



Social Emotional Links

Winter 2011
Volume: 1 Issue: 7

How Parents Can Support the Social and Emotional Development of Themselves and Others

Development of core social and emotional skills such as self management, healthy relationships and making responsible decisions are essential life skills with a myriad of benefits. Becoming proficient in these skills is a process that evolves over time, beginning in infancy and continuing through adulthood. For toddlers and youth, these skills are best learned in a caring, nurturing environment with adults who role model appropriate behaviors and emotions. Children also need an opportunity to practice the skills and receive constructive feedback.

Although many schools are now intentionally embedding social and emotional instruction in the curriculum, *parents and families play the critical, primary role in the development of these important skills.* According to Daniel Goleman, "There are hundreds of studies showing that how parents treat their children – whether with harsh discipline or empathic understanding, with indifference or warmth, and so on – has deep and lasting consequences for the child's emotional life."* In order for parents to support their child's development in this area, they must have a good grasp of social emotional intelligence themselves.

Here are some tips for how parents can enhance their own social emotional skills and model them for their children:

Self Awareness - Explore and identify your deepest feelings such as loneliness, shame, fear, betrayal, guilt, jealousy and joy. Assess your strengths and weaknesses honestly. Be confident with your decisions and actions.

Self Management – Learn to identify, express and manage your emotions. Find what works for you to stay calm when you get angry.

Monitor your stress to ensure it doesn't negatively affect your health or relationships. Work with your children to organize your home and establish a few family goals to expose them to the goal setting process. Celebrate your successes!

Social Awareness - Recognize, discuss and respect the differences in others. Honor your child's feelings with an empathic response and look for opportunities to practice empathy with others. Teach your child how to read others' feelings and social cues. Help your child resolve conflicts with friends peacefully.

Relationship Skills - Model healthy relationships with your spouse, friends and family. Learn to communicate effectively, be a good listener, be empathic, cooperate and compromise when needed. Apologize when you are wrong or make a mistake.

Responsible Decision Making – Practice making solid, fair and ethical decisions based on respect, social norms, and consequences. Follow the law. Practice honesty. Remember that children are astute learners and learn as much from your behaviors as your rules, lectures and instruction.

Research has shown that children whose parents are emotionally adept have an astounding range of advantages both academically and socially. It is never too late to develop your social emotional skills. If you feel a need to enhance your parenting skills, seek out a support group or professional help. It's one of the best gifts you could give yourself and your child.

*Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Dell, New York (2005)

WHAT IS SEL?

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively. SEL is fundamental children's social and emotional development—their health, ethical development, citizenship, academic learning, and motivation to succeed. Not only does SEL enhance academic outcomes for students, it also ensures that schools will address a broader mission of educating students to be good problem-solvers and caring, responsible, and engaged citizens.

SEL RESOURCES

Websites:

Child Development Institute, LLC:
www.childdevelopmentinfo.com

Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL):
<http://casel.org/sel/families.php>

Search Institute's parent resources:
www.parentfurther.com

Books:

Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: How to Raise a Self-Disciplined, Responsible, Socially Skilled Child. Maurice Elias, Ph.D. et al. (2000).

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. (1980/1999).

Touchpoints: The Essential Reference—Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development (birth to age 3). T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. (1992)



Funding provided by the Illinois State Board of Education and supported by the Children's Mental Health Partnership.