



Encouraging Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood - Part 1

Course Objective: Identify strategies and tools to encourage emotional intelligence in young children



A different way of being smart

- Recognize how I am feeling
- Label my feelings
- Identify what led to the feeling
- Express feelings appropriately
- Regulate to maintain or shift my feelings

"Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it."
-Vincent van Gogh

"If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then *no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.*" -Daniel Goleman



Children often experience emotional difficulties because they...

- Are in a particular developmental stage
- Are reacting to the environment they are in
- Are imitating what they see in those around them
- Do not have their basic needs met
- Do not know what to do when they experience a variety of situations that produce intense emotions
- Lack the emotional skills needed to deal with certain situations
- Their brain is reverting back to past experiences (what they have seen and experienced)



Children need to be able to discern:

- What am I feeling? What can I do about it? (Part 1)
- What are they feeling and what can I do about it? (Part 2)



Children need to learn:

PART 1: *Everyone has feelings *There are words for feelings *Feelings are neither good nor bad
*Feelings can give you information, like other senses

PART 2: *Feelings are different from actions *There are many ways to deal with feelings *I am in charge of my feelings and have choices *Feelings are okay, hurting people is not



Social scientists have identified a typical trajectory for emotional development.

To help identify what you can expect at different ages, Minnesota has outlined what to expect from birth to Kindergarten (page 57+) in their [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress Document](#).



What you do matters - You can promote emotional skills!

*You can teach skills directly or indirectly, during everyday moments and structured teaching times.



What are some things you currently do to foster children's EQ Skills?

(The ability to recognize how they are feeling, label feelings in themselves and others, identify what led to the feeling, express feelings appropriately, and be able to maintain or shift feelings, as needed/desired?)

Direct Teaching – Using intentional books, songs, and activities

Indirect Teaching – In the moment, as you go through your day



Encouraging Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood – Part 1

1 Teach Children About Emotions

✓ Use emotion words during everyday moments

- Model listening and validating emotions (yours and those around you)
- Role model with “parallel talk”, describing your feelings and your actions while expressing an intense emotion

“When we talk about feelings, even with toddlers, children learn how to control their emotions more readily. We are giving our children a set of important tools they’ll use for the rest of their lives.”
Dr. Susanne Denham

✓ Use a “Feelings Wheel” to show the range, activities that label emotion words, and use the “Mood-Meter”

- Use a morning greeting as a way to connect, acknowledge mood, identify feelings, and/or label what the child may be needing
- Do spontaneous mood-meter during the day, especially when intensity is elevated
- Learn and use words that describe the range of emotions
 - Content-happy-joyful
 - Antsy-perky-exuberant
 - Annoyed-angry-furious
 - Unsure-nervous-overwhelmed
 - Mopey-lonely-mournful
 - Anxious-fearful-terrified

✓ Do many activities that intentionally teach emotional skills



- Make faces together - “Make a _____ face.”
- Q and A: How does your face look when you feel proud?” “What makes you feel proud?”
- Activity: “Sad me.”
 - Ask, “Do you ever feel sad (or other emotion words)?” List why as the child/children share out.
 - Have brainstorm: “What do you usually do when you are sad?” and “What are ideas of what you can do when you feel sad?”
 - Add ideas as appropriate for your group and practice (include verbal/auditory, physical, mental/visual, self-nurturing, creative). Examples:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| ▪ Cry | ▪ Be alone | ▪ Talk to your teddy bear |
| ▪ Tell a pet | ▪ Call a friend | ▪ Listen to music |
| ▪ Talk to someone you trust | ▪ Ask for a hug | ▪ Write about it |
| ▪ Take a walk | ▪ Give a hug | ▪ Draw your sadness. |

- “Mirror mirror - What do I see?” Use a hand or wall mirror.
 - Look in the mirror and say - “Mirror, mirror, what do I see?”
 - Then make an emotion face - “I see a sad mommy looking at me.”
 - Then give your child a turn.
 - Help the child say, “I see a happy *Mattie* looking at me!”
- Sing Songs
If you are happy and you know it...add new verses to teach feelings
If you’re sad and you know it, cry a tear..“boo hoo”
If you’re mad and you know it, use your words “I’m mad”
If you’re scared and you know it ask for help, “help me”
If you’re happy and you know it, shout hurray! - HURRAY!
If you’re tired and you know it, give a yawn.

Other variations: <https://www.songsforteaching.com/jackhartmann/ifyoureangryandyouknowit.htm>

The Hokey Pokey and other emotions songs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHS7vCdBeus>



- Read books to teach about emotions and emotional skills
 - When reading children’s books, talk about and have children identify how the characters feel, what happened to cause their feelings, and how characters’ emotions change throughout a story
 - Read books designed to teach about emotions such as “Mouse was Mad”, “My Many Colored Days”, and “Llama, Llama Red Pajama”



Encouraging Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood - Part 1

2 Maintain a supportive response and emotion-coach through difficult situations

A. Reframe

- Change the self-talk
- Recognize that their stress hormone is elevated and their "thinking brain" is compromised or "Hijacked"
- Stress hormone leads to behavior that is rigid and stuck or chaotic and disorganized
- Become aware of the child's emotion and recognize the moment as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching

B. Get into "helpful mode"

- Push the "pause" button on your own agenda
- Take an empathetic stance
 - Move down to child, getting below eye level
 - Open your "heart-full" and helpful hands
 - Use a soft, tuned-in facial expression
 - Remain present and "infuse calm"



"The only way to change someone's mind is to connect with them from the heart."
- Rasheed Ogunlaru

C. Help the child feel heard *Joining *Wondering *Soothing

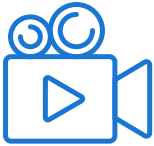
- Change the focus from "Listen to me!" to "Help me understand."
- Seek to understand the child's point of view

Actively listen

- "I'm listening."
- "Uh huh... I see... OOH."
- "I will help you."
- "I think you had something very important to say?"
- "Tell me what you need."
- "What did you think was going to happen?"

Avoid Feeling Stoppers

- "You're okay."
- "You're not hungry."
- "There's nothing to be afraid of."
- "That didn't hurt."
- "Tell her you're sorry."
- "Quiet, your acting too silly!"
- "Toughen up!"
- "Don't be such a baby"
- "That's nothing to cry about."



Video Analysis

What did the adult do?

Which EQ skills were impacted?

LET'S

DO

THIS!

3 y/o says "I don't want to clean up!"



4 y/o says "She is mean! She won't let me play!"



6 y/o says "Your bossy. I am not going to listen to you!"



Label Feelings - Validate - Empathize - Clarify



What is one takeaway? What is one adult teaching strategy, activity, or tool you can use to encourage emotional intelligence in young children?



Positive Behavior Intervention Supports Encouraging Emotional Development



Teach Skills

- *How to calm
- *How to express strong feelings
- *How to take a break when needed
- *How to refuse or say "no"
- *How to wait
- *How to ask for help



Foster Social Emotional Skills

- *Build emotional literacy skills
- *Identify and label emotions
- *Model social language
- *Problem-solve with child
- *Teach perspective-taking
- *Promote, model, and practice friendship skills like sharing, helping, taking turns, apologizing, empathy

Provide a Highly Supportive Environment that Prevents Challenges

- *Empathize with child's feelings
- *Stay calm
- *Be consistent and clear with rules
- *Teach child the rules
- *Tell child what you want them to do
- *Reinforce when child does something you want them to do
- *Modify the environment to provide a good fit
- *Plan ahead so you don't have to rush child
- *Prepare for transitions with verbal alert or timer
- *Sing songs to indicate what will happen next
- *Provide a regular routine
- *Make sure child gets enough down time, activity and sleep each day
- *Provide two reasonable choices
- *Make sure your expectations match what the child is capable of
- *Give clear and simple directions with only one step at a time
- *Use "first-then" and "when-then" statements

Strengthen your Relationship with your Child

- *Give child positive attention
- *Give encouragement
- *Have special one-on-one play time
- *Get down at child's level
- *Listen to child's stories
- *Be silly together
- *Provide hugs and pats on the back
- *Invite child to help you with a chore
- *Tell child what you like about them
- *Ask for the child's opinion and insight

