



Social Emotional Learning and Relationships

The word “relationship” means to “connect”. One’s ability to connect or relate to another human being is fundamental to our survival. According to Dan Goleman, in *Emotional Intelligence* (2005), the art of relationships is the ability to recognize and respond fittingly to people’s feelings and concerns.

Socially and emotionally healthy children and teens know how to get along well with others. They understand how to handle their emotions effectively in relationships. They communicate well, empathize with others, are cooperative, know when to seek help, and can work with others to solve problems.

These relationship skills are necessary to be successful in school, the workplace and in personal relationships throughout one’s life. These skills are best taught by significant others in a child’s life through explicit and intentional instruction, modeling the skills, and providing children with clear feedback as they learn and practice.

Verbal and non-verbal communication are key components to healthy relationships. As we prepare our children to function in the 21st century, it is essential to recognize the current forms of communication used by youth, including cell phones, text messages, email, Facebook, Twitter, and Skype. A 2010 study by the Pew Foundation indicated that the typical teen

sends or receives 50 text messages a day or around 1,500 a month. Arbitron and Edison Research conducted a social networking survey in 2010 and found that 48% of Americans over the age of twelve have a profile on a social networking site. The skill set necessary to cultivate and maintain relationships in this technological age is a myriad of complex social skills. Communicating through technology makes it difficult for children to learn about relationship cues such as voice inflection, body language, or facial cues. Equally important is the inability to work together and solve relational problems when contact with others is primarily through technology.

Goleman states that the first school of social and emotional skills is the home. It is through our family life that “we learn how to feel about ourselves and how others will react to our feelings...what choices we have...and how to read and express our hopes and fears.” Adults who are emotionally competent in their own relationship skills are more capable of assisting children and teens in the work of developing these skills. Our children learn from observing how we as adults relate to others.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Make time to have a real conversation around a child’s day, feelings, or issues. Spend less time reminding them about rules or what they must do.
- Help children identify a problem, talk about solutions, discuss the consequences of each solution and assist them to solve the problem.
- Help children identify their own feelings and recognize the feelings of others.
- Teach children that their reactions have a consequence which can either be positive or negative.
- Help children learn when they can handle a situation and when they need to seek help.
- Model good listening skills.
- Treat others with respect.
- Apologize when appropriate and remember that children may not remember the issue, but they will always remember how adults made them feel.

SEL RESOURCES

Websites:

Collaborative for Academic, social, and Emotional Learning

Parent Resource Packet:

<http://www.casel.org/downloads/parentpacketLSS.pdf>

Books:

Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children (2008). Lantieri, Linda and Goleman, Daniel.

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Raising a Thinking Child (1994)
Raising a Thinking Preteen (2000)
Thinking Parent, Thinking Child (2005)



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