



that they do not take another's perspective. This affects their ability to distinguish between an accident and something done intentionally. They cannot see that the other person intended to hurt them. Near the end of the preoperational stage, they begin to understand the difference between accidental and intentional injury.

**Viewing Friendship** A child's level of development affects how she views friendship. Preoperational thinkers, somewhat egocentric, tend to describe a friend merely as someone who plays with her. Her egocentricity sets limits on how she sees the world in general, and the concept of friendship.

Concrete Operational Thinkers: Ages 6 to 11 or 12 Years Old

**Describing Others** Children in this stage use fewer concrete terms and begin using broad psychological terms to describe other people. A young child in this stage might describe his friends by comparing their behaviors in some way: "Carl draws better than anybody in our class" or "Tyrone spells better than most of the class." Children usually use fewer and fewer such behavioral comparisons as they get older. Fifth graders—10-year-olds—would use broader psychological constructs in their descriptions: "Carl is very artistic"; "Cecil is one of the smartest people in class."

**Understanding Accidental or Intentional Behavior** Children, with their egocentricity diminishing, now understand intentional behavior. For some children, this occurs during kindergarten, but others might take longer to understand the concept. Children move toward greater understanding of the meaning of intentional behavior, however, during this stage. They get more accurate in detecting when someone did something on purpose.

**Viewing Friendship** As they mature, children's ideas about friendship change. They become less and less egocentric. Their sense of moral obligation blossoms, and they understand that they are responsible for themselves as they interact with others. Children become better at and more willing to share and take turns with age, and this enables them to bond with other children much more easily. Still later, in the next stage of cognition, a 14-year-old understands that friends support each other, a major shift in thinking about friendship. This is a more advanced view of friendship than the preoperational thinker's (young child's) observation that friends are merely momentary playmates.

❖ SELF-CONTROL AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

As teachers or parents, we want to help children develop self-control and become compassionate and caring, to develop prosocial behavior. All the changes in cognition, including memory and perception, and in social cognition form a foundation for a child's ability to regulate his or her own behavior—self-control. These changes also make it possible for children to become compassionate and caring individuals.

Self-Control: What to Expect

**Self-control** is the voluntary, internal regulation of behavior. It might well be one of the most significant changes during early childhood. Also known as self-regulation, it is an essential part of how children learn, is important in a child's growth and development, and is fundamental in preserving social and moral order. Figure 3.3 shows the milestones in the development of self-control.

**Self-control**  
Regulating behavior internally and voluntarily

**How Children Demonstrate Self-Control** Children show self-control when they do the following:

- **Control impulses, wait, and postpone action.** A child would step back, examine a situation, then decide how to act. He resists reacting impulsively.

