

MAKING CHOICES

What is this developmental skill?

Making choices is the ability to evaluate options, express preferences, and make decisions appropriate for one's age. It helps children develop independence, responsibility, and confidence.

How does this normally develop?

Children begin making simple choices early in life, such as selecting a toy or choosing between two snacks. As they mature, they gradually make more complex decisions while receiving guidance from trusted adults.

How can neglect interfere?

Children who experience neglect may have had very few opportunities to make choices, or they may have been expected to make decisions far beyond their developmental abilities. Some become hesitant to choose because they fear making mistakes, while others attempt to control every situation because unpredictability once felt unsafe.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Be unable to choose between simple options.
- Frequently ask others to decide.
- Become anxious when given choices.
- Insist on controlling every decision.
- Become upset when choices are limited.

Parenting Implications

Offer structured, age-appropriate choices rather than unlimited options. Simple decisions, such as choosing between two shirts or selecting a bedtime story, help children experience control while remaining within safe boundaries.

From Understanding to Attunement

Every healthy choice your child makes strengthens the belief that they have a meaningful role in their own life. Guided opportunities to make decisions help replace fear with confidence and build a stronger sense of agency.