

Parents Matter

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Developing Emotional Intelligence at Home

Research points to one's emotional intelligence as a significant factor for both personal and professional success. Encouraging your children to participate in clubs, sports, and other extra-curricular activities that promote self-awareness, teamwork and cooperation will contribute to emotional learning. However, there are things you can do at home as parents to foster this development.

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, defines the concept as the ability to monitor one's own and other people's feelings and emotions and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. At the heart of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, which includes knowing the various emotions one feels, and how these feelings generate actions and reactions. Only with self-awareness can a person begin to manage emotions, use them to motivate and make decisions, and manage relationships with empathy and compassion.

Here are some tips for promoting emotional self-awareness with your children:

- **Take time to talk about feelings.** Help your children identify what they are feeling in any given moment and acquire the language to talk about a range of emotions.
- **Point out various triggers for different emotional responses.** Perhaps there are patterns to what causes frustration, or certain instances that create a sparkle of joy in your children's eyes. Taking time to pause and connect different emotional responses to events in life will help your children make intellectual connections to emotional responses.
- **Ask where different emotions are felt in the body.** There is wisdom to a sinking feeling in the stomach or a broken heart. Emotional responses generally trigger a physical reaction. And many children experience the physical sensation without understanding the emotional trigger involved. For example, if your child can learn to identify when a stomach ache is triggered by nervous feelings - he or she will be able to better manage the situation.
- When watching T.V. or movies, **point out different emotional states** and actions/reactions unfolding on screen. Because these scenarios are neutral and not being experienced first hand by your child, they can provide great examples for discussion and learning.
- Last of all, **remind your children that emotions are important road signs** for life that are not to be ignored. Anger can tell them when they are in a situation that must be changed. Joy can point them in a life-fulfilling direction. Jealousy may even reveal an area in their own life they'd like to cultivate. It's not the emotions themselves that are good or bad, it's what they do with them. Learning to work with their emotions, and not be high-jacked by them, is the first and most important step to developing emotional intelligence.

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Another Parent Tip From...

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