

PERSPECTIVE TAKING

What is this developmental skill?

Perspective taking is the ability to understand that other people have their own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and viewpoints that may differ from one's own.

How does this normally develop?

As children's cognitive and emotional abilities mature, they gradually learn that people can think differently, know different information, and experience the same event in different ways. Caregivers foster this growth by encouraging curiosity about others' feelings and experiences.

How can neglect interfere with its development?

When caregivers rarely discuss emotions or mental states, children have fewer opportunities to understand the minds of others. Survival needs may also keep children focused primarily on their own immediate experiences rather than considering another person's perspective.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Assume everyone feels the same way they do.
- Have difficulty understanding others' reactions.
- Struggle with empathy.
- Misunderstand social situations.
- Appear self-centered despite not intending to be.
- Become confused when others disagree.

Parenting Implications

Caregivers can regularly wonder aloud about what others might be thinking or feeling, helping children explore multiple perspectives without judgment.

From Understanding to Attunement

Instead of assuming a child lacks empathy, ask whether they have had enough experiences learning that every person has a unique inner world worth understanding.