

CAUSE AND EFFECT IN MY OWN ACTIONS

What is this developmental skill?

A sense of cause and effect in one's own actions is the understanding that our choices and behaviors can influence what happens next. Children begin to recognize that they can affect their environment, solve problems, and make things happen through their own actions.

How does this normally develop?

From infancy, children discover that their actions have consequences. A baby cries and someone responds. A toddler presses a button and a toy lights up. As children grow, they learn that making choices, trying new strategies, and practicing skills often lead to desired outcomes. These everyday experiences build confidence that their actions matter.

How can neglect interfere?

Children who experience neglect often receive inconsistent or absent responses from caregivers. They may learn that crying does not bring comfort, asking for help goes unanswered, or their efforts make little difference. Over time, they may stop expecting their actions to influence outcomes.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Give up easily when something is difficult.
- Wait for others to solve problems.
- Seem passive or unmotivated.
- Believe nothing they do makes a difference.
- Avoid trying new activities.

Parenting Implications

Create opportunities for your child to experience success through their own efforts. Allow them to make age-appropriate choices, solve simple problems, and see the positive results of their actions. Acknowledge effort as much as outcomes.

From Understanding to Attunement

Children develop confidence when they experience that their actions matter. Every opportunity to make a choice, solve a problem, or accomplish a task helps strengthen that belief.