimed that the discovery was "so simple that only a genius could have thought of it."



Experts differ in their responses to some of the bigger questions in child psychology, such as whether early experiences matter more than later ones or whether nature or nurture plays a greater role in development. Because childhood plays such an important role in the course of the rest of life, it is little wonder why this topic has become such an important one within psychology, sociology, and education.

Experts focus only on the many influences that contribute to normal child development, but also to various factors that might lead to psychological problems during childhood. Self-esteem, school, parenting, social pressures, and other subjects are all of tremendous interest to child psychologists who strive to help kids develop and grow in ways that are healthy and appropriate.

✚ Major Contexts in Child Psychology

If you are like most people, you probably think about the internal factors that influence how a child grows, such as genetics and personal characteristics. However, development involves much more than the influences that arise from within an individual. Environmental factors such as social relationships and the culture in which we live also play essential roles.



There are three major contexts that we need to consider in our analysis of child psychology.

Cultural Context

The culture a child lives in contributes a set of values, customs, shared assumptions and ways of living that influence development throughout the lifespan. Culture may play a role in how children relate to their parents, the type of education they receive and the type of childcare that is provided.

Social Context

Relationships with peers and adults have an effect on how children think, learn and develop. Families, schools and peer groups all make up an important part of the social context.

Socioeconomic Context

Social class can also play a major role in child development. Socioeconomic status (often abbreviated as SES), is based upon a number of different factors including how much education people have, how much money they earn, the job they hold and where they live.

Children raised in households with a high socioeconomic status tend to have greater access to opportunities, while those from households with lower socioeconomic status may have less access to such things as health care, quality nutrition, and education. Such factors can have a major impact on child psychology.

Remember, all three of these contexts are constantly interacting. While a child may have fewer opportunities due to a low socioeconomic status, enriching social relationships and strong cultural ties may help correct this imbalance.

Essential Influences

Child psychology encompasses a wide range of topics, from the genetic influences on behavior to the social pressures on development. The following are just some of the major subjects that are essential to the study of child psychology:1

- Cognitive development
- Environmental influences
- Gender Roles
- Genetics
- Language
- Personality development
- Prenatal development
- Social Growth
- Sexual Development

Child psychologists, for example, might look at which child care settings and practices lead to the best psychological outcomes or they might work with kids to help them develop growth mindsets.

II. Importance Of Understanding Child Psychology

The early years of an individual's life are crucial for their emotional, social and physical wellbeing. This has an overall impact on their personalities as adults. Research says that the early years play a significant role in brain development too. A person's early experiences both with their parents as well as with the outside world profoundly affect their future physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.

QUESTIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD

Showing your child love is crucial to effective parenting, but so is understanding him—and that is often the critical and missing ingredient in parent-child relationships, especially with children who are emotionally struggling. Tragically, children who are well loved by their parents often do not feel that love if their parents don't understand them. Parenting without a true understanding of our children influences us to see our kids as we think they are rather than as they really are. I know very few parents who don't love their children, but I know many parents who don't understand them.

Most parents believe that if they love their children this will magically convey that they "are here and will always be here." But parents who never learn how to understand what is really going on in their children's or teens minds will not be able to grasp how to break the cycle of defiance.

The harsh reality is that children who act out tend to feel misunderstood. Defiant children are more internally complex than how they present to the outside world. We parents become so focused on our kids' external behaviors that we tend to overlook their inner angst. Understanding is one of the most powerful tools available for creating break-throughs in difficult family patterns, especially with stopping defiance in your child. As you will see below, becoming more mindful of your own thoughts and feelings when you were a child, can help give you more understanding of your child.

It Feels Good to Be Understood

Understanding your child is an important part of helping him become secure and healthy, because it not only shows him you love him but also encourages him to love himself. Please read through the questions below and reflect on them. These questions below will help you see how important feeling understood has been in your own life, so you can more fully appreciate the value of understanding your child.

- Who most understood your feelings, needs, and desires as you were growing up?

- How did you feel about the person who understood you the most?
- Who least understood your feelings, needs, and desires as you were growing up?
- How did you feel about the person who understood you the least?
- How did feeling understood help you to behave in an appropriate manner?
- Did feeling misunderstood ever influence you to make poor choices or to behave in an inappropriate manner? If you answered yes, what did you do?

As you'll probably see by your responses to the above questions, feeling understood provides us with the emotional leverage to do our best to make good choices and do the right thing on a daily basis. No child or teen ever complains to me that his or her parents show too much understanding and emotional support.

III. Tips To Understand Child Psychology



Understanding the psychological needs of a child is not easy, but it needs to be done. Children at different stages of development behave in different ways. A child of 5 – 6 years will behave differently than an adolescent.

Realising and accepting your child's likes, dislikes, qualities (good or bad) is the key to being a good parent. When you accept them just the way they are, they get a sense of security. Here are a few tips to help you understand your child:

1. Observe

You need to know your child if you want to understand him. It is possible to do so simply by being around him and observing him. When you see him playing, asking for a certain thing, reacting in a certain manner to situations, his interaction with others, etc., you get to know a great deal about his overall personality.

2. Be Your Child's Best Friend

Making your child realise that you are always there for him whenever he needs you can be your first step towards attaining this goal. This will make him feel secure, loved and wanted. Help him to open up to you.

3. Spend Quality Time With Your Child

Being around your child isn't enough. To know him better, do activities together like playing games, cooking (children are always eager to help), cleaning up cupboards or his room, etc.

4. Praise Your Child

Praising him for good work done will boost his self-esteem. However, overpraise can make him arrogant and snobbish.

5. Listen

By listening to your child, you get to know him more. Doing so will make him feel that you are interested in his life. This will in turn help to strengthen the bond between you two.

6. Talk

Talking to your child about things that are of interest to him could help him open up to you. In this way, you could initiate conversations more easily and get to know your child better.

7. Give Full Attention While Talking

Always maintain eye contact while talking to your child. By doing so, you will make sure your child believes that you are listening and what he's saying is of utmost importance to you.

8. Give Respect

When your child talks about any of his insecurities, fears, or any situation where he has been put to shame, do not laugh or ridicule him. You need to understand that for a child (especially during his adolescent years), it isn't

particularly easy to open up. It must have taken a lot of courage on his part to do so.

9. Explain Things

Children up to the age of 5 – 6 will abide by all the rules created by you or the decisions you have taken for their betterment. The real problem lies with adolescents. Blame it on their age. In such situations just try and explain as to why you had to take a certain decision or do a certain thing. At that moment they may be angry with you, but eventually, with time, they will understand.

10. Take an Opinion

Ask for his opinion where it is necessary. Doing so will make him feel important and will raise his self-worth.

11. Discover the Reasons Behind Their Behaviour

If your child has been misbehaving or has shown some negative behaviour, try to find out the cause behind it. By doing so, you will find out where you've been going wrong as a parent, and it will give you a chance to enhance your parenting skills.

12. Know Their Likes and Dislikes

Knowledge about what your child likes and dislikes will also help you know them better.

13. Freedom of Expression

Allow your child to express himself the way he wants to. You could get a glimpse of how he thinks or what he wants.

14. Don't Be Too Curious

Every parent is eager to know what is happening in their child's life, especially in case your child is an adolescent; but don't be overly curious. Too much curiosity on your part could make him feel that you don't believe in him, and this could end the bond between the two of you.

15. Think Like Them

It is important to think like your child while talking to him or doing an activity together. This will give him a sense of familiarity.

16. Let Their Imagination Take Wings

While taking a stroll with your little one, observe him. He may see something quite different from what you are seeing. Do not stop him when he does so. This will help you get an insight into his inner world.

IV. Recognising The Problems With A Child's Psychological Development

Parents have an innate ability to understand when something is not right with their child. So how can you, as a parent, get a clear idea as to what is going on? It's best to ask people who are close to your child.



1. Friends

Ask friends who have children in a similar age group and find out what their kids are like? Do they speak, are they able to write, eat on their own, follow instructions, etc. In case of an adolescent kid, you could ask his friends how he is at school, his behaviour towards his peers and others, etc.

2. Internet

You may also search the internet for your queries, but make sure you only follow reliable content.

3. Teachers

During Parent-Teacher Meets, the teacher may also be able to throw some light on your child mental health and wellbeing in general. You may ask her if she has noticed anything different in your child.

4. Caregivers

In today's time in many families when both parents are working, it may be necessary to hire a babysitter for your kid. She is the one who gets to be with him the most. Therefore, she is the best person to ask when you feel that something is amiss.

5. Paediatrician

A Doctor can easily detect any shortcomings in a child during the scheduled visits for vaccinations or check-ups.

6. Psychologists

A psychologist will be the best person to answer any queries regarding child psychology. He can help in case of any behavioural issues like depression, low self-esteem, anxiety/phobias or different types of disorders like Autism, ADHD, etc. in the child.

V. The Psychological Effects of Moving Frequently on Kids (and How to Ease the Transition)



- While moving can be a positive experience for a family, it often has some negative implications for the children involved.
- Moving has the most profound impact on kids over the age of 5, as it's particularly difficult for them to leave behind friends and adjust in a new school during this important time of development.
- Ultimately, it's important that parents provide their children with a secure and stable environment, and do what they can to make the move easier on them.

- The first step in making this move easier on your kids is keeping them informed: don't leave them in the dark, but be honest about what is changing and when.
- Also, assist them in making a treasure chest and a memory box: the former should be filled with their favorite things and the latter with phone numbers and addresses of close friends and family.
- Finally, make sure they say their proper goodbyes to their home and have plenty of time to do so.



Moving to a new city can serve as a positive change for your life, which might explain why so many do make that move: as up to 63% of Aussies have moved to a new place at least once, compared to the 37% who've never left their hometowns. That said, moving to a new place can have its challenges too, especially for kids. In fact, moving during childhood can have a major impact on your child's mental health.

The Impact of Moving on Your Child's Mental Health

Kids who have moved five or more times during their childhood are three times as likely to experience mental health problems compared to those who stay in their hometowns. In a study of 50,000 children, researchers found that the impact of moving is often worse for children over the age of five. This is because they have to leave behind friends and change schools during an important time of social development.

Healthy child development is best supported by security and stability across different domains in the child's life. Key components of that stability include

housing, parenting, family dynamics, neighborhood factors, peer influences, and school development. Children with unstable housing often have fewer high-quality relationships, lower life satisfaction, and a lower sense of personal well-being.

“Moving house can be a hugely stressful experience for the parents and the family as a whole as it can be associated with change in social environment,” said Foteini Tseliou, lead author of the study. “Parents need to be aware that such a change can be even more stressful for children as they may be more sensitive and less resilient.”

But what can you do to make the transition to a new town, city, state, or even country easier when you’re moving with kids?



How To Make Moving With Children As Painless As Possible?

Moving to a new home is a long process. It is stressful, exhausting and challenging, especially when you have kids. Whether you are relocating across the street in the Gold Coast or across the state, the entire process can be a stressful experience when children are involved. The thought of leaving old friends, home, and familiar surroundings can make them feel restless, which in turn, make your entire relocation a more arduous task.

In such scenarios, it is better to hire highly-trained and affordable Gold Coast Removalists who can take the stress out of your move so that you can focus on preparing your kids for this new beginning. You can spend quality time

with them and give special attention during the relocation. This will make the process less painful for you as parents as well as for your children.



Here is the list of things you can plan, prepare and implement to turn your stressful relocation process into a fun adventure for your kids.

1. Break The News At The Right Time

Whether your children are small or teens, it is important for you to break the news of your relocation at the right time. If your kids are mature, they will appreciate the news and feel involved in the entire process. In case, your kids are younger, give them time to understand the situation.

You can tell them about the move a month before this event. This much time will be enough for them to accept the change. It is important to make them comfortable with this big move. Listen to them and answer all questions they may have about the new place. This will help them know what to expect, things to do in Gold Coast and how to manage the situation during the transition.

2. Plan And Prepare

Planning and preparation are the key aspects when it comes to relocating with kids. It is imperative to do as much as you can before the final moving day to experience a hassle-free move. It is good to get them involved in the packing process.

Make packing fun by giving them small things to pack for the big move. Teach them how to wrap the items properly and encourage them to help you in

packing household belongings. If your kids are older, then take their assistance while packing your household belongings. Let them pack their toys, books and other stuff related to their room. This will give them a feeling that they are an important part of this relocation process.

3. Cope With Their Emotional Stress

For children, leaving their rooms, their school, their friends – it's all filled with emotions. This is one of the crucial phases where you need to ensure that they are settling down well with the situation without any anxiety.

Allow your kids to know that it is normal to be sad during the relocation like this. Instead of leaving them, spend time and also throw a good-bye party and invite their friends, relatives and neighbours.

Since younger children need time, you need to be careful while breaking the news of relocation. A month is enough for them to say goodbye to their friends. But try to overcome their stress by spending quality time with them. Keep them stay mentally active and encourage them to express their feelings.

4. Get Them Involved

No matter how stressful the entire process is, make sure you involve your kids in different tasks. Whether it's about packing household items or cleaning the house, you can make it a fun process.

You can also get a floor plan of your kid's bedroom and allow them to plan what goes where in his/her room. Let them choose the paint colour, curtains, new furniture, etc. to make that happen before the move-in day.

Apart from this, invest them in packing their own precious stuff like toys, CD collection etc. Allow them to create their own colourful labels or decorate their room boxes in their own creative way.

Tip: For professional packing, hire a well-renowned removal company on Gold Coast which can offer you complete packing and moving services at the best price.

5. Make Them Aware Of New Place (Home)

Don't forget to promote your new home and neighbourhood to your kids. Be specific about the hot spots including the schools, the parks/playing grounds, the restaurants and other hangout places. This will appeal to them, and they get more excited about the move.

Tip: Use maps, photos, destination brochures to encourage your kids to embrace the benefits of living in a new home.

6. Pack First Night Bag For Your Children

Moving with kids is challenging, but you can make it a painless process by packing all essentials for the first night in your home. This is specially applicable when you are moving with toddlers on board. This will automatically reduce the stress out of your shoulders and make it easy for your kids to gel up in the new place. Here is the list of few things that you need to pack for your kids:

- ✓ A first-aid kit
- ✓ Diapers and wipes (if they are toddlers)
- ✓ Food, milk powder, sippy cups and water bottle
- ✓ Clothing and night suit
- ✓ Toys
- ✓ Extra bags
- ✓ Pacifiers
- ✓ Blanket
- ✓ Toiletries
- ✓ Hand sanitiser
- ✓ Bath items
- ✓ Stroller and carrier.

7. Make Their First Night In The New House Comfortable

Move-in day is both exciting and exhausting for your children. So, it is better to make the first night as relaxed as possible for them. Make sure your kids feel comfy and homey. For that, you can stick to the same routine and make them feel familiar with all of their favourite things such as toys, bedsheet, blanket, etc.

Try to spend quality time together at your new home. You can eat pizza with your kids or watch cartoons with them. This is the best time to thank your kids for their assistance.

Moving to a new home is physically stressful and emotionally exhausting, especially when your kids are involved in it. To make the process painless, you can follow the tricks as mentioned above and also hire experienced Gold Coast removalists for the safe and secure transition of your valuable belongings.

HOW TO HELP YOUR KIDS MAKE NEW FRIENDS AFTER A MOVE

Here are a few tactics to help your kids adjust to new surroundings.

1. Prepare Them for New Situations

Going to somebody's house for the first time can be nerve-racking. Help your kid by talking her through the scenario beforehand. Try something like: "We're going to Sally's birthday party next week. Remember that you've been to birthday parties before, like at Uncle John's house. At birthday parties, we play games and we eat cake. We're going to do the same kind of thing, just at Sally's house."

2. Lead by Example

"Never ask your child to do anything that you wouldn't be willing to do yourself," says Dr. Carducci. Be warm and friendly with people that you meet (children learn by mimicking behavior), but if you wouldn't feel comfortable walking up to a group of strangers, then you can't expect your child to do the same (even if those strangers are her new classmates).

3. Don't Push Things Too Quickly

Introduce your kid to new things by using the "factorial approach," a technique where you change just one or two things at a time. For example, start by inviting that new toddler neighbor (and mom friend!) over to your house for a playdate on your home turf. Once they're playing together comfortably and happily, change the environment by bringing both kids to the park. Once that situation becomes more comfortable, you could invite another friend to join in. Go slowly to give your child time to adjust to and engage with each step.

4. Don't Intervene

If you see your kid struggling to make friends at the playground, it's tempting to step in and give her a gentle nudge toward the group hanging out by the swings. But Dr. Carducci warns that if you get involved, your child won't learn "frustration tolerance" (i.e., how to deal with the particular situation that they find themselves in)—a valuable skill that she'll need beyond the schoolyard.

5. But Do Stay Nearby (for a Little While)

Let's say you're dropping your child off at a birthday party. "Make it a point to stay there until she feels comfortable with the situation," advises Dr.

Carducci. The idea is to give her a chance to warm up to the noise and new environment. Stick around until she feels at ease with the group but then walk away. “Don’t stay the whole time—let her know that you’re going to be back and that she’s going to be fine.”

6. Be Open About Your Own Anxiety

Even less shy kids can demonstrate "situational shyness," explains Dr. Carducci, especially during periods of transition like moving or starting school. Let your kid know that everyone feels nervous from time to time. And more specifically, talk about a time where you felt social anxiety (like speaking in public) and how you handled it (you gave a presentation at work and felt really good afterward). Sometimes feeling less alone is all it takes for children (and grown-ups) to branch out and try something new.

VI. What Are The Different Psychological Disorders In Children?

Many psychiatric disorders in children are due to physiological genetic constituent. However, there are many of them without any physical causes. Some disorders may be diagnosed early in life, but some are not detected until adulthood. Here is a list of them:



1. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

In ADHD a child has problems in paying attention and is hyperactive. His actions are difficult to control.

2. Intellectual Disability

In this case, the child has limitations in intellectual functioning and is significantly impaired in adaptive behaviour.

3. Autism Spectrum Disorder

It is a serious developmental disorder in which the child can neither communicate nor interact. It affects the nervous system and overall development of the individual.

4. Conduct Disorder

It is diagnosed either during childhood or adolescence. Children with this disorder have great difficulty following rules and behaving in a socially acceptable way.

5. Adjustment Disorder

This is characterised by a group of symptoms like stress, feeling sad or hopeless and physical symptoms of losing weight etc. This usually occurs due to a serious emotional event like the death of a near one, shifting to some other place, change of school etc.

6. Adopted Child Syndrome

It is a disorder found among some adopted kids and happens due to a number of psychological and emotional problems like bonding with the adoptive parents, an attachment to the place they lived in earlier or the people they were living with. It often results in lying, stealing and aggressive behaviour towards the adoptive parents.

7. Stereotypic Movement Disorder

It is a disorder in which the person engages in a repetitive purposeless movement which may interfere with normal daily functioning. This disorder mostly occurs in children with autism, intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities.

8. Childhood Schizophrenia

It is a rare disorder in children but severe mental disorder in which children interpret reality abnormally. In this type of disorder, the child may experience hallucinations, delusions and extremely disordered thinking, and exhibit behaviour which may affect everyday life.

9. Selective Mutism

It is a childhood Anxiety Disorder and is mainly a child's inability to speak and communicate in social settings like school or any place where he does not feel secure and comfortable.

10. Sluggish Cognitive Tempo

An Attention Disorder where the child seems to be in a different world and is sleepy, lethargic, hypoactive and confused. He also moves about slowly and is often found staring at random objects for a prolonged period.

11. Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder

It is a mental disorder that occurs in children and adolescents. It is a condition in which a child experiences extreme irritability, anger, and frequent intense temper outbursts.

VII. How Can A Child Psychologist Help?

Childhood Development psychology is a vast and varied subject. It is not easy for a layperson to answer questions on it or help a child with psychological development problems. In such cases, only a specialist could help. Child Psycho-therapists can help in a lot of ways. They are trained to help children with family problems, issues at school, health-related problems, and difficult relationships. They also specialise in helping children with disorders like ADHD, Schizophrenia, Depression, Anxiety, Eating Disorders, etc.

Child Psycho-therapists also work on the development of a child's mental health and focus on their overall development-cognitive, social, emotional and linguistic.



Childhood is a very important phase. A bad childhood could have a negative impact on the individual's adulthood as well. Therefore, awareness of your child's personality is an essential part of parenting. Only if you know your child well, will you be able to focus on his talents and positives, which, in turn, will give him a well-rounded personality in the years to come.

Bottom Line

Understanding what makes kids tick is an enormous task, so the study of child psychology is both wide and deep. The goal is to study the many influences that combine and interact to help make kids who they are and to use that information to improve parenting, education, child care, psychotherapy, and other areas focused on benefiting children.

By having a solid understanding of how children grow, think, and behave, parents and professionals working with children can be better prepared to help the kids in their care.

References

Six Questions To Better Understand Your Child | Psychology Today, Retrieved August 30, 2021, From

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/liking-the-child-you-love/201407/six-questions-better-understand-your-child>

By Kendra Cherry. (2021) | Child Psychology And Development | Very Well Mind, Retrieved August 30, 2021, From

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-child-psychology-2795067>

Child Psychology and Mental Health | Child Development Institute, Retrieved August 30, 2021, From

<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-psychology/>

Moving with kids: Tips on how to relocate your family successfully | thrive works, Retrieved August 31, 2022, From

<https://thriveworks.com/blog/moving-tough-kids-impact-mental-health/>

How To Make Moving With Children As Painless As Possible? | Better Removalists Gold Coast, Retrieved August 31, 2022, From

<https://www.betterremovalistsgoldcoast.com.au/how-to-make-moving-with-children-as-painless-as-possible/>

By Sarah Stiefvater. (2019) | Explained: The Psychological Effects Of Moving Frequently On Adults And Kids (And How To Ease The Transition) | Pure Wow, Retrieved August 31, 2022, From

<https://www.purewow.com/wellness/psychological-effects-of-moving>