

# Observation of a child (juna)

Psychology, Child Development



## **Introduction**

From my first day at U-NOW I have enjoyed observing and interacting with Juna. Juna consistently has a smile on her face, which makes me feel happy. I enjoy spending time with Juna because I can easily connect with her. For instance, the way she dresses allows me to reminisce about my childhood; she typically wears pink and purple dresses with matching shoes, similar to what I wore as a young child. I can also relate to Juna because like myself, she is an only child. She does not interact much with the other children and frequently talks about her parents. As a child I did not interact much with the other children in my class and frequently talked about my parents. I chose to observe Juna because she reminds me of myself when I was a child.

## **Physical Development**

I observed Juna's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development to gain a better sense of what is developmentally appropriate for a toddler. Juna is a toddler, for she is twenty-two months old. First, I examined Juna's physical development. For a typically developing toddler, "once [he or she] masters walking, [his or her] motor skills grow by leaps and bounds. [He or she] learns to jump, tiptoe, march, throw and kick a ball, and make a riding toy go by pushing with [his or her] feet or perhaps even by pedaling (p. 66)." Juna enjoys using a riding toy when she is playing outside. Over the past two months Juna has learned how to make the riding toy move by pushing her feet on the ground. She observed other children in her class trying to figure out how to make the riding toy move and listened to her teachers' instructions. With the help of her classmates and teachers, Juna can now

successfully move the riding toy by pushing with her feet on her own. Juna also enjoys throwing balls when she is playin outside. She frequently will throw a ball into a hoop or to a teacher who is standing close to her. She smiles when the ball goes into the hoop or when the teacher catches the ball. While Juna can throw the ball, she is not yet able to catch the ball. If a teacher throws a ball to Juna she often will “ plunge ahead full speed before figuring out how to stop (p. 66).”

Several times I have observed Juna trying to catch a ball and she will run after the ball as it rolls away from her. Juna is not yet able to catch a ball because it is not developmentally appropriate for her age. When she is older shewill be able to easily catch a ball, however developmentally she is only capable of throwing and kicking a ball at this time.

I have observed Juna’s physical development inside the classroom as well. When Juna is playing inside she likes to “ pull all of the toys off of a shelf at once and carryas much as [she] can hold from one place to another (p. 66).” Instead of choosing the toys she would like to play with, Juna takes all of the toys off of the shelf. Then, she will carry all of the toys in her hands over to the table. Since she tries to carry all of the toys at once, most of whatshe is carrying winds up on the floor.

Based on my observations, Juna’s physical development is appropriate for a toddler.

## **Social Development**

Not only have I observed Juna's physical development, but also her social development. Social development is key for developing toddlers because "as their social awareness expands, they pick up cultural messages about who they are and how they should be (p. 65)." Based on the messages they receive from their classmates and teachers, toddlers begin to form their identity. Since toddlers are just beginning to develop socially, "[they] work very hard to understand social rules and get things right (p. 66)."

While toddlers are learning what behaviors are socially acceptable, they are also figuring out who they are in the world. Social development includes a variety of behaviors that developing toddlers are likely to exhibit. However, Juna does not fit many of the developmentally appropriate social behaviors for a toddler. For instance, toddlers "actively seek out their friends and especially enjoy imitating each other's behavior and engaging in group activities (p. 67)."

Instead of playing with other children or imitating their behavior, Juna often plays alone. She does not engage in many group activities compared to the other children. While toddlers tend to "choose friends who share their interests and will play with them (p. 67)," Juna does not play very often with the children in her class. Juna either plays by herself or with a teacher. When other children try to play with Juna "the most basic conflict [arises and] centers on "what is mine" and "what is yours" (p. 68)."

If another child tries to share toys with Juna she will yell to the other child, "mine!" In turn, the other child will yell to Juna, "mine!" As evidenced above,

toddlers become upset when others try to share their toys because they believe it is their toy. Not only have I have observed Juna grapple with this aspect of social development, but many of her classmates as well. Over the next few months I hope Juna will “ develop rituals, favorite games, and deepening affections and attachments with other toddlers (p. 67).”

## **Emotional Development**

It is important for her social development to develop such bonds with her classmates, for Juna’s current social behavior does not closely reflect what is developmentally appropriate for her age. In addition to physical and social development, I also observed Juna’s emotional development. In terms of emotional development “ toddlers can use words to express strong feelings and to evoke what is not present (p 66).” Upon reading this sentence I immediately think of the times Juna has said, “ Papa coming.” She repeatedly will say “ Papa coming” throughout the day, even hours before he will pick her up. She does not say the phrase as a question or an exclamation, just as a matter of fact. Perhaps by saying “ Papa coming” she is expressing a strong feeling she is experiencing when her Papa is not with her. Or perhaps she is just looking forward to him picking her up. While I am unable to interpret what Juna feels when she says “ Papa coming,” I am able to get a better sense of her emotions when she plays with a baby.

It is important to recognize “ even very young toddlers are capable of empathy and touching kindness in their own ways. Their interactions with children and adults may at times seem very sophisticated, for example, when they imitate a gentle adult and comfort a hurt friend or tenderly pat a

baby (p. 67).” I have observed Juna playing with a baby and she is very gentle; she holds the baby in her arms and will rock and pat the baby. While I have observed Juna’s kindness by the way she handles a baby, I have also witnessed Juna burst into tears. Toddlers are capable of expressing empathy and kindness and “ at other times, fatigue, anxiety, or other distress overwhelms them, and they burst into tears or full-blown tantrums (p. 67).”

Two weeks ago one of Juna’s classmates celebrated his birthday with the class. The teacher lit a candle on the child’s cupcake and upon seeing the candle being lit, Juna burst into tears. She began yelling “ nocupcake! No cupcake!” She was shaking her head back and forth and her facial expression appeared to be pure fear. As seen in my observations, Juna experiences a variety of emotions; her emotional development is appropriate for a toddler.

## **Cognitive Development**

I have observed physical, social, emotional, as well as cognitive development. In terms of cognitive development, “ toddlers are fascinated by words. They constantly repeat words and phrases they hear (p. 66).” Juna often repeats words she hears from her teachers such as “ shoes,” or “ book,” as well as “ mama” and “ papa.” Juna quickly picks up words her teachers say and repeats them numerous times. However, Juna repeats words most often when she is looking at books.

As I examine Juna’s cognitive development, it is important to recognize “ toddlers love books-especially sturdy ones they can easily manipulate, with clear pictures and lots of things to do-textures to feel, holes to peek through

or poke fingers into, sounds to make, actions to imitate (p. 66).” Juna looks at the same few books which contain animal furs to touch. Along with feeling the different fur, she makes the sound each animal makes. For example, she points to a picture of a cow in the book and say, “ moo!” Then she touches the cow’s fur on that page. In addition to looking at books, Juna also tends to “ find all of the [horses] and line up the rubber animals according to their height (p. 67).” Juna will empty out the basket full of the rubber animals and usually will pick out all of the horses. Once she has all of the different sized horses, she lines the horses up by height. She starts with the shortest horse and will continue until she ends with the tallest horse. When I have observed her lining up the horses by height, she was not prompted by a teacher or another child to do so. Juna separates the horses from the rest of the rubber animals and lines them up on her own. Based on my observations, Juna’s cognitive development is appropriate for a toddler. As Juna is “ experimenting with objects, language, and social interaction [she is] entering a new phase of cognitive growth (p. 67).”

Juna’s classroom environment encourages her to expand her mind in a variety of ways. Her brain is “ developing increasingly sophisticated mental representations of the real world and mastering them through using them in play (p. 67).” Through play, language, and social interaction with others Juna is able to foster not only her cognitive development, but also her physical, social, and emotional development. By closely observing Juna I have learned that I chose her because she reminds me of myself when I was a child. I feel I have a more meaningful connection with her as opposed to the other children because interacting with her allows me to think about my feelings and

experiences when I was young. Reflecting on Juna's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development has raised questions for me to consider how I developed in these areas as a child.

## **How to Observe a Child**

It can be hard not to compare your 3-year-old with other kids — or to listen when other people tell you what they think he should be doing at this age. If you're not completely sure what skills are typical for 3-year-olds, check out these developmental milestones. You'll get a better idea of which skills are typically expected to develop this year. You'll also learn whether there are possible developmental trouble spots to discuss with the pediatrician.

### **Physical Milestones**

This year children are working to get better at the gross and fine motor skills they developed as 2-year-olds. They start doing some new things, too. Most 3-year-olds learn to do things like these by the time they're 4:

#### **Gross Motor Skills**

- Run and walk without tripping over own feet
- Jump, hop and stand on one foot
- Walk backwards and climb stairs one foot after the other
- Kick and throw a small ball; catch a bigger ball most of the time
- Climb
- Start pedaling a tricycle or bike

#### **Fine Motor Skills**

- Draw a circle with a crayon, pencil or marker (Get tips to help young kids learn to write.)



- Play with toys with small moving parts and buttons
- Turn the pages of a book one at a time
- Build with Mega Bloks and create towers of six or more blocks
- Work door handles and twist-on bottle tops

### **Cognitive Milestones**

This year, children start learning new things about the world. They often think of creative approaches to tasks and activities. By the end of this year, typical cognitive milestones include being able to do things like:

- Name the eight colors in a crayon box (red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, brown, black)
- Recite numbers to 10 and start counting groups of things
- Start understanding time in terms of morning, night and days of the week
- Remember and retell favorite stories
- Understand and talk about things that are the “ same” and “ different”
- Follow simple three-step directions (“ Brush your teeth, wash your face and put on your pajamas.”)

### **Language Milestones**

By the end of the year, 3-year-olds typically have a lot to say. They also understand more of what you say—but may not always follow your directions. Kids this age typically use language like this:

- Use the basic rules of grammar, but make mistakes with words that don’t follow the rules, like saying “ mouses” instead of “ mice”

- Speak well enough that most strangers can understand what they're saying
- Use five or six words in a sentence and have a two- to three-sentence conversation
- Tell you their name, the name of at least one friend and the names of most common objects
- Understand words like “ in,” “ on,” “ behind” and “ next”
- Ask “ wh” questions, like “ why,” to get more information about things

### **Social and Emotional Milestones**

Three-year-olds are an interesting mix of independent, playful and fearful. By the end of their fourth year, most 3-year-olds do these things:

- Be interested—although hesitant—about going new places and trying new things
- Start to play with children (as opposed to only playing side-by-side)
- Start being able to comfort and show concern for an unhappy friend without prompting
- Take turns while playing (even if they don't like to)
- Play “ real life” with toys like play kitchens
- Start finding simple ways to solve arguments and disagreements
- Show (but maybe not name) a variety of emotions beyond happy, sad and mad

Remember that kids develop at different rates. If your child is late to do a few of these things, don't panic. If your 3-year-old isn't able to do many of

these things as he approaches age 4, consider talking to his doctor about an evaluation to look at your child's skills.

Children have their sense of initiative reinforced by being given the freedom and encouragement to play. Now it is important for kids to learn that they can exert power over themselves and the world.