### Developmental trends

**Between 3-4 years**
- Communicates freely with family members and familiar others.
- Seeks comfort, and reassurance from familiar family and carers, and is able to be soothed by them.
- Has developing capacity to self soothe when distressed.
- Understands the cause of feelings and can label them.
- Extends the circle of special adults eg. to grandparents, baby-sitter.
- Needs adult help to negotiate conflict.
- Is starting to manage emotions.
- Is starting to play with other children and share.
- Has real friendships with other children.
- Is becoming more coordinated at running, climbing, and other large-muscle play.
- Can walk up steps, throw and catch a large ball using two hands and body.
- Use play tools and may be able to ride a tricycle.
- Holds crayons with fingers, not fists.
- Dresses and undresses without much help.
- Communicates well in simple sentences and may understand about 1000 words.
- Pronunciation has improved, likes to talk about own interests.
- Fine motor skill increases, can mark with crayons, turn pages in a book.
- Day time toilet training often attained.

**Between 4-5 years**
- Knows own name and age.
- Is becoming more independent from family.
- Needs structure, routine and limits to manage intense emotions.
- Is asking lots of questions.
- Is learning about differences between people.
- Takes time making up his mind.
- Is developing confidence in physical feats but can misjudge abilities.
- Likes active play and exercise and needs at least 60 minutes of this per day.
- Eye-hand coordination is becoming more practised and refined.
- Cuts along the line with scissors/can draw people with at least four ‘parts’.
- Shows a preference for being right-handed or left-handed.
- Converses about topics and understands 2500 to 3000 words.
- Loves silly jokes and ‘rude’ words.
- Is curious about body and sexuality and role-plays at being grown-up.
- May show pride in accomplishing tasks.
- Conscience is starting to develop, child weighs risks and actions; “I would take it but my parents would find out”.

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## Possible indicators of trauma

### 3 - 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural changes</th>
<th>Mood and personality changes</th>
<th>Fear of trauma recurring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• increased tension, irritability, reactivity and inability to relax</td>
<td>• obvious anxiety and fearfulness</td>
<td>• loss of, or reduced capacity to control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• regression to behaviour of younger child</td>
<td>• withdrawal and quieting</td>
<td>• increased need for control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uncharacteristic aggression</td>
<td>• specific, trauma-related fears; general fearfulness</td>
<td>• fear of separation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Reduced eye contact | • intense repetitive play often obvious | **Parental/carer support following trauma**
| | • involvement of playmates in trauma-related play at school and day care | Encourage parent(s)/carers to:
| | • separation anxiety with parents/others | • seek, accept and increase support for themselves to manage their own shock and emotional responses
| | • loss of self-esteem and self confidence | • remain calm. Listen to and tolerate child's retelling of event
| | | • respect child's fears; give child time to cope with fears
| | | • protect child from re-exposure to frightening situations and reminders of trauma, including scary T.V. programs, movies, stories, and physical or locational reminders of trauma
| | | • accept and help the child to name strong feelings during brief conversations (the child cannot talk about these feelings or the experience for long)
| | | • expect and understand child's regression while maintaining basic household rules
| | | • expect some difficult or uncharacteristic behaviour
| | | • seek information and advice about child's developmental and educational progress
| | | • take time out to recharge

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*Printed on sustainable paper by Print Bound, 8 Apollo Court, Blackburn 3130.*

March 2007.

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.