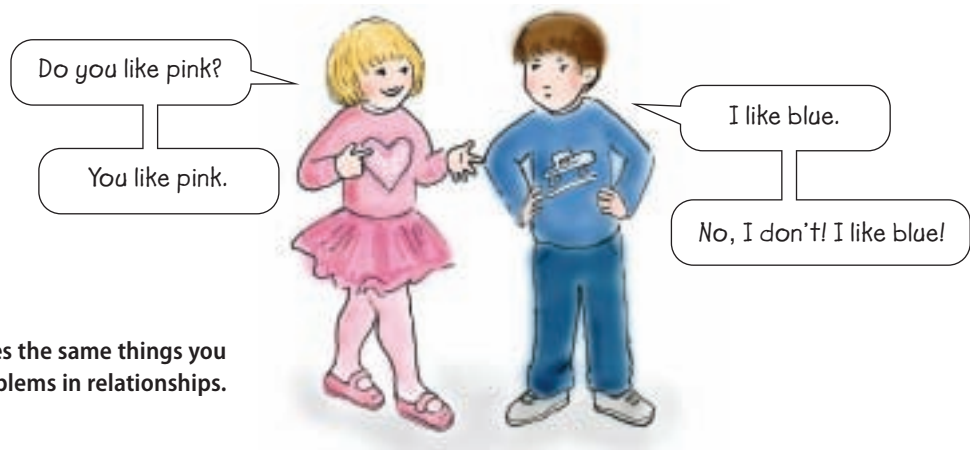


Stages of Tuning In

The ability to understand other people doesn't happen all at once. It takes about six years for most children, beginning in the first year of life, to become completely tuned in to other people. Your child might take eight or ten years, or even longer. It may be something he always has to work extra hard at.

But no matter how many years it takes him, your child's understanding of others will pass through a series of five stages. These stages are the same ones, more or less, that every child must go through. Knowing what they are will give you an idea of what your child needs to learn to progress to the next stage.



Thinking everyone likes the same things you do causes problems in relationships.

Stage 1: Understanding wanting

Every child's first lesson about wanting is that other people sometimes want things that are different from what he wants. Toddlers learn this simple truth when their desires conflict with those of their parents. (For instance, they want to eat candy and their parents won't let them.)

Sometime after a child has begun to understand what other people want, he can start predicting their actions and feelings. Then he can use this information to figure out how to react to them.

A child who has reached Stage 1 has learned these ideas (usually in the order shown):

- > Different people want different things.
- > To get what they want, people act in different ways.
- > When people get what they want, they feel happy.
- > When people don't get what they want, they feel unhappy.

In Stage 1, a child understands and talks about what people want.