

REASONING

What is this developmental skill?

Reasoning is the ability to think logically, identify relationships, draw conclusions, and use information to make sense of the world. It allows children to compare ideas, recognize patterns, understand why things happen, and apply what they have learned to new situations. Reasoning helps children move beyond memorizing facts to understanding concepts.

How does this normally develop?

Reasoning develops gradually as children's brains mature and they gain experience interacting with their environment. Young children begin by making simple comparisons and recognizing basic patterns. As they grow, they become better able to understand cause and effect, categorize information, recognize similarities and differences, and think through increasingly complex problems. Conversations with adults, play, exploration, and opportunities to ask questions all strengthen reasoning skills.

How can neglect interfere with its development?

Neglect can interfere with reasoning by limiting the experiences that help children develop logical thinking. Children who receive little conversation, explanation, or guided exploration have fewer opportunities to learn how events relate to one another. Chronic stress may also reduce the brain's ability to think beyond immediate circumstances, making it more difficult to analyze situations or consider multiple possibilities. As a result, children may rely on concrete thinking and have difficulty understanding more complex relationships.

What might this look like?

A child with reasoning difficulties may:

- Have difficulty understanding why things happen.
- Struggle to recognize patterns or relationships.
- Find it difficult to compare and contrast ideas.
- Have trouble applying previously learned information to new situations.
- Need concrete examples before understanding abstract concepts.
- Jump to conclusions without considering all of the information.
- Become confused when problems require flexible or logical thinking.

Parenting Implications

Children strengthen reasoning through conversation and exploration. Ask open-ended questions such as, *"Why do you think that happened?"* or *"What do you think might happen next?"* Encourage children to explain their thinking rather than simply giving the correct answer. Read books together, discuss everyday events, and involve children in age-appropriate problem-solving. The goal is not to test children but to help them practice making connections and thinking through situations.

From Understanding to Attunement

Instead of thinking, *"They should be able to figure this out,"* consider, *"They may still be developing the ability to think through relationships and solve problems logically."* This perspective recognizes that reasoning grows through experience, guidance, and supportive relationships. By encouraging curiosity, asking thoughtful questions, and helping children make connections, caregivers strengthen the cognitive skills that allow children to understand their world and approach new challenges with confidence.