



The TOTLETTER

Fall 2017

Helping Children Understand Their Emotions and Teaching Emotional Intelligence

What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand and manage your own emotions and that of others. Emotional intelligence includes three primary skills, which are true for both emotionally intelligent children and adults.

1. Using emotions effectively. Emotionally intelligent people use their emotions to help them think and problem solve in school and at work.
2. Identifying emotions properly. Emotionally intelligent people are able to accurately identify their feelings and that of others, which means they can read situations and relationships.
3. Regulating emotions skillfully. Emotionally intelligent people can harness their own emotions, and, also use their empathetic responses to other people in helpful way.

That sounds easy enough, but identifying feelings and learning to empathize doesn't come naturally to everyone. Regardless of the ease with which people learn emotional intelligence, the skill is extremely important throughout life.

The importance of emotional intelligence

We all know that people who are emotionally appropriate are more pleasant to be around than people who are not. But, what are the other benefits of emotional intelligence? Some of the specific benefits for children include:

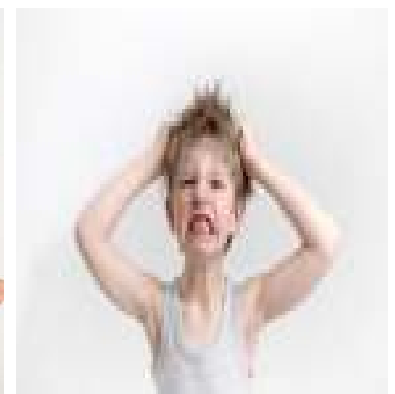
1. Academic success. Children with higher emotional intelligence perform better in school, as a whole, than their peers with lower scores.

2. Academic retention. Children with higher emotional intelligence are less likely to drop out of high school or college than children with lower emotional intelligence scores.
3. Increased pro-social behavior. Children with higher emotional intelligence tend to be more adept at navigating relationships, cooperating and responding compassionately and appropriately with friends, at home and at school.



Children and Emotions

Starting at a very young age, children feel all types of emotions. They know sadness, happiness, fear, anger, and many other feelings. Emotions tell us how we feel about different situations. They push us into action and give us the energy to stop negative experiences and gain more positive experiences. Even though children feel these emotions, they don't always understand them, and they may not know what to do with them when they feel them. Feeling different emotions can sometimes be confusing for children.



How parents and educators can help

Children who explicitly learn how to recognize and manage their emotions reap positive benefits. As educators and parents we can help children learn about their emotions and help them learn to manage them.

Here are some way that we can do that:

1. Name the emotion. Children learn by watching you. If you're sad and crying, or angry, take some time to name those emotions out loud with children so he or she can learn to identify what you're feeling. Let them see how you cope properly with your emotions and talk about how you feel. This lets the child know that it's okay to have these feelings too. And, it shows children useful ways to deal with them. You might say that you're feeling sad about things today and then suggest doing something fun that might make you all feel better. By seeing how you respond to these feelings, children can learn what to do in the same situation. Use a rich vocabulary. Emotions aren't just "happy" or "sad." Sometimes, emotions are extremely complex, and a rich vocabulary of feeling words can help unfold the complexity of the emotions. Use many different words to describe feelings in your home, so children can learn about the complexity of feelings.
2. Validate children's feelings. If a child is having a complete meltdown, take some time to validate his or her feelings, even if you don't give in to them. Instead of ignoring a tantrum, say, "I know how frustrated you are that we can't go to the park right now, and it's completely reasonable to feel that way."



3. Talking about feelings. Let children talk about their emotions. It's one of the best things adults can do--just give children a chance to talk. When children have such strong feelings, it is very important to hear what they have to say. Give them a chance to talk. Find out why they are so angry or sad. Talking about feelings won't always make things better, but sometimes children can feel some relief just by saying what it is that is troubling them. Most of us have felt relief just by saying something outloud. It's the same for children. Sometimes talking about feelings helps children understand what's going on. This is also a good chance for you to explain what is happening and get a better understanding of what the child is thinking.
4. Understanding facial expressions and reactions. Children may not understand that their faces and inside feelings are clues to their emotions. Children may need some help to understand how these face and body clues tell what they are feeling.
5. Planning for strong feelings. Help children cope with intense feelings by creating coping strategies. Have a quiet place for children to take a break when angry or sad. Give children tools and teach them how and when to use them such as a stress ball or a trampoline. These tools help children release energy in a positive way. Encourage children to use words or write about their feelings. Establish a phrase the child can use to remove themselves from stressful or upsetting situations. The phrase gives children a way to politely excuse themselves, regain control, and then return to the situation. Select a short phrase that can be used in a variety of situations such as, "Excuse me. I need a minute to think."
6. Teach empathy. Talk about compassion and empathy for others' feelings, and model it yourself in your interactions with others.
7. Responding to other people's feelings and understanding different viewpoints. Not only do children have to identify other people's feelings, but they also need to learn how to respond when someone is angry, sad, or excited. Teach children appropriate responses through role play and reviewing past events. Discuss how different people in the role play feel, how their body

language and words show their feelings, and the best response for the situation. Also, discuss how the child would feel if this happened to them and how they would like other people to respond. For example if a child comes home from school feeling angry with his friend about a disagreement, take the time to talk through the disagreement and help your child understand his friend's different point of view.

8. Model effective communication. Use feeling phrases like, "I feel angry right now, and I need some time to cool off before we continue this conversation." "It hurt my feelings when you said my picture was ugly, I worked hard on that picture and felt proud of it."



Activity Suggestions

- Cut out pictures in magazines or newspapers of people who are feeling different emotions. Make a poster of all the different kinds of feelings.
- Read stories where characters experience events that are happy, sad, surprising, or frustrating. Discuss why the characters felt the way they did and what they said or did to indicate their feelings.
- To help children connect their feelings with their body clues. Ask the children to think of different times when they felt happy, sad, afraid, or angry. Then pretend they are in those situations. Have them try to describe how they feel on the inside and how their faces feel. Feelings of happiness usually mean smiles, laughter, and lightness. Frowns, crying, and heavy feelings are for sadness. Fear is connected to tension, wanting to hide, and a tight feeling in the face. Anger can make you

feel like you're going to explode and causes a snarling look on the face.

Taken in part by sheknows.com

Craft Ideas

Paper Plate Apple & Worm

Materials: paper plate, red paint, paintbrush, popsicle stick, googly eyes, glue, marker, scissors, green and brown paper, stapler



1. Have the child paint the paper plate red. Set it aside to dry.
2. Glue the eyes onto the popsicle stick and add wiggly lines with the marker to make it look like a worm.
3. Cut two slits into the dried paper plate and thread the worm into the cuts.
4. To finish off the craft, cut out a leaf and stem and staple them to the top of the paper plate.

Square Collage

This open-ended craft is simple, fun, and uses materials you probably already have on hand!



Materials: construction paper (assorted colours and black for the background), cotton swabs, ruler, glue, small cup, scissors, pencil

1. Using the ruler, measure out 1" squares on the construction paper. Cut paper into squares.
2. Provide the child with a small cup of glue and a cotton swab, along with the colourful paper squares.
3. Let their creativity shine!

Adapted from messforless.net

Corn-on-the-Cob

This craft is great for small children and combines craft time with some snacking! Just be sure to supervise so that the children don't eat any glue with their cereal.



Materials: construction paper (yellow and green), pencil, Cheerios or other circular cereal, scissors, glue, stapler

1. First draw/cut out your ear of corn out of the construction paper. Yellow for the center and green for the two outer leaves.
2. Glue/staple those three pieces together to form the corn on the cob.
3. Put a good layer of glue all over the yellow construction paper piece. Have your child lay the cereal on top of the glue, until it's completely covered.
4. Set aside to let it dry completely.

Adapted from gluedtomycraftsblog.com

Puffy Ghosts

This is a super easy seasonal craft for preschoolers and toddlers.

Materials: white cardstock, scissors, glue, cotton balls, black paper



1. Cut a ghost shape out of the white cardstock.
2. Let the child glue the cotton balls to the cardstock. They can apply the glue directly to the paper or for younger ones, pour the glue onto a small plate so they can dip the cotton balls. Ask them to completely cover the paper with cotton balls.
3. Cut two eyes and mouth out of the black paper and glue them onto the finished ghost.
4. If you want, you can tape string onto the back to hang your ghost.

Source: thrivinghomeblog.com

Activities

Activity Cube

This is a fun way to introduce exercise to the day and is perfect to do inside when it's cold out!



You will need: square box (any size but small enough that it can be rolled like dice), construction paper (6 different colours), glue or tape, marker

Tape the box shut and cover each side with a different colour of paper. Write the activities on each side:

- Touch toes
- Arm circles
- Jumping jacks
- Hop backwards
- Hop on 1 foot
- Run in place

To play, have the child roll the cube and whatever it lands on, you do!

Adapted from: amandasmearman.com

Cardboard Tube Car Ramps

Make some cardboard tube ramps for a fun car racing activity for vehicle-loving kids! Great fun for exploring motion, cause and effect, and for a rainy day activity.



You will need: cardboard wrapping paper tube, black and white paint, small cars

The set up is easy—cut along the tube to create two even halves. Paint the inside of each half black and once dry, add a broken white line down the middle to resemble a roadway. As soon as the paint is dry, they are ready for play. You can prop them up against a chair or pillow and watch the cars zoom down the ramp!

Source: theimaginationtree.com

Indoor Obstacle Course

This obstacle course takes some planning to put together but once set up, it can be used multiple times over multiple days.

Materials: "painter's" tape (or other colourful low-stick tape)



By using the tape on the floor, you can guide children through a variety of fun, indoor movements. For example, tape an 'X' on the floor to mean "hop on one foot", or tape a line to resemble a balance beam. A wiggly line can be used to convey the child needs to roll the length of it, and a zigzag line is meant to be followed. The sky is the limit!

Songs and Fingerplays

My Friends Go Marching

Sung to the tune of: The Ants Go Marching

My friends go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah!
My friends go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah!
My friends go marching one by one, my friends who begin with ____ *sit down, and we'll all keep marching round and round, till we all sit down.

**One by one insert the first letter of each child's name into song. Repeat the song until all the children are seated*

Note: Start the song with all the children standing up and marching around.



Where is _____?

Sung to the tune of: Are you Sleeping

Where is (Child's Name)

Where is (Child's Name)

Please stand up,

Please stand up,

Do a little wave,

Do a little clapping ,

Sit back down,

Sit back down.

**Have the children follow the instructions of the song.*

Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall

Sung to the tune of: This Old Man

Winter, Spring

Summer, Fall

these are season,

four in all.

Weather changes,
sun and rain and snow,
leaves fall down
and flowers grow.

Winter, Spring

Summer, Fall

these are season,

four in all.

Look outside
and you will see
just what season
it will be!

This is ME!

This is me,
from my head to my toes.
I have two eyes,
and a nose.
I can wiggle my ears,
and stomp my feet.
From my head to my toes,
I'm pretty neat!



Tasty Treats

Lunch Kebab

It's always fun to have lunch on a stick! There are so many options for kebab lunches. The concept is simple: small, bite-sized pieces of food threaded onto a wooden stick (remove any pointy ends of skewers for small children).



Mac & Cheese Bites

Makes 48 mini muffin-sized bites

Ingredients:

- 12 oz. elbow macaroni
- 5 oz. of garlic and herb cheese boursin, alouette, or even herbed cream cheese works, any soft spreadable herbed cheese

- 2 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 tbsp. cold unsalted butter
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cups milk
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- pinch salt and pepper
- for the crust:
- 2 cups crushed Ritz Crackers
- 6 tbsp. butter melted
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and spray 2 mini muffin tins with cooking spray.
2. Begin by melting the 6 tbsp. of butter and then mixing in the crushed Ritz and the 1/2 cup cheddar. Press about 1 tsp. of crumb mixture into the bottom of the mini muffin tin. Press down until firmly packed. Crust should come up a little on the sides.
3. Prepare macaroni noodles. Cook in boiling water until a few minutes shy of al dente. When done, strain and then put into a large bowl. Add the herbed cheese, cheddar, sour cream, milk, eggs, cold butter, and salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly until cheese is starting to melt and no large clumps remain. Spoon about 1-2 tsp. of mixture into each well over the prepared crust. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let sit at least 10 minutes. If you try to remove them before that, they will crumble as you take them out. After 10 minutes, run a knife around the edges and then gently remove each one. Serve warm. Enjoy!

Source: oldhousetonewhome.net

Sue's Banana Oat Muffins

These make great after-school snacks!

In a large bowl, mix together:

- 1 ¼ c quick oats
- 1 c flour (whole wheat pastry flour is best but all-purpose is fine)
- 1 T chia seeds
- 1/3 c granulated sugar
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder

- 1 tsp baking soda
- sprinkle of salt

In a separate bowl, beat together:

- 1 egg (not directly from the fridge; room temperature is preferable so that it doesn't cause the coconut oil to solidify and clump)
- 2 cups mashed bananas (4-6 bananas depending on size)
- 1/3 c coconut oil, melted

Instructions:

1. Add banana mixture to dry ingredients and stir just until moistened.
2. Add ½ c chocolate chips or chopped nuts, if desired.
3. Fill greased 12-cup muffin pan and sprinkle with sesame seeds.
4. Bake at 375F for 25-35 minutes until brown and a little springy. Note: these muffins won't spring as much because of their high banana content.

Chilly Weather: A Reminder for Parents

As the days turn colder, please ensure that your child always has sufficient clothing for fun, outdoor play!

