

Parents' Guide to Social & Emotional Development

Research has shown that those with high emotional intelligence have better attention skills and fewer learning problems, and are generally more successful in academic and workplace settings. We offer the following examples as a guide to help you continue

Social and emotional intelligence involves understanding your feelings and behaviors, as well as those of others, and applying this knowledge to your interactions and relationships. The term “emotional intelligence” was coined in 1990 by Peter Salovey

- ✓ **Self-awareness is knowing yourself. It’s about knowing your emotions, strengths and challenges, and how your emotions affect your behavior.**

- ✓ **Self-management is knowing how to control your behaviors and moods, and setting and working toward goals.**

- ✓ **Social awareness is the ability to understand and respect the perspectives of others, and to apply this knowledge to interactions with people from diverse backgrounds.**

- ✓ **Having good relationship skills involves knowing how to establish and keep rewarding and positive relationships with friends, family and others from a wide range of backgrounds.**

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Responsible decision-making involves identifying the impact of your choices on yourself and others, and using empathy, relationship skills and self- and social awareness to make decisions.

✓ **Self-Awareness**

Accurately identifying your emotions and the causes for them, as well as your strengths and challenges, is being self-aware. Self-awareness is important because when you know yourself and understand your own tendencies you are better-able to manage and express your emotions, form and sustain positive relationships, and make more responsible decisions. Self-awareness helps you make choices that are right for you, from what job you'd like to have to how you react in a stressful situation.

✓ **Morning Routine**

Take time to check in with yourself and your mood. Look at yourself in the mirror while you get ready in the morning and reflect on your expression. Think about how often you appear happy, and how your expressions impact your interactions with your child and others. You can also do a mood check, and ask yourself, "What is going on with me today? What am I grateful for? How do I want my day to go?" Remember that you want to teach your child about the positive nature of self-awareness, and if she sees you smiling and happy to engage in this learning experience, you are setting a good example for her to follow. At times, simply smiling can change your mood, and smiles are contagious. If you try to smile at your children in the morning, it can help everyone have a positive start to their day.

✓ **Self-Management**

Self-management is the ability to control emotions and the behaviors sparked by those emotions. It also involves being able to set and work toward goals. If you can accurately identify your feelings and how they influence your actions, you will be better-able to act on those feelings. Being able to take a moment to breathe and calm down when you're angry instead of yelling and fighting is what self-management looks like in daily practice. Perseverance and resilience are part of self-management because they help you overcome challenges to pursue goals. An example of perseverance could be simply working on a recipe multiple times until it comes out just right, while resilience can involve overcoming financial obstacles to

pursue a goal, like taking on an additional job to pick up extra money to go back to school. Everybody has both positive and negative emotions, and the key to self-management is knowing how to regulate and cope with those feelings.

✓ Throughout the Day

Take a moment to deal with stress. The responsibilities of caring for children and juggling a variety of other daily tasks can become stressful for any parent. One of the first steps to managing feelings of stress is identifying what causes those feelings. Susan Rivers, Deputy Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, suggests taking a moment to reflect on your emotions. You may also want to use this moment to take a deep breath, redirect your negative emotions, and identify what makes you feel empowered and what causes you to get stressed or engage in bad behavior. You can choose to do this when you are feeling stressed or you can do it regularly during your day. Begin by asking yourself, "How can I control my emotions so that I can set the best example for my child?" For instance, if your child didn't pick up his room after you told him to, instead of getting frustrated, you may want to take a moment to calm yourself, and then explain why you are upset. You can say, "I don't like it when the room is not clean because your baby sister might put things in her mouth. Why don't we pick up your toys together?" By finding ways to cope with your emotions, you will be showing your child how to calm himself, deal with stress and manage his emotions.

✓ Social Awareness

Social awareness involves having a strong sense of empathy -- or the ability to understand and respect the perspective of others -- and applying it to social interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. A person with strong social awareness is able to recognize the emotions of others, and use this knowledge and understanding to be responsive to their needs. A long-term study conducted at the University of California at Berkeley found that social and emotional abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige. In order to teach your child to understand and embrace the difference perspectives of others, it's helpful to ask yourself, "How socially aware am I?"

✓ After School

Think about your own social skills. While commuting home after work or school, take time to reflect on how you approach different social interactions in your life. You can do this by thinking about your day and trying to see certain situations from

the perspective of others. For example, if you had a meeting at work and someone disagreed with you, did you pay attention to their feedback and accept their constructive criticism? Or did you become defensive and upset? If the latter is the case, think about other ways you could react more positively. It may also help if you think about the positive attributes and contributions of others. Understanding and addressing others' concerns is essential to social awareness, and coaching yourself can help you learn how to be more diplomatic in your interactions. This is especially true for any interactions that you have with your child. Ask yourself, "How are my reactions and responses affecting my child? Am I providing him with an example of good social behavior? Am I fostering his self-esteem and providing him with positive support and encouragement? How do I react when he questions me or wants to talk about his concerns?" Remember that your child is looking to you as an example. Taking a moment to consider how you interact with him and others is an important part of nurturing his social skills.

✓ **Relationship Skills**

Good relationship skills -- which allow one to interact in meaningful and productive ways with others and to maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups -- can help contribute to a person's overall success. It involves communicating effectively with others in a friendly way and being able to work as part of a team. If you are able to foster trust and respect with others, and you are skilled at negotiating and effectively resolving conflicts, disagreements and disputes, you have strong relationship skills. With the ever-expanding exposure to different cultures and people in today's always-connected world, building relationship skills can have a positive effect on your personal and professional life. Research suggests that those with strong emotional and social intelligence are more likely to contribute to a positive work environment.

✓ **Dinner Time**

Dinner time offers a good opportunity to think about your relationship skills. Take a moment while setting the table, preparing dinner or washing dishes to think about the people and situations you encountered that day. Think about your role and behavior in those relationships. Do you listen actively to your child's concerns? Did you keep your promise to your mother to take her to the doctor's office? Did you follow through when your teenager broke your rules? Can your family members trust you when you say you're going to do something? By asking yourself these questions, and evaluating your relationship strengths and challenges, you will be gaining a sense of social understanding that can help you be the best role model for

your family. Another way to model positive relationship skills is to try to have meals together as often as possible and to use this time to talk to one another and nurture your relationship as a family. Research has found that teens who have frequent family dinners are more likely to be emotionally content, work hard at school, and have high-quality relationships with their parents. Knowing that your family table is a safe place to talk about the good and the bad can nurture your relationship with your child, and it can provide her with an example of what a positive and strong relationship look like.

✓ **Responsible Decision-Making**

The ability to make responsible decisions involves identifying and managing emotions, as well as utilizing social awareness and relationship skills. This requires the combination of character, empathy and behavior, and taking responsibility for your actions, behaviors and words. Modeling responsible decision-making can take many forms. Did you put off a vacation to save for a needed appliance? Do you think of other family members when deciding what to do for holidays? Do you take responsibility for your actions? Can others hold you accountable without your becoming defensive, angry, or withdrawn? If the answer to these questions is yes, you're showing responsible decision-making. You can support your child's growing ability to make responsible decisions by evaluating your own decision-making strategies and abilities so that he can follow your example and be better-equipped to make good decisions.

✓ **Bed Time**

Think about your decision-making strategies. After a long day, it may be challenging to think about the way you make choices, but it's important to do so in order to consciously model the behavior for your child. Bedtime is a good opportunity to analyze your decisions of the day, and think about how you reached your conclusions. You may also want to think about important choices you made in the past that involved your child or your family members, and break down the steps that you took to reach that decision. How did you come to those decisions? Did you write a pros and cons list? How did this decision affect you and others? What did you base your decision on? Did you make responsible choices? Talk through your decision-making strategies with your child to show him that everyone has a process when making decisions. Even if you aren't sure why you decided to do something, talk about that as well. If you share with your child, you show him he's not alone in struggling with decisions or making choices he can't quite explain.